COUNTRYWISE

The countryside charity Northern Lincolnshire

Newsletter from CPRE the Countryside Charity for Northern Lincolnshire

JANUARY 2026

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Climate Change

What is our response?

Whilst scientists are agreed that we need to drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, the sad fact is that, across the world, emissions are still increasing. We are burning more and more fossil fuels. Oil, gas and coal supply over 84 per cent of global energy (global electricity generation is 60 per cent fossil fuels). All three are still rising in absolute terms, and demand for energy is rising sharply across the world. So, how does the UK, with the highest industrial electricity prices in the developed world, fare?

The UK emits **less than 1% of annual global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions**, a figure that has dropped significantly as the UK cuts domestic emissions. This reflects more on the transformation of the British economy, as we have become the leader in deindustrialisation in Europe. As a result, our carbon footprint is much larger as we import a large percentage of our manufactured goods from countries that still rely heavily on fossil fuels for their energy sources.

It is instructive to note that the emissions from Drax power station, one of the top ten polluting stations in Europe, does not count in our reported emissions, because the wood pellets it burns are imported!

With a pending environmental tragedy unfolding how can CPRE respond? As a countryside and landscape charity we need to argue strongly for the government to have a radical rethink about the role of the countryside in reducing our carbon footprint. We need to continue to promote planting more trees and hedgerows, taking better care of our soils and restoring peatlands. These actually suck carbon from the air and store it in the ground.

We also need to safeguard our remaining farmland to boost biodiversity and ensure the UK's food security. Unfortunately, our most productive agricultural land is at high risk of flooding and research from this year shows that farms around our towns and cities are vanishing at an alarming rate.

Making the best use of our finite supply of land means, taking a smarter approach to renewables, infrastructure and housing. Our agricultural land is precious and we can't afford to keep wasting these opportunities to put solar on roofs, not prime farmland and building houses on greenfield sites, when there is so much brownfield land that could be developed first.

THE COST OF TRANSITION TO RENEWABLE ENERGY

With the increasing uptake of electric vehicles and the aspiration of our local MPs for Northern Lincolnshire to become an AI growth zone, with one of Europe's largest AI data centre clusters, where is all the electricity going to come from? The answer is of course, nuclear and renewable energy, but what about reliability and cost?

Renewable energy now provides more than half of the UK's electricity, and its reliability has improved significantly. But the system still depends on gas-fired power stations and electricity imports during periods of low wind or weak sunshine. Grid bottlenecks, limited storage capacity and the challenge of balancing an intermittent supply continue to expose structural weaknesses.

While renewables often appear cheap on paper, those headline figures typically exclude the wider system costs. Wind and solar are variable, low-density and geographically dispersed, requiring extensive new transmission lines, large-scale battery and long-duration storage, and a reliable fleet of gas plants to fill the gaps when output drops.

The result is a power system that now needs around 120 gigawatts of installed capacity to meet the same demand that 60GW covered before the rapid expansion of renewables. That means more pylons, more grid reinforcement and more backup infrastructure — all of which feed directly into household and industrial bills. These system costs are rising, not falling.

And the trend is accelerating. As more renewables are added, their system costs increase. Meanwhile, the real cost of gas continues to decline, something we will not be able to take advantage of, due to 20-year contracts for offshore wind.

A future powered largely by renewables should, in theory, deliver cheaper electricity than today's gas-fired grid. Gas remains costly to extract and transport. But the government faces a political and economic headache: during the transition, households are effectively paying twice.

Consumers are still footing the bill for electricity priced around the cost of gas, even as they simultaneously fund the multibillion-pound build-out of new clean-energy infrastructure through their bills.

Ministers have offered a £150 rebate to ease the pressure, but the underlying costs continue to climb. Analysts estimate that the annual contribution a typical household makes toward the capital costs of new renewable projects will rise from £84 today to £141 by 2030.

Households face a growing stack of energy-related charges. They will pay £19 a year towards construction of the Sizewell C nuclear plant and another £20 for the rollout of smart meters. A further £53 will be added to electricity bills to help cover the £70 billion upgrade of the UK's ageing transmission network.

