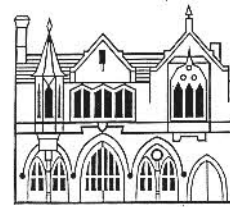


The Citizen



Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association
Working for the social and civic life of our community

March 2007

Annual General Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the 82nd Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association will be held in the Wellcome Great Hall of the Town Hall, Berkhamsted, on

Wednesday 21st March 2007 at 8 pm.

Nominations for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Membership Secretary, Independent Examiner and Committee Members should be submitted to the Hon. Secretary (Miranda Cummins, 27 North Road, Berkhamsted, HP4 3DU) not later than 24 hours before the AGM. Consent of the person nominated must be obtained previously.

Agenda

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Apologies for absence | 5. Election of Officers |
| 2. Minutes of the last AGM | 6. Election of Committee Members |
| 3. Chairman's Report | 7. Appointment of Independent Examiners |
| 4. Treasurer's Report | 8. Any other business |

Following coffee:

BCA Environment Awards 2006

There were a number of nominations for the Environment Award for the year 2006 representing a wide variety of entries. The selected short list below, will be illustrated at the award presentation prior to the winners being announced.

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | 18 & 19 Hunters Park | - 2 det. Houses r/o Loughrigg, Gravel Path |
| 2 | Gilhams Court, 343-351, High St. | - apartments, etc.between Cross Oak Rd and Queens Rd |
| 3 | 3 - 4, Church Gates, Church Lane | - conversion to 2 new dwellings |
| 4 | Park House & land, Park St. | - two new dwellings |
| 5 | Hillcroft, Kingsdale Road | - two detached houses with four garages |
| 6 | Castle Mill, Lower Kings Road | - conversion to 7 apartments plus construction of further five new apartments and parking area |
| 7 | Headlands House, Byways | - replacement dwelling and double garage |
| 8 | Waitrose, St Johns Well Lane | - extension and alterations |
| 9 | 7, Shrublands Road | - formation of access and off-road parking |
| 10 | 27/28, Oakwood (r/o) | - new dwelling and new access to Shootersway |
| 11 | Bobbys, 80-82, High Street | - replacement signage |
| 12 | 24 Kitsbury Road | - conversion of shop to house |
| 13 | Skate Board Park | |

A member of the Berkhamsted Police Community Team will give an update on their current activities.

Open Forum

Finally there will be an Open Forum in which members will be able to ask questions and make comments. It is hoped that as many members as possible will stay to make this a lively end to the proceedings!

The present committee would warmly welcome other members to join them and look forward to additional nominations for committee members.

Chairman's Column

See Chairman's Report, to be distributed at the AGM.

I hope to see many of you at the AGM on Wednesday March 21st (please note the change of date) with your questions, criticisms and ideas for the Open Forum.

Activities Sub-Committee

Rita Jones - Chairman reports:

The time lag between writing and distribution of the Newsletter means that the February meeting has already taken place.

Sadly, Margaret Edinburgh, Chairman of the Berkhamsted branch of the Royal National Lifeboat Institute, who was to have up-dated us on 'The Spirit of Berkhamsted' and the RNLI, has just come out of hospital and so has had to postpone this talk. I am sure you will join me in wishing her a speedy recovery. We look forward to hearing her later this year or some time in 2008.

As usual, my committee rose to the occasion and I hope that 'A Committee Miscellany', based on new and proposed changes to legislation concerning DIY, repairs, house sales and the green belt, will provide a useful, informative and entertaining replacement.

Norman Cutting, an electrician, will explain how new legislation affects electrical DIY and repairs and our legal eagle, Graham Spittle, will explain the effects on DIY repairs and house sales.

Jenny Habib, who is involved with other committees concerned with the Green Belt, will tell us how it will be affected by proposed legislation changes.

We hope this informal evening will produce lots of questions and a lively discussion.

And now for something completely different:

The next event, (after the AGM), is a talk and tasting "Coffee with a Local Flavour".

It will be given by Colin Smith, who is Managing Director of a local coffee company (in Hemel Hempstead).

Make a note of the date, Thursday April 12th, at 8pm as usual, in the Sessions Hall.

New Year's Day Ramble –

a short report by *Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby*

It was a glorious mild cloudless morning, just perfect for a walk. Nearly 50 other walkers thought the same. The group included a girl of nine and 5 dogs. There was even a woman who had travelled back on the 01:34 from Euston having been up in London to be one of the 350,000 to welcome in the New Year.

