

The Citizen



Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

March 2003

Annual General Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the 78th Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association will be held in the Wellcome Great Hall of the Town Hall, Berkhamsted, on **Thurs 20th March 2003 at 8 pm.**

Nominations for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Membership Secretary, Hon. Auditor and Committee Members should be submitted to the 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
2. Minutes of the last AGM
3. Chairman's Report
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Election of Officers
6. Election of Committee Members
7. Election of Hon. Auditor

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

The monthly committee meetings last for around 1½ hours and we have two regular sub-committees. *The Town Amenities Sub-Committee* works hard to try and ensure that changes made to the environment, both in Northchurch and Berkhamsted, are for the better.

The Activities & Publicity Sub-Committee plans and organises a programme of talks, walk and other events. The Association is represented on a number of other local bodies such as the CAB, Graham Greene Birthplace Trust, Town Hall Trust and Town Centre Advisory Forum.

BCA Environment Awards 2002

There were a number of nominations for the Environment Award for the year 2002, representing a wide variety of entries. The selected short list to be illustrated at the AGM presentation is as follows:-

*17 Kitsbury Road-Rendering of stone cladding.
6 Boxwell Road- Rendering of stone cladding.
Callaghan Court, 33 High Street (Ex BMG Garage)
Eggesfield Place, off Seymour Road, Northchurch.
Bartrum Cottages (Affordable houses) Ravens Lane
Rear of Penny Farthing
The Studio (Old school) Chapel Street
10-18 Applecroft, off Seymour Road, Northchurch.*

*146 High Street (Ex motorist shop)
34 Bridgewater Road.(New House)
Rear of 250 High Street, (new fenestration)
Outspan House (refurbishment + Car Park)
6 Barncroft Road (New dwelling)
22 Chapel Street (Extension)
Willow Cottage Extension, Shootersway.
Ex Auction Rooms, Middle Road.*

Please note

Prior to the AGM (at **8 pm**), we have Nick Edlin from Dacorum Borough Council who will give a brief update on the proposed parking proposals that were subject to a consultation process last year. This will be a rare opportunity to hear, from one of the Council officers, the thinking behind the proposals, so try not to be late!

Open Forum

Finally there will be an Open Forum in which members will be able to ask questions and make comments. It

BCA Activities

Rita Jones writes:

A new year is a time for looking forward and for looking back

At the October talk on bricks and brick making, several members wanted to know the names of the original Dunton Brothers. They were Bert, Vic, Ted, Ron, Reg and a sixth called Sonny, though only five of them were really involved, and our thanks to Nick Siney for this.

In November, Stephen Halliday asked if we could make a collection for the Pepper Foundation and we were happy to send them a cheque for £53, so thanks to everyone at the talk.

The entertainment at our Christmas evening was a small, local choir called 'Canzona' who provided a delightful programme of Christmas music, ably accompanied by our vice-chairman, Graham Spittle. As usual there were opportunities for us all to join in some of the carols. I am sure that everyone present will agree that it was a wonderful evening. The attendance seemed reasonable, making it all worthwhile, until closer inspection revealed that about half were the committee and their families, and official guests. I appreciate that we all have many calls on our time at Christmas, but the vast percentage of the membership who could not make it missed a really good evening. This year we are trying a Friday evening to see if this is more favourable, so please put Friday December 12th 2003 in your diaries.

New Year's Day, you may remember, was wet, but I walked to Aldbury and I decided to walk back. Thanks to you all for your support and a special thanks to the leader, Bill Willett.

We hope you enjoyed Matt Wheeler telling us about Dacorum Heritage Trust on Wednesday, February 12th, especially its current and future projects.

March brings the AGM (details on the front page), and I look forward to seeing you there.



Ravens Lane lock and lock-keepers cottage
(I fell in this one when a little lad - Ed)

Chairman's Report

Gordon Bluck says:

Although I had a very good evening, the Christmas party was a bit of a disappointment as far as numbers of members were concerned, but unless members can come up with a better idea we will continue with the carol singing format. Rita and her team did us proud and I know our guests, mayors, MP and the rest of us had a great time. The choir were excellent but the star of the show was Graham Spittle, past Chairman and my able vice-Chairman on the piano. I have to keep these artists motivated.

On a serious note, we as an organisation, rely on our committees, (main, activities and town amenities) and the hard work they do. The Association is no different from the other groups in the town in having difficulty in getting people to help but if there are members who would like to help on any front they would be very welcome.

I will be happy with part time members, say every two months and people can make a real contribution to the town. I joined the main committee ten years ago aged 41 and have been Town Amenities Chairman for nine years. I have a full time job and two teenage children, so you out there, you **can** do it, please come and help us. You should not underestimate the influence that the BCA has on the town.