By the end of the decade, families are expected to

shoulder an additional £90 annually to cover the cost of curtailing renewable generation during periods of excess supply — a consequence of a grid still unable to handle the surging volumes of green power.

CPRE supports the growth of renewable energy, in the right place, but it would be helpful if politicians were transparent about the true cost of the transition. Then again, they will also have to address another problem and additional cost. By 2050 we will have to manage the decommissioning of solar panels and wind turbines!

Annual Presentation Evening 2025

The Annual Presentation Evening, held at Scawby Village Hall on Wednesday 1 October was a very well-attended and successful event. Thanks to our sponsors Quickline and InternetTY, winners received generous prizes and attractive certificates and plaques.

Scawby, winners of the large village competition, provided refreshments and all prize winners spoke eloquently of their efforts and the success they had achieved.

Barton (see below) was deserved winner of the small town award after narrowly missing out on the top spot in the past few years.

Barnetby (right) scored a hat trick of wins, whilst Low Burnham (far right)

Best small town winners – Barton upon Humber

Barnetby won the Best Medium Village for the third year

continued their record run of success with another marvellous display of planting. With every property getting involved in a splendid effort of community involvement.

The evening was also a chance

Epworth Ecoists receiving their litter picking award

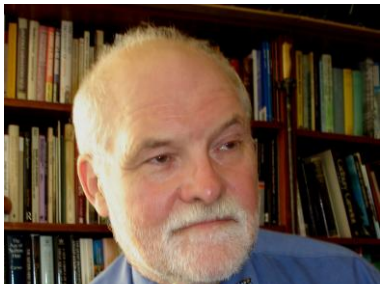
to recognise some of our dedicated litter pickers, including the Epworth Ecoists (see above) and Zac and Ellie who set up Pickwalks, inspiring groups in the Grimsby area to pick up litter whilst walking their dogs, as well as organising larger-scale litter picks.

Low Burnham were the Best Small Village winners

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

The countryside charity Northern Lincolnshire

CPRE Northern Lincolnshire's Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday 4th October at St John's Hall Brigg. The speaker was Dr Kevin Leahy who gave a highly entertaining talk about 'Some of my favourite things.' With his vast experience and knowledge, he highlighted some of the most interesting things that he has dealt with during his career in Archaeology.



Rooftop Solar Campaign Success

CPRE have secured a campaign win with the government now planning for solar panels to be fitted on most new-build homes in England by 2027.

We have been campaigning to unlock the potential that millions of our roofs have for solar – on suitable new homes, existing commercial buildings and large car parks – and protect our countryside at the same time.

As we transition to clean power, solar power is a key part of the energy mix. But at present, a vast amount of potential space for solar is being wasted on our rooftops. It seems the obvious solution to meet the demand without damaging our most beautiful and tranquil landscapes and using valuable farmland for huge solar arrays.

Having won part of the battle on rooftop solar CPRE are continuing to argue for the following issues to be addressed.

- Improvements to the system that allows and incentivises households to sell the energy they generate through rooftop solar back to the grid – the 'Smart Export Guarantee'
- Improve and expand 'Power Purchase Agreements', which enable homeowners to get rooftop solar installed for free in exchange for long-term agreements with clean energy suppliers
- A streamlined planning process that includes fewer steps if people want to install rooftop solar

We need to continue the campaign to put more solar on rooftops and avoid using our precious farmland.

PLANNING HELP – If you have any concerns about local plans or potential development in your area, CPRE Northern Lincolnshire can offer professional help or advice using our planning experts. Please contact David Rose davidjohnrose@gmail.com or jenny.haynes@btinternet.com giving brief details of your issue or concern.

JOIN US

Countrywise is the Newsletter of CPRE, the countryside charity – Northern Lincolnshire. The branch is one of over 40 county branches throughout England, with 65,000 supporters nationally. Joining CPRE is open to all and we positively welcome involvement from supporters in all of our activities and campaigns.

If you would like to learn more about us, our website address is cprenorthernlincs.org.uk

If you would like to be more involved, please contact either:

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