Our leader was again Bill Willett, who led us up past Castle Hill, through the Alpine Meadow to the Bridgewater Monument and down into Aldbury in time to watch Morris Dancers outside the Valliant Trooper. He stopped at various points to give us the benefit of his knowledge of the buildings passed, the local area and history of the Commons enclosure.

The going underfoot was surprisingly dry and not as much mud, as I would have expected bearing in mind all the rain we had had over the weekend.

We were a smaller group coming back. It may have been because it is not easy for the two pubs to serve such large groups of walkers quickly in addition to their other customers. However, congratulations to both the Greyhound and Valliant Trooper for the service they provided. Although there were some who had decided not to do the return leg, there were others who joined us. We did not come back via Norcott, Dudswell and the canal but a more pleasant way by coming over the top and Northchurch Common and finally approaching Berkhamsted to the north of Bridgewater School, giving three chances to break off depending on which part of Berkhamsted, the walkers lived. On the way back we saw several deer in the scrub.

It was a wonderful start to the New Year, and a big thank you to Bill Willett who has now led walks for several years. On a personal note, as Membership Secretary, if any of your friends who were with you are not members, perhaps you could persuade them, like one of the walkers to join, by contacting me!



Beech tree covered in hoar frost January 2007
(oh, how I love/hate this tree!)

Revised East of England Plan (EEP) for the Dacorum Area -

Comments by our Town Amenities Sub-Committee

When the original EEP was being considered in late 2002, the Association sent in a comment on the plan which:-

- a) Questioned the fact that Hertfordshire was included in the E of E Region as Hertfordshire sat uncomfortably with the other counties, and considered that if a regional authority was required it should consist of a "northern outer London" belt rather than the current disposition.
- b) Questioned the proposals for development particularly in southern Herts in relation to transport, water, employment, health, and education.
- c) Concluded that any such further development should only be considered when the solutions to these various problems were resolved and funding was available in advance of such development and not following on afterwards.

Since 2002 four major events have occurred which demonstrate the accuracy of our observations:-

- a) The Hospital at Hemel Hempstead is being severely downgraded and moved to an old and congested site in Watford which will not be ready for a number of years and certainly will not be able to handle the increased population proposed in the current plan. A second hospital planned for the Hatfield/Welwyn Area has been shelved indefinitely leaving a significant gap in patient capacity.
- b) We have suffered the worst drought for many years and no solution (except to pray for more rain) is currently available.
- c) The Buncefield explosion has increased unemployment in the area
- d) A number of schools are being threatened with closure at a time when the plan proposes an increase in dwellings of 18000 (say a population increase of 40,000 - up 20%).

While one might not be able to "lay the blame" for the drought or Buncefield upon the planning authority, the question of the drought, the fragility of employment, and in particular, the current proposals for the hospitals and the schools (which are a direct result of government policy) show how out of context the current proposals are to this area. There is a need for a new plan, properly coordinated by all departments of government, to be prepared and submitted for acceptance by the local electorate.

We consider that the intervening five years have fully justified the criticisms that the Association tabled in their original comments.

Berkhamsted Access Committee

Norman Cutting attends and reports:

This committee meets every 3 months and addresses the concerns and problems of the disabled in Berkhamsted. Similar committees are held in Tring and Hemel Hempstead.

Ongoing items include improving access to the ground floor in W H Smiths, encouraging the use of 'Shopmobility' within the town - available every day now contrary to the sign outside the Civic Centre - and reinstating the 'lost' parking spaces in Lower Kings Road car park.

More information on our web-site.

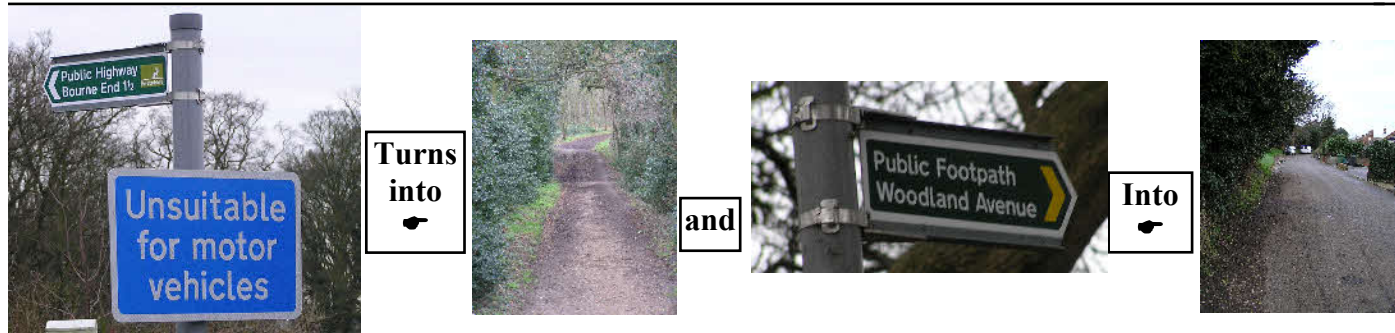
Dacorum Environment Forum

Norman Cutting reports:

