

Chairman's Address to LRA meeting on 13th May 2024

Good evening everybody and isn't it nice to be able to arrive here in daylight and relative warmth!

Perhaps I should start with the most momentous news which is that MVDC's partner for the Transform Leatherhead project, Kier, have now engaged a firm called "Design South East" to meet with key stakeholders in Leatherhead so as to get an accurate picture of what we would like, or, perhaps, not like! I was invited, but at the last minute, Kier said that they only wanted one person per group and so I asked Martyn to step in as he is much more familiar with the planning world than I am. He is now here this evening, "fresh" or should I say "exhausted" from his day walking around and discussing Leatherhead.

Meanwhile, a new group is springing into life in Leatherhead. It is called TLC2030 and is centred on The Hub in the old school in North Leatherhead. The Organisers, Eddie McCardle and Bill Donnelly, together with others in their team are in the middle of transforming that old building. They want to do a lot of painting most of which will be done by volunteers but are also envisaging some new building which, as I understand it, will be offered to an outside contractor. There is already a sewing room with very modern machines for hire at extremely reasonable rates and an art room with plenty of space. I am sure many of you will have visited or just called in at the café where delicious buns and sandwiches are available together with light-hearted chat.

For some time I have been heralding the arrival of some planters to improve the image of the Plough Roundabout. There are even four sites marked out and a quotation has been received for the work which was to have been paid for by CIL or the "Community Infrastructure Levy." However, at the last minute some complications have arisen and until these are resolved the project is in limbo. I will report further when matters move on.

The 5th August will be the date of our next meeting, and PC Ewan Keen and PC Oliver Storey will be coming to speak to us. If you have any particular questions or problems that you would like them to discuss, I am sure it would help if you wrote to me first with them, and then I could pass them on. On a more general note, if any of you have an idea about someone you would like to hear speak at one of our meetings, please do tell me so we can discuss it.

Our 2023 accounts have been compiled by our Treasurer Paula Sabine and are currently kindly being "examined" by LRA member and qualified accountant, Jo Slater. They will be presented for your information at our next meeting.

I am sure you will be relieved to hear that an Enforcement Order plus a heavy fine has been placed on the owners of both the former Building Supplies at the top of the High Street and on the landowner of the former chapel on the Reigate Road. Also, a new tenant has apparently been secured for 5-19 Church Street, namely McDonalds. Finally, last week the

owners of Brook Willow Farm, just off Randalls Road, appealed against the non-determination of their application for “established use” in respect of their motorcross track. Complaints have been raised by people on both sides of the River Mole about the alleged noise this creates

Finally, I return to the problem of who would like to be at the helm of the L.R.A. when I leave. This is a very important, voluntary post. I am hoping to remain until the end of 2025 (i.e. 31st December) by which time the new Local Plan should be in place and the form of the Transform Leatherhead project settled. However, Surrey is an active area and there is bound to be a never-ending stream of further, perhaps smaller, applications to be examined and commented on. December 31st 2025 might seem a long way off, but, in fact, now would be an ideal time to join us and “test the water.” Someone who is about to retire from a very busy job or who has already done so and is finding time heavy on their hands would be ideal. Also, of course, you need to be enthusiastic about Leatherhead and I may have to leave sooner!

And now, I will move over and offer the mic to our Chief Planning Director, Martyn Williams, who has spent the whole day today in the Institute hearing about the latest plans for Transform Leatherhead. He will then hand over to our main speaker, David Stoves. David was so alarmed by the growth of scamming on the Internet and its resultant harm to unwary users that he undertook a course so as to be in a position to guide and warn us all. Martyn, over to you.