COUNTRYWISE

Campaign to Protect Rural England Northern Lincolnshire

Newsletter from CPRE the Countryside Charity for Northern Lincolnshire

NOVEMBER 2026

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Opposition mounts to more Data Centres

England is facing a surge in applications for large-scale data centres as demand for AI infrastructure grows. Yet there is no national plan to determine where these developments should be located or how they should be designed and operated. Without proper safeguards, the countryside risks becoming a dumping ground for vast, energy and water-intensive facilities, placing increasing pressure on landscapes, nature, tranquillity and local communities.

We could be heading towards an unprecedented land-use crisis. That's why CPRE is calling for an immediate pause on unchecked data centres until a clear strategic framework is in place.

Locally, the approved AI data centre campus at Elsham Tech Park will rank among the largest of its kind in the UK. At full build-out, the site would include up to 15 hyperscale data centre buildings across 176 hectares, delivering more than 1.5 million square metres of floorspace and up to 1GW of computing capacity. CPRE's objections included: carbon emissions and energy demand, water supply pressures, noise and light





pollution, loss of privacy for local residents and visual impact on the local landscape.

The project attracted more than 380 objection letters but was nevertheless approved by North Lincolnshire Council. They also approved a new data centre, the Humber Tech Park, on a 76-hectare site at South Killingholme. A further data centre, at Conesby, a 20-acre greenfield site on Normanby Road, Scunthorpe, is also in the pipeline. There are also plans to use land at British Steel to build another data centre.

CPRE will continue to raise objections to the proliferation of data centres in our area, as we support the national campaign to insist that the government undertake a thorough review of the pressures on land use, and the energy and water required to support data centres.

This issue is becoming critical in our area as there are plans for a Northern Lincolnshire AI Growth Zone, led by North Lincolnshire Council and developer Greystoke. The project aims to establish the region as a major European hub for Artificial Intelligence and cloud capacity.

Presentation Evening 2026





CPRE Northern Lincolnshire's annual Presentation Evening was held at Worlaby on Wednesday 30 September, and the village hall was packed with award-winners and supporters for the special occasion. The Mayor of North Lincolnshire, Councillor Janet Lee, presented the awards, which were again, generously sponsored by InternetTY and Quickline.

Low Burnham (see above) were winners, for a record 7th year, of the Small Village category and they also won the Best Community planting in that section. First time winners of the Medium Village category, Ulceby, are shown below left, whilst the winners of the large village, Belton, are shown below right.





The evening was a celebration of all that is best about Northern Lincolnshire. Winners spoke passionately about the improvements they had made to their local environment and the community spirit that had been such an important part of the competition and their success.

This was especially true of small-town winners, Waltham who picked up awards for their cemetery and their splendid war memorial.

As well as the prizes for the Best Kept Village Competition there were Environment Awards and Litter Champion Awards (see below).



Standing up for Stallingborough



Brigg Litter pickers



Hibaldstow Litter pickers

The Special Award for creating a suitable celebration of 100 years of CPRE's work as an environmental charity was won by Barnetby-le-Wold. Their interpretation was simple but highly effective; a metal figure sitting on the bench, reading about the formation of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England in the Barnetby Times from 1926 (see below). It was great that the two young lads from the village, Jake Broughton and Tom Lindley, who designed and made the very imaginative sculpture, were able to attend in person to receive the award.



Campaign to Protect Rural England
Northern Lincolnshire

HISTORY OF THE BEST KEPT VILLAGE COMPETITION IN OUR AREA

This year's Presentation Evening was a special occasion, as we were also celebrating 50 years of the Best Kept Village in Northern Lincolnshire. However, one of the residents from Goxhill, who attended the Presentation Evening, had evidence that the village took part in the competition before 1976, as shown in the photograph from 1963 below.



This was the annual Best Kept Village competition organised by the Lincolnshire branch of CPRE and Community Lincs, and first introduced in 1962, fourteen years prior to the Northern Lincolnshire branch taking on the responsibility for our area.

It was good to see evidence that Goxhill were setting the standard in Lincolnshire in 1963 and they also won in 1966, with the winner's plaque shown in the photograph below.



The history of the early years of the Best Kept Village competition in Northern Lincolnshire is rather patchy, and we would be delighted to hear from anyone who has details that we could add to our records.

GREENING THE GRID



The government plans to double the amount of electricity to connect from where it's generated to where it's used. Building and upgrading this new transmission infrastructure is already happening – it's what National Grid is calling the 'Great Grid Upgrade'. In our area the North Humber to High Marnham project is already well advanced and will result in pylons and overhead transmission lines for 90 kilometres.

CPRE is campaigning for the 'Great Grid Upgrade' to have the least environmental impact and the greatest benefit for people, nature and the countryside. We have produced a manifesto offering solutions as detailed below:

1. Have a 'national conversation' to produce a sensible and agreed plan, rather than a piecemeal approach.
2. Plan to develop energy-intensive industries, such as data centres, closer to where energy is generated.
3. Use smarter cable materials and superconductors that increase efficiency by allowing existing electricity lines to carry more power, and use smaller 'T'-pylons and/or other pylon designs that can reduce visual impact for local communities.
4. Build more of the Grid offshore, using cables under the sea.
5. Protect sensitive landscapes and sites.
6. Ensure all major infrastructure projects contribute to improving landscapes and the countryside.

If you want to find out more go to https://www.cpre.org.uk/greening-the-grid/

National Planning Changes

The countryside charity
Northern Lincolnshire

With the publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the government imposed rigid nationwide rules on housing targets and infrastructure. The reforms reduce local democracy, override local policies and shift decisions to a nationally set framework.

On other issues that matter most to rural communities, the government has taken a different course. The definition of the controversial 'grey belt' concept has been expanded yet further, while the Housing Delivery Test remains in place, keeping councils locked into mandatory housing targets and a five-year land supply.

There are also doubts about whether higher housing targets alone will significantly improve affordability. Housebuilders may control the rate at which homes are released onto the market, meaning that planning permissions do not always translate into immediate housing supply. Consequently, some critics question whether the reforms will deliver the



scale of affordability improvements promised. The NPPF also hands developers a default 'yes' for homes close to railway stations, regardless of whether they have reliable and regular services or the schools, GP surgeries and shops required to support expanding communities. This opens the door to speculative, developer-led sprawl on greenfield and rural land.

The NPPF also includes provision for data centres to be given fast-tracked permission without proper regard for landscape and environmental impacts. This hands big tech firms a free run at some of our most beautiful landscapes.

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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