

Report of CPRE Bedfordshire AGM Thurs 7 April 2011

Held at Stotfold Mill, Stotfold, Bedfordshire

We were greeted to Wine and Nibbles at 7pm and a chance to chat to all the attending Committee Members. I had a chance to look at the posters on display. I was pleased to see the one regarding the Covanta proposal. I have had a chance to look at both the reports that CPRE has sent to the IPC objecting to the proposal. The second report was responding to IPC the case against Covanta's proposal by further expanding on the first report. (These can be read in full on the www.cprebeds.org.uk website) I found the arguments very compelling and very detailed.

Meeting commenced at 7.30pm.

The election of Officers and Executive Committee for 2011-2012

Most of those proposed were up for re-election with three new additional executive members. All were seconded and no dissensions.

Committee Officers elected were:

Geoff Lambert	Chair
Peter Scott	Vice Chair
Alan Aplin	Hon Treasurer
Susanne Yates	Hon Secretary (replaces Maureen Hall who had resigned)

Executive Committee

Steve Halton	Re-elected
Gerry Sansom	Re-elected
Alex Munro	Newly elected
Ann May	Newly elected
Rosalie Lamburn	Newly elected

The Trustees Report and Statement of Accounts

Fundraising both Nationally and Regionally

The forthcoming new Bill for Localisation. (CPRE against it as they feel it is a threat to local planning and needs more work to be done on the finer detail.

Constitution Change

Regarding the number of committee members and Executive Committee members to make meetings quorate was proposed and passed. This change means now 9 executives are required, of which 4 must be Committee members, and 4 meetings to be held a year and 14 days notice to be given.

Any other Business

A medal was presented to Alice Crampin who has been a long-term member and also a past chairman. She has worked tirelessly for the CPRE over her life. She was delighted and gave a short speech of thanks and acceptance.

We were told there were 17 CPRE Living Awards for the last year.

Anne Collet-White, Development Officer made an impassioned plea for new members and urged us all to try to spread the word. There are several very important campaigns that are ongoing in Bedfordshire, not least the Rookery Pit South, but several others of equal importance in other areas of the County. All need people to help with these campaigns. We all know the importance of People Power.

She also spoke about the booklet that outlines the procedures on how to object to planning applications that may affect our environment. The booklet is also available online on the CPRE's website. She also mentioned the CPRE's report on the objections to Covanta's proposal that were sent to the IPC.

Restoring the Stotfold Mill

We were then introduced to Paul Redwood, a volunteer from the Stotfold Mill Preservation Trust. He explained in brief the history of the Preservation Trust and how it came into being.

After the 1992 fire, years of lobbying and negotiating followed until the Mill finally became the property of the Preservation Trust whose primary aims are:

To preserve, restore and maintain Stotfold Mill, a building of special architectural and historical interest, as a working watermill and display of rural life artefacts, for the education and benefit of the public.

To manage the conservation, protection and preservation of the adjacent Stotfold Nature Reserve and in doing so provide for the care and management of the reserve and the education of the public in the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the flora and fauna of the reserve.

After the fire in 1992 it took some years before the formation of the SPT and they were finally able to buy the ruin of the Mill for 1 penny! This happened because the developer who wanted to buy it and clear the site and build flats on it were refused planning permission and so the land became worthless, and they did not wish to restore the mill, thus the cost of 1p. What was eventually achieved is a wonderful testament to the local community of Stotfold and surrounding villages in raising over £750,000 as well as providing the army of volunteers, the tireless work of the Preservation Trust in obtaining over £350,000 from the Lottery Heritage Fund. They then set about rebuilding the Mill and getting the machinery which had survived the fire repaired and restored by Whitmore and Binyon who had made and installed the original 4.4meter wide overshot corn mill waterwheel, which is the widest in the country and the Hursting frame in 1897. They are still in business. This was opened to the public on 2 April 2011 and there is to be an official opening to be announced. They were awarded a Living Award by CPRE and also The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

The Water Meadows

The Mill is further enhanced by a varied riverside wildlife habitat which the Trust, in partnership with **Teasel**, the Stotfold conservation group, is developing in the adjacent 7-acre Mill Meadows, leased from the County Council. The Trust has planted many indigenous trees, added additional hedges and an osier bed, excavated lakes and ponds, and built an otter holt, all with the aim of eventually making the Meadows accessible to the public as an enticing place to delight future visitors.

Paul backed all this information up by showing us a slide show at the same time. (For further information you can visit the website www.stotfoldmill.com).

We then had a tour of the Mill, which is set over three floors, and now has a tea room and visitors information desk. It was working at the time, so we saw all the working parts, including the vast water wheel. They now mill and sell bags of flour from locally grown wheat. The mill is manned by volunteers including an experienced miller. It can be operated on all three floors by one man. This project has also received a Living Award from the CPRE.

Obviously as it was dark by the end of the evening I was unable to walk round the Water Meadows, but rest assured, I will be back to walk around it.