



## Rethinking Energy

By David Hook, Chair, Vision for Norfolk

CPRE Norfolk has serious concerns about the threat posed by proposals for mega solar developments in the county. Three Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are already progressing through the planning system and developers are seeking additional sites for at least three more projects. In total, if all these proposals are permitted, around 17,000 acres of Norfolk countryside will be covered by solar panels (up to 4.5m in height) and associated infrastructure – equivalent to twice the land area of Norwich.

Industrialising large tracts of countryside is not the best way to address the challenges posed by climate change. CPRE Norfolk fully supports the de-carbonisation of energy production and this can be achieved in a better way by maximising the harvesting of solar energy from roofs and other artificial surfaces.

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) has set a target of 85GW to be produced from solar sources by 2050 as part of the renewable energy requirement needed to achieve net zero by mid-century. Research carried out by the UCL Energy Institute for CPRE has demonstrated that by 2050: “there is potential for up to 117GW of low carbon electricity to be generated from roofs and other developed spaces”. This is far higher than the CCC target - there really is no need for any mega solar on land.

The Norfolk NSIP schemes, in common with similar projects in other parts of the country, would not contribute to the achievement of the government’s 2030 95% clean power target because the grid connection offers for these proposals are in most instances at least 10 years in the future. They would therefore also be unlikely to be of benefit in helping to reach the UK’s ambitious commitment to cut emissions 81% by 2035. It is hard to see how mega solar on land can be justified on the grounds that it would be of use in addressing any immediate urgent need.

Continued overleaf >

# Chairs Note

A very warm welcome to the CPRE Norfolk newsletter. I am writing this at the end of half term week, and the weather is finally getting brighter. Norfolk is beautiful in all weathers, but after a dreary winter it is even more uplifting when the sun breaks through the clouds and we see the growing signs of spring. For those within reach, this half term brought the Science Festival to Norwich, with many fascinating, fun and educational events for all ages. It also brought me the opportunity to visit the Council Chamber in Norwich City Hall where a mural has been created showing just where we stand with climate change, and our future options, which are challenging at best.

We have been taking our messages directly to our new and returning MPs, and are working widely with the national CPRE charity, as well as all the county branches in the east of England. Many of our issues are replicated across a much wider area. We hope this strengthens our position, which is simply to ask the question “How can we do things better?”.

Key priorities are to see the move to green power happen quickly in a way that does not sacrifice food production or biodiversity. There is little point in covering swathes of agricultural land with mega solar farms when we have all the roof space required to meet the target. We would rather see local energy distribution networks than miles of new pylons. And we believe there needs to be a concerted effort to ensure we improve the energy and water efficiency of our housing stock, including mandating solar panels and water efficiency measures on all new builds.

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According to NESO, the National Energy System Operator, 200 – 225 GW of generation projects need to be connected to the grid by 2030 to reach the 95% clean power target. In order to achieve this NESO has set out a plan to reform the way in which the grid queue operates with “Ready” projects being prioritised for connection. A “Ready” scheme will most likely be one for which planning, land rights and finance is already in place. Proposals for new mega solar projects do not fit these criteria.

A CPRE Norfolk member has secured a parliamentary petition asking the government to “Promote solar energy on roofs and ban large-scale solar schemes on farmland and open

Housing remains a key issue, with no current policies to solve the issues. We have been campaigning for a new wave of social house building to fix the underlying cause of the ‘crisis’. Headlines suggesting we will be getting 1.5 million new homes and 12 new towns in this country simply will not happen. With over 1 million build-ready housing sites in the UK land banked, and a vast quantity of empty property both residential and commercial, the supply opportunities are already available.

We are responding to the Land Use consultation now launched. We absolutely and wholeheartedly support the idea of a national land plan that considers all our needs, the land required to meet them, and which then sets a rational plan of where things need to be. The draft ideas tabled currently are still far away from this, and we will be lobbying for a better approach.

