

Environmental Committee Report 2014

The LRA Environmental Committee take an interest in all the ways the residents' of Leatherhead interact with their surroundings and are exposed to the delights and/or nuisances in this setting. While we cannot take on every cause, we can give advice and support as various groups take their concerns forward. In carrying out our work we want Leatherhead to be as good as it can be.

Since the 2012 Olympics we have had a focus on the Town Centre. At one time there was a hope that, once again, there would be flowers and shrubs up and down the High Street to soften and brighten the town setting. Since the MVDC's High Street plans are on the back burner, we have taken on the planting of small neglected spaces. We identified the 18 abandoned planters on Nat West Corner as a location worthy of our attention since they could be viewed from all directions when entering the High Street.

Leatherhead Open Gardens

In order to fund the planting schemes, we are now in our third year of holding Leatherhead Open Gardens. This year, we have teamed up with another environmental group, the Friends of the Parish Church. The event has been embraced by local people and we are proud to announce the annual event with 11 gardens which will be open between 11 am and 5 pm on Sunday, 8 June.

Improvement of Town Centre Environment

We have encouraged businesses and restaurants to plant and add colour to the town by announcing a Brighter Leatherhead competition. Patrick Gardner was the recipient of the Trophy in 2012. We sent thank you notes with a token of our appreciation to those who participated. In 2013, we recognised the tremendous contribution the four Town Centre pubs made with their excellent planting schemes. Certificates of Appreciation were presented to each pub in October 2013. We will continue to show our appreciation to Town Centre businesses.

Trees

The most recent new project of the committee is the identification of groups of trees that would be missed if they were removed from the Leatherhead landscape. These trees were listed because of an awareness that trees were disappearing at regular intervals: some due to disease and old age; some in preparation for the development of a site. With a view to obtaining some protection for these groups of trees, their identification was noted. The tree groups identified will appear at the end of this report.

Although the list was compiled months ago, it was not determined who should be its recipient and, perhaps, the protector of the trees.

As if things were not bad enough, the winter storms have caused the further loss of some 2000 trees in the county. Some of these trees had to be dealt with rapidly because they were obstructing paths and roadways. If you are aware of trees that have come down, that the Councils may not be aware of, please let us know. This will make information on the subject more exact.

For the above reasons, when Cllr Tim Hall approached the committee concerning the replanting and the addition of trees to the landscape, it could not have come at a better moment.

Cllr Hall joined the Env. sub committee meeting on 7 April, and made us aware of funds that are available for tree planting. We are, therefore, interested in having residents make us aware of places where trees are needed. Initially, two or three locations will be identified--one in the north, one in the south and/or the town centre.

Paul Manwaring, Area Maintenance Engineer for SCC and and Alex Bagnall, MV Parks Department Tree Officer, have been suggested as possible contacts for the project. Cllr Hall will make the initial contact.

Screening of Waterworks Hawks Hill (more about trees)

LRA members collected over 200 signatures on a petition to the Sutton and East Surrey Water Company asking that the company screen their unsightly buildings very prominently positioned in the Green Belt. The petition was presented to Anthony Ferrar, the

Managing Director in September. The LRA lent support to this effort.

Since that time, the water company, some of our councillors and LRA members have met three times attempting to put the situation right. We remain quietly optimistic as we explore the way forward.

Forty Foot Road

One of the most frequently mentioned concerns at LRA open meetings and Environmental meetings over the past two years has been the potholes in Forty Foot Road. They were of particular concern because Woodlands School needs to use the road to access their buildings. The delicate state of health of the students who attend this Special Needs school brought significant weight to the argument that SCC should take action. All the organisations located on Forty Foot Road and those who access facilities via the road have been concerned for year about the bad state of the road. A member of the LRA, Flip Cargill, gained the support of Cllr Tim Hall and together they called a meeting last summer.

From that meeting sprang a group galvanised into action. The very able leadership of Chairman, Mark Francis, has resulted in a significant part of Forty Foot Road being resurfaced in February. It will be adopted in a few months' time and will be followed by the adoption of Beech Holt. The group continues to work toward getting the Epsom end of the road adopted.

Village Green Status for Leach Grove Wood

After two years of gathering signatures and data concerning the wood, Flip Cargill reports that SCC's Helen Gilbert has informed her of the following:

"I have been advised that the above application will need testing at a non-statutory Public Inquiry. The Inquiry is likely to be for at least one week and I will be in touch again shortly to canvass all parties' availability. Please note that as the Registration Authority is already holding two public inquiries in June and July, it is unlikely that this inquiry will take place before September at the earliest"

In addition, FC writes: meanwhile the wood is alive with kids as well as squirrels and wildlife and some debris from the storms. Regrettably, there has also been some fly tipping. Clearly, this is not a place to dump garden waste."

Participation in MV Green Belt Release and Housing Consultations

Members of the Environmental Committee participated fully in the consultations to express concerns that our environment would be changed beyond recognition if some of the sites were released. The sale and development of the Barnett Wood Lane Allotments for the development of 500 houses was one particular concern but we also supported all the other residents groups as they fought their own corners. Save South Leatherhead and residents of Randall's Road were very active.

Bee friendly spaces - Government Pollinator Strategy - Community involvement

Most people know our bees are in trouble. The Government has announced its National Draft Pollinator Strategy, the Bee action plan that Friends of the Earth have been asking for. We can all, community groups and companies, help to create bee friendly habitats in our local environments.

Litter/Fly tipping/dog mess

We hope that our members are not in any way involved with the above. However, some people are. Perhaps you have a solution to these problems? Leach Grove, the wood near the recreation ground, and the wood beside the hospital car park are all being used in an antisocial way. Poplar Road, the Woods and Windfield are all being affected by irresponsible dog owners.

Environment group's contact: In order to end on a positive note, may we point out that:

We take pride in being one of the - dare we say it! - greenest RAs. We have made contact with many groups across the county who are working to ensure we all care for and protect our environment, which is essential for our continued wellbeing. We aim to strengthen our contacts with and share our ideas with these many groups.