The last meeting, held on 11th January, highlighted the difficulties that the Borough Council has by being 'informed' by the East of England Regional Assembly that the Borough can easily accommodate another 18,000 dwellings by 2031 and the National Government 'suggesting' that all these dwellings will be required to meet population increases.

Green belt and open space are considered as 'undeveloped' and ripe for 'improvement'. It also transpires that the East of England had a 70% increase in immigration over a 3 year period just prior to the decision being taken and is reflected in the numbers 'required'.

I will leave it to you to draw your own conclusions!



Town Amenities Sub-Committee

Gordon Bluck, TASC Chairman reports:

There is not a lot to report since the last issue, other than we have not received a reply from Dacorum Borough Council Estates Department regarding the very large illuminated sign off Lower Kings Road, indicating the Waitrose store. We had missed the planning application and it had been approved. We wanted to know from DBC, who owned the land, why they had allowed a private company to put very large signs on their property and if there was a considerable rent payable. If there was, we are probably less concerned as it would help the public coffers. We also wanted to know if there was only a short lease and could it be moved in future. Answer came there none.

Our main focus as a committee at this time of the year is the annual Environment Award and elsewhere in the newsletter is the long list of contenders. John Cook will be doing the slides and preparing the presentation and I will be doing the easy bit of presenting. I hope you will all come to the AGM.

Tony Statham has done a lot of work comparing what we had said in response to the Town Council document "Future Berkhamsted" with the final document. We were concerned that as our contribution to this revised paper had been acknowledged it would appear that we now fully supported the final draft. There are, in reality, several points we do not support and so Tony has written to Town Council on this basis.

Our involvement with the Dacorum Hospital Action group continues.



Your very own editor, Norman Cutting, acted as 'Town Crier' on a wet Saturday morning in early January to remind residents that all is not yet lost.

Contributions to:

The Citizen

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Web site: <http://www.berko.org.uk/bca>

Edited and compiled by Norman Cutting

Membership Counts

By Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby

Membership currently stands at 445 household members. Twelve years ago it was 606. That was a long time ago you may say. However, it was still 599 in March 2001. This is a drop of over 25% in 6 years. Joining is not just going to meetings, or receiving newsletters, but it is to help us have an influence in having a say. It is therefore very important that we maintain our membership because if it continues to fall we may no longer be listened to.

There are currently 93 members with outstanding subscriptions. If you are one of them, a second reminder would have been enclosed with this newsletter. If you have paid and have still been sent a reminder, please contact me. Thank you to the 102 members who have already recently paid.

You know what the Citizens Association do. Please ask a friend and or a neighbour if they are members. If not encourage them to join by sending me £5 along with their name and address. It is as simple as that. It saves time and me not having to forward them a membership form. Wouldn't it marvellous if we could get up to 500 members again by this time next year?

Best Dressed Christmas Window Competition.

Rita Jones writes:

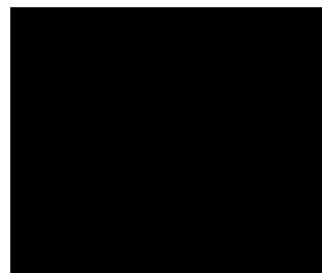
This was the 9th award which the BCA have presented at the Berkhamsted Festival of Light, and it is proving to be very popular, with high standards making judging difficult.

This year **Peter John** won the cup.

Highly Commended went to **Anne Marie**.

Certificates of Commendation to **Cancer Research UK** and **Walton Design**.

I was delighted with the enthusiasm of the shops, and the original and attractive window displays certainly add to the pleasure of shopping in Berkhamsted at Christmas.



Night photo of our area from Thursday 18th to Saturday 20th January 2007

Chairman: Rita Jones, 18 St Margarets Close, HP4 2HL Tel: 872757 (e: ritjones@waitrose.com)

Membership Secretary: Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, 38 Kitsbury Road, HP4 3EA Tel: 865882

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

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