We campaign tirelessly on these issues, and as well as already helping us by being a member of CPRE Norfolk, please encourage more people to join us, including your own parish council who can sign up to our Alliance (see page 4). Donations are also really important for us, please consider supporting our work by donating via <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/6469#!/DonationDetails>

A busy time ahead. My best wishes to you for 2025 and thank you for your continued support.



Chris Dady  
Chair, CPRE Norfolk

countryside”. The petition has received widespread support throughout the UK and can be accessed and shared via the following link: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/703284> .

In order to prevent the widespread industrialisation of countryside in Norfolk and elsewhere in the UK, which would result from the imposition of NSIP mega solar schemes on local communities, each one covering thousands of acres of land, please sign this petition and in so doing support the CPRE message: ‘Renewables Done Well’.

# Reconnecting Norfolk

By Pallavi Devulapalli & Rob Archer

The closure of the King's Lynn to Norwich railway in 1969 has left a lasting impact on Norfolk. Since then, the populations of King's Lynn, Swaffham, Dereham, Wymondham, and Norwich have grown significantly, along with traffic congestion on the A47.

Despite calls to dual the A47, CPRE Norfolk believes this would be an expensive and counterproductive mistake. Expanding roads often leads to increased traffic, worsening congestion, pollution, and environmental damage. A more sustainable solution is to reinstate the missing sections of the railway. Unlike road expansion, restoring rail infrastructure would provide a long-term alternative with a lower environmental impact, preserving Norfolk's countryside and farmland.

## A Feasible and Proven Concept

Reinstating this rail link is achievable. Around half of the original route remains in use today: King's Lynn to Middleton Towers supports freight, and Dereham to Wymondham is a heritage railway. The final section, Wymondham to Norwich, is part of the Ely to Norwich main line.

The missing 23 miles are mostly unobstructed, with space available alongside the A47 where needed. Other UK railways have successfully reopened, such as the Newcastle to Ashington line and the Borders Railway in Scotland, which now carries two million passengers annually. The King's Lynn to Norwich corridor serves a larger population, making it a prime candidate for reinstatement.

## Addressing Public Need

Many Norfolk residents would benefit from improved rail services. Approximately 40% of people in King's Lynn and Norwich do not own a car. Existing bus services are slow and unreliable due to congestion. A frequent rail service would provide a viable alternative, reducing road traffic and improving access to work, education, and leisure.

## A Phased Approach to Rebuilding

We propose restoring the line in stages. First, a shuttle service from King's Lynn to a new park-and-ride at the A149, with stops at Fairstead and Gaywood/the Hardwick. This section already exists for freight but needs new passenger stations. Simultaneously, a regular passenger service between Dereham and Norwich via Wymondham could be reinstated with minimal upgrades.

The second phase would replace the missing 23 miles of track, requiring a new route through Swaffham and a connection into Dereham. Once complete, hourly direct trains could run between King's Lynn and Norwich, alongside local services to Dereham and Fakenham.

## A Sustainable Future for Norfolk

This project is complex but far less disruptive and costly than road expansion. Across Europe, countries are successfully reopening railways, and in the UK, reopenings have exceeded expectations. Reinstating the King's Lynn to Norwich railway would transform Norfolk, bringing significant social, economic, and environmental benefits.

Support this campaign & sign the petition - [www.you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/reinstate-the-train-connection-from-kings-lynn-to-norwich](http://www.you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/reinstate-the-train-connection-from-kings-lynn-to-norwich)



# Join us for a magical, musical evening

We are delighted to invite you to join us for a special evening of choral music performed in aid of CPRE Norfolk, a concert that promises to be filled with inspiring music and community spirit. This memorable event will be held on **Saturday, 10th May at St Peter Mancroft Church, Norwich**, with doors opening at 6.30pm. The concert will be followed by our Annual General Meeting (AGM) at 8pm, where we will reflect on our achievements and look ahead to the future.

The concert will feature the acclaimed Norfolk, [Sine Nomine Choir](#), whose breath-taking harmonies and stirring repertoire will transport you on a musical journey. Their performance will include a mix of sacred and secular music featuring classical choral pieces, and folk songs ensuring there is something for everyone to enjoy.

