

Cambridge Past Present and Future
(formerly The Cambridge Preservation Society)
& **Wandlebury Country Park**
in Crisis



The Cambridge Preservation Society was founded in 1928 ‘to preserve and protect any place or building in or near Cambridge which is of beauty or historic interest’. Over many years of careful husbandry the society acquired a portfolio of land and historic buildings. It had a distinguished record in preserving the beauty of Cambridge and managing its own properties, especially its flagship, Wandlebury Country Park, which was acquired partly by public subscription and partly by a gift from the Gray family.

In 2009 the name of the charity was changed to **Cambridge Past Present and Future**.

In our view, and that of many members, since then it has profoundly lost direction, so much so that we fear that current, secretly planned and activated policies threaten Wandlebury and undermine the aims for which the Society was founded.

=Wandlebury is at risk =

We are calling for an Extraordinary General Meeting of the members

Our concerns are summarised overleaf.

If you are a CPPF member and share our concerns, please support our call for an EGM and for changes in the membership of the Board by **SIGNING OUR DEMAND FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING**, and **SUPPORTING THE RESOLUTIONS WE WANT TO SEE VOTED ON** at that EGM.

For more information, to sign up to our demand, and/or for a proxy voting form, please contact:

savewbury@btinternet.com

CPPF & Wandlebury Country Park in Crisis

Our concerns can be summarised as follows:

1. Lack of consultation and active concealment from the membership of ‘highly contentious plans’ (the Chairman’s phrase)

The plans for Wandlebury Country Park and its Ranger team, described below, were deliberately concealed from the membership at the Annual General Meeting in October 2014 and also from the Properties Committee of the charity, which has the specific task of overseeing the management of the properties. The 2012-2018 plan for Wandlebury has never been made available to the members.

Following a public meeting of protest held in Stapleford on January 26th the charity has at last initiated some proposals to meet and “inform” the membership but these “consultation meetings” come after the facts, are too late to prevent the serious damage that has already been done, and have no power to change anything. Only an EGM can force the urgently needed changes.

2. Inappropriate use of funds

The renamed charity has expanded its management staff from one to no less than six, five of them ‘Senior Managers’, who receive substantial salaries. To provide for these managers, the charity has grandiose plans to expand their office accommodation in the Stable Block at Wandlebury with little or no benefit to visitors. To fund this development the charity is planning to sell a beautiful and historic house in Orchard Street in clear contradiction to the aims of the charity.

The published accounts of the charity are opaque; they provide much less detail than other, comparable charities. Nonetheless it is clear that a very high proportion of spending, well over 50%, goes on staff salaries and less than 5% on maintenance of its properties, again in clear contradiction to its purpose. The CPPF statement that “no-one earns more than £60K” is not reassuring in that respect. Other charities spend up to 90% their income on their charitable purposes, and less than 10% on running their charities.

3. Mismanagement of the charity’s major property holdings

Wandlebury Country Park (WCP) has been managed by resident Rangers for the past 40 years. It is one of Cambridge’s most beautiful, magical and well-loved places. Repeated visitor surveys have shown that nearly 90% of visitors are fully satisfied and want no changes.

In March 2014 sixteen ancient and beautiful trees within the Ring were felled. No proper notice was given and there was no consideration whatsoever of conservation. This action included the destruction of bat and badger habitats, both protected species. When challenged, it was stated that this destructive work was necessary for the safety of the public but this assertion was contradicted by the arboriculture report. Plans for further extensive tree felling are currently on hold.

On November 17, without any prior warning or consultation, the three highly skilled and experienced full-time Rangers, each with 14 years’ service and held in the highest esteem by the public, were told that their jobs were to be made redundant. No remotely adequate explanation was given, merely vague assertions of the need for ‘greater flexibility’ and ‘seasonal differences’ in staffing. The Rangers are to be replaced by a single unskilled warden and some part-time and volunteer staff. Two of the three currently employed part-time Rangers have now resigned. All practical tasks are to be done by contractors, an inefficient and expensive option. The park will be unsafe, conservation will suffer and the animals will not be properly cared for without a resident expert Ranger. These management changes are destructive and inhumane.

At the public meeting in January there was near unanimous support for a petition which demanded a revised plan for the park with retention of the full-time Rangers and proper priority given to conservation. This petition was ignored and the Rangers’ internal appeal was rejected.

Coton Countryside Reserve (CCR) Formally opened 10 years ago, CCR received a large bequest from the Martin family. In spite of this, the car park is a mess, the reserve remains bleak and unwelcoming and it is usually deserted. This is not proper management.

In conclusion, Cambridge PPF uses its funds badly, mismanages its properties and has treated its loyal employees with contempt. In our opinion, it is time for the membership to hold the Board of Trustees and the senior managers of the charity to account.