



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

Press Release

14 November 2014

Campaign to Protect Rural England president Sir Andrew Motion visits Avonside *CPRE president examines threats to landscape and impact of housing and infrastructure projects*



CPRE President Sir Andrew Motion talks to local CPRE campaigner and farmer, Jill Britten, about threats to the green belt around Bristol (photo credit, Benjamin Halfpenny)

The president of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Sir Andrew Motion visited the CPRE branches of Wiltshire, Somerset and Avonside to discuss countryside issues with local volunteers.

In a whistle-stop tour of the region, taking in the West Country's glorious landscapes, Sir Andrew met with branch representatives and other activists to discuss past and current concerns.

Arriving in Whitchurch, Avonside, Sir Andrew met with Jill Britten of Whitewood Farm, a farmer of organic beef in the Green Belt, and local campaigners. Jill has refused considerable offers from developers for her land, while the local CPRE branch has been continuing to campaign against development of the surrounding Green Belt.

Sir Andrew Motion, president of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, said of the visit:

"It has been fantastic to meet CPRE members and other countryside activists. Their work to protect and enhance the West Country's beautiful landscapes is invaluable. Having been created with the assumption of permanence, the Green Belt is vital in preventing urban sprawl and preserving beautiful landscapes like that around Whitchurch.

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"As with the case of Jill Britten of Whitewood Farm, it is absolutely wrong that farmers and people who own land should be pressured into considering offers for land supposedly protected against development. Both Green Belt and well-managed agricultural land is crucial to the balance and vitality of the countryside."

Georgie Bigg, chair of CPRE Avonside, comments:

"Our area has the unique benefit of two superb cities surrounded by Green Belt. They are set in glorious countryside and are enjoyed by both locals and visitors alike. Bath is a World Heritage Site and Bristol is European Green Capital for 2015. The absence of development on the edge of these cities, largely due to the presence of the Green Belt, keeps them contained. It allows the countryside to be in easy reach of residents for their leisure and enjoyment, but also available to produce wonderful local food.

"This resource is now under threat. Developers are targeting green fields around our cities and villages resulting in unnecessary urban sprawl. What is more, local people feel the planning system is letting them down. The Government promised a new focus on 'Localism' and more power for communities. The new National Planning Policy Framework suggested local people would have an influence on the future of their neighbourhoods. It is very clear, however, that the balance of power is still with the developers, communities are not being listened to, and the countryside around Bristol and Bath is under threat."

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For further photographs please contact national office press officer Benjamin Halfpenny on 020 7981 2819 / benjaminh@cpre.org.uk.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) fights for a better future for the English countryside. We work locally and nationally to protect, shape and enhance a beautiful, thriving countryside for everyone to value and enjoy. Our members are united in their love for England's landscapes and rural communities, and stand up for the countryside, so it can continue to sustain, enchant and inspire future generations. Founded in 1926, President: Sir Andrew Motion, Patron: Her Majesty The Queen. www.cpre.org.uk