This event is a fantastic opportunity to support CPRE Norfolk's vital work in protecting our beautiful countryside and promoting sustainable development. All proceeds from ticket sales will go directly to funding our campaigns and initiatives, helping us to continue making a positive impact across the county.

Following the concert, we encourage you to stay for our AGM, where we will discuss the charity's progress over the past year and share our plans for the year ahead. This is a great chance to engage with fellow members, meet the team, and contribute to shaping the future of CPRE Norfolk.



St Peter Mancroft Church

## Event Details:

**Date:** Saturday, 10th May 2025

**Venue:** St Peter Mancroft Church, Norwich, NR2 1QZ

**Time:** doors open 6.30pm

**Tickets:** via donation on the night (suggested donation £10)

We would love for as many of our members and supporters as possible to join us for this special occasion. Whether you are a long-time supporter or new to CPRE Norfolk, this evening promises to be a wonderful celebration of music, community, and our shared love for the countryside.

We look forward to seeing you there!

For further information, please contact - [info@cprenorfolk.org.uk](mailto:info@cprenorfolk.org.uk)



Sine Nomine Choir

## Our Alliance Needs You!

CPRE Norfolk is calling on all members to unite in opposition to the rise of industrial-scale solar farms threatening our county's countryside. While we support renewable energy, these vast developments risk destroying valuable farmland, harming wildlife, and disrupting local communities. We advocate for a balanced approach - prioritising solar on rooftops and brownfield sites instead. By joining our alliance, you can help campaign for sustainable solutions that protect Norfolk's landscapes for future generations.

**Membership of the alliance is free** and open to parish councils, action groups, other interested organisations and individuals. We provide guidance and newsletters to members on how to navigate the NSIP process and highlight areas which will strengthen objections.

If you would like to join this alliance, please email [planning@cprenorfolk.org.uk](mailto:planning@cprenorfolk.org.uk)

# Starry, Starry Nights

By Lisa Ashbury

There's something magical about standing under Norfolk's night sky on a clear evening. Free from artificial glare, the stars shine in full brilliance. But beyond beauty, our dark skies are a valuable asset that must be protected.

## What's happening in Norfolk's Night Sky in 2025?

Norfolk's skies always offer celestial wonders, but 2025 brings particularly exciting events. The Perseid Meteor Shower will peak on August 12, producing up to 100 meteors per hour under dark skies. The Horsehead and Flame Nebulae in Orion provide breathtaking sights for astrophotographers, while Saturn's opposition in late summer will make its rings visible through even small telescopes. Earlier in the year, the rare seven-planet alignment in March was a once-in-a-generation event, not set to occur again until 2040.

## Why do Norfolk's Dark Skies Matter?

Beyond their visual appeal, dark skies play a crucial role in wildlife conservation, as many nocturnal species depend on natural darkness to survive. Reducing artificial light also benefits human health by improving sleep and well-being. Additionally, Norfolk's reputation as a prime stargazing destination supports local tourism, bringing visitors to the area's unique dark sky locations.

## Where to stargaze in Norfolk

For those eager to experience truly dark skies, several locations stand out. Salhouse Broad's Dark Skies Discovery Hub offers a dedicated platform and educational displays, while Kelling Heath is home to one of the UK's largest star parties. RSPB Titchwell Marsh allows for a combination of birdwatching and stargazing, and the Norfolk Coast Path provides expansive, low-light areas perfect for nighttime exploration.

## How to protect Norfolk's dark skies

Preserving the beauty of Norfolk's night skies is simple with mindful choices. Switching to warm, low-level outdoor lighting with shielded fixtures reduces unnecessary glare, while closing curtains at night and using dimmable LED bulbs with warm tones minimizes indoor light pollution. Joining local stargazing events raises awareness of light pollution issues, while supporting dark sky initiatives, such as those run by CPRE Norfolk, helps advocate for responsible lighting policies. Encouraging thoughtful development, where new buildings use downward-facing, energy-efficient lighting, can also make a lasting impact. Conversations with neighbours about responsible lighting choices, such as motion-activated lights and softer bulbs, can further promote awareness and collective action.

## How to get involved

If you're passionate about protecting Norfolk's dark skies, there are many ways to contribute. Volunteering with CPRE Norfolk allows you to support conservation initiatives, while attending educational events deepens understanding and connects you with like-minded individuals. Becoming a CPRE Norfolk member directly supports efforts to safeguard the countryside. Simply spreading awareness by sharing information with friends, family, and the community can also make a difference.

## See for yourself

Experiencing a truly dark sky is the best way to understand its value. By visiting Norfolk's stargazing sites and appreciating the unspoiled night sky, we reinforce the importance of protecting these spaces. Ensuring future generations can enjoy the same breathtaking views of the cosmos begins with the choices we make today.

Find out more how CPRE Norfolk actively campaigns to reduce light pollution in the Norfolk countryside by visiting - [www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/what-we-care-about/dark-skies-and-dark-landscapes/](http://www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/what-we-care-about/dark-skies-and-dark-landscapes/)



Photo - Joran Quinten, Unsplash

# Why Membership Matters

By Lisa Ashbury

Spring is a season of renewal, a time when nature reawakens, and with it, new opportunities emerge for us to shape Norfolk's countryside for the better. As a valued CPRE Norfolk member, your support is the driving force behind everything we do. But what does that really mean? What tangible impact does your membership have? Let's explore the difference you're making.

## Your Membership In Action

Collective action is powerful. Thanks to our members, we continue to protect Norfolk's landscapes and promote sustainable solutions.

**Challenging the Norwich Western Link (NWL):** The £274 million project was halted in January 2025 after Norfolk County Council withdrew its application due to environmental concerns. CPRE Norfolk remains committed to advocating for alternatives that safeguard wildlife and natural spaces.

**Supporting Parish Councils:** Through our Parish Council Alliance, we empower communities to challenge unsustainable developments and influence smarter planning policies.

**Sustainable Flood Management:** We champion natural flood solutions, hosting expert-led events and supporting local councils in mitigating climate-related risks.

## Our Key Initiatives for 2025

This year, our focus is on key initiatives that will shape the future of Norfolk's countryside:

- **Flooding Resilience & River Protection** – We are campaigning for sustainable flood prevention strategies and working to protect Norfolk's rivers from harmful developments and mismanagement, while supporting local communities in implementing practical solutions.
- **Prioritising Rooftop Solar & Energy Efficiency** – We are pressing for rooftop solar as a priority, ensuring that energy-saving measures are implemented before new energy generation projects are pursued. By promoting solar panels on existing buildings, we can help reduce the need for large-scale energy developments that impact the countryside.
- **A National Land Use Strategy** – We are calling on the government to develop a comprehensive land use strategy, ensuring that decisions on farming, development, and conservation work together in a balanced and sustainable way.
- **Better Housing Standards & Social Housing** – We believe Norfolk needs affordable, high-quality housing that meets the needs of its communities without compromising the countryside. We are campaigning for prioritising social house building and raising the standards for all new builds, ensuring they are energy-efficient and sustainable.
- **Supporting Food Growing & Local Agriculture** – Sustainable food production is a key part of Norfolk's future. We support local food-growing initiatives, from community allotments to regenerative farming, helping to strengthen local food security while preserving our rural heritage.

## How you can support the countryside in 2025

There are many ways to help protect and enhance Norfolk's countryside beyond becoming a member:

- Get involved in planning discussions by staying informed about local developments and advocating for sustainable policies. Your voice can help protect greenbelt land and ensure responsible infrastructure decisions.
- Attend CPRE Norfolk events to connect with like-minded individuals and support conservation efforts.
- Support local farmers by choosing Norfolk-grown produce, which sustains rural communities and reduces food miles.
- Reduce light pollution by using shielded outdoor lights and backing dark sky initiatives to protect wildlife and human health.
- Volunteer with CPRE Norfolk—whether through research, outreach, or community clean-ups, every effort contributes to preserving Norfolk's landscapes.

# Fostering Future Champions

By Lisa Ashbury

At CPRE Norfolk, we believe the future of our countryside depends on the passion and involvement of the next generation. Connecting children with nature isn't just about encouraging healthy habits—it's about inspiring a lifelong appreciation for the natural world and nurturing conservation leaders of tomorrow.

## Why getting outside matters

Spending time in nature sparks curiosity, whether spotting a soaring buzzard, identifying butterflies, or exploring a wildflower meadow. These experiences help children understand ecosystems and sustainability, laying the foundation for lifelong conservation values.

Beyond education, time in nature improves mental and physical well-being. Studies show it reduces stress, boosts mood, and enhances overall health. Encouraging young people to explore the countryside fosters both personal well-being and a sense of environmental responsibility.

## Challenges Facing the Next Generation

Despite these benefits, urbanisation, increased screen time, and reduced access to green spaces mean fewer young people are experiencing the countryside. CPRE Norfolk is committed to breaking down these barriers and making nature accessible to all.



## CPRE Norfolk's 2025 Initiatives

We're launching initiatives to inspire, educate, and engage young people, ensuring the countryside remains a cherished space for future generations.

### Youth Environmental Champion Award

This new award will celebrate young conservation leaders making a difference in biodiversity projects, climate action, or local campaigns. Recognising their achievements will encourage others to follow their example.

### School Partnerships and Workshops

We're partnering with Norfolk schools to deliver hands-on workshops on biodiversity, pollution prevention, and sustainability. By bringing the countryside into classrooms - and students into the countryside - we aim to make nature both accessible and engaging.

## A Shared Responsibility for the Future

As stewards of Norfolk's countryside, we must ensure its wonders are cherished for generations. By inspiring a love of nature in young people today, we lay the groundwork for a greener, brighter future. At CPRE Norfolk, we're excited to nurture tomorrow's conservation leaders and hope you'll join us in making this vision a reality.

## Our special thanks!

After years of dedicated service, we bid a heartfelt farewell to Michael Rayner, our brilliant Planning Consultant at CPRE Norfolk. Michael's expertise and unwavering commitment have been invaluable in protecting our countryside from unsustainable development. His guidance has empowered communities, shaped planning policies, and preserved Norfolk's landscapes for future generations. While he moves on to a well-earned retirement, his legacy remains.

Thank you, Michael, for your passion and dedication — you will be greatly missed!



# Volunteer Voices

By Lisa Ashbury

Our volunteers are at the heart of CPRE Norfolk. Whether it's campaigning for sustainable development, helping to protect our countryside, or supporting local communities, our volunteers bring passion and dedication to everything we do. But what inspires someone to get involved?

## “Why I volunteer” - Lisa Ashbury

“I got involved because I love the countryside and have always been fascinated by animals, the sea, rivers, and everything outdoors. I couldn't resist applying when I saw the volunteer position come up. From the very beginning, the team have been incredibly welcoming, supporting me through the onboarding process and giving me valuable insights into how the charity works and how it helps protect our local countryside.

I am very happy to be able to commit my time to help CPRE Norfolk reach its goals, and I'm especially passionate about getting young people involved and out into the countryside, just as I was when I was younger. I'm a huge fan of all things Norfolk, and though I may be a Scottish lass, my heart truly belongs here.

If you care about Norfolk's countryside, there's a place for you in CPRE Norfolk. You don't need to be an expert, just someone who loves the countryside and wants to make a difference.”

## Get Involved – Join Our Volunteer Team!

Inspired? We'd love to welcome you as a CPRE Norfolk volunteer. Whether you have a few hours a month or want to take on a more active role, there's a place for you.

Ways to get involved:

- Campaigning & Advocacy – Help shape policies that protect Norfolk's countryside.
- Community Engagement – Work with local groups and councils to support sustainable planning.
- Events & Outreach – Assist at local events and help spread awareness.
- Research & Writing – Support our work through research, writing, and creative contributions.

Interested? Get in touch with us today and find out how you can be part of CPRE Norfolk's mission.



Annie Spratt, Unsplash

Join in:  
[cprenorfolk.org.uk](https://cprenorfolk.org.uk)

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