There will be elsewhere, the list of entries from the annual Environment award that the judges will be looking at in the next few weeks; feedback will be appreciated. I look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

Residents Parking

Norman Cutting updates us:

The Borough Council have come to a decision over the consultation exercise carried out last year.

It is now proposed that parking meters will be installed along the High Street (charges in 12 minute dollops!), car park charges will be rationalised and a private company will be employed to enforce the regulations for the Borough Council.

This last proposal is partly a result of the decision by County to no longer employ traffic wardens and to 'decriminalise' parking offences.

Currently, County pays the Wardens and fines go to central government, which in turn return some of the money to County to pay the Wardens to enforce..... you get the idea!

By changing the process, Borough pays for enforcement and Borough collects the money. For example, the benefit to the offender is that it will no longer be a criminal offence to park on the pavement.

East of England Regional Plan

John Parsons reports:

The Committee has received a copy of the 'Consultations on Options leading to Regional Planning Guidance (RPG 14) for the East of England 2021' (whew – Ed).

The purpose of the document is to develop a strategy for the development of the East of England region (EofE R).

It states that the EofE R is drawn from the old SE Region (Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Essex, Bucks, Oxford and Berks) and the old East Anglia Region (Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridge) and now consists of Beds, Cambs, Essex and Herts, Norfolk and Suffolk. Apparently the main reasons for the change is that the Mayor of London has been given his own planning rights, thus separating the Northern from the Southern Home Counties and to conform with the proposed EEC Policies on Regionalisation.

Most of the plan contents are unarguable, however the Committee's main concern centres upon the definition of the EofE R and the inclusion of Hertfordshire in this grouping.

The Committee considers that, unlike the outlying counties, only a relatively small part of the Herts economy is based upon agriculture. The great majority is derived from its location on the outer fringe of London and that a 'Northern Home Counties Group' comprising possibly of Essex, Herts, Beds, Bucks and Berks would be more appropriate, reflecting the area's close proximity to London with the attendant pressures of population, housing and transport arising from this location. We also understand that the County Council is also unhappy about the inclusion of Hertfordshire in the EofE Region.

The plan itself in paragraph 5.21 states that the existing RPG policies do not specifically refer to most of Hertfordshire and in paragraph 7.22 under the heading 'The Arc around London' it says 'That many of the towns have strong economies and pressures to accommodate more housing and employment, consequently housing pressures are intense leading to affordability and social exclusion problems'. However, no solutions are offered.

The eventual outcome of the regionalisation policy is regional self government (as in Scotland), but we do not believe there is local support for yet another layer of local government in the area, particularly as in the proposed EofE Region, where two very different economies would be arguing for funding on projects that would be of very little interest to the other part of the region.

A letter has been sent to Herts County Council and the EofE Local Government Conference (authors of the document) expressing our views.

We will keep you informed of further developments.

Town Amenities Sub Committee - Gordon Bluck, TASC Chairman reports:

December was a quiet month for planning but we were delighted with the modification of the parking plans, which had caused so many problems.

Turning to regular planning matters we were, and have been very concerned with the proposals for the cricket club, which had the permission for a "small town pavilion" and now wants to change into a sports centre. The weight of supporting evidence from the local sports community has been considerable and the BCA understands the situation; however, green belt is, green belt and we will continue to support it unless there is a very good reason to let it go. We, as a committee were concerned to note that it appears that several apparently unauthorised sheds have been erected on that sports area, not just by the cricket club. We have asked Dacorum Borough Council to investigate.

We were very keen to ensure that when the Ashlyns school lift is approved the existing Flemish Garden Wall Bond is carried over. It may cost more but it is important that historic brickwork is continued, hence the October 2002 meeting about bricks and brick making.

We objected to the proposal to erect a new notice board at the Quaker Meeting House at 289 High Street which was over 3 times the size of the existing one and would obscure the listed building. It was also to be made of metal coated in blue, which is not in keeping with the conservation area.

At the last meeting we agreed to object to a proposal to surround completely a house at 24 Hall Park with extensions. We normally do not object to extensions to private houses but this is too much.

Finally a proposal to convert a warehouse at Belton Lane has our support for affordable housing, but we expressed concern regarding parking and traffic.

Cllr Garrick Stevens writes:

Although I have been a long-standing member, this is my first item in this illustrious organ. These are my personal views, so if anything offends you, please blame the Editor! (*after a good start, you have to go and spoil it!* -Ed)

While I applaud the magnificent work which the Citizens have done in bringing focus on planning issues especially the built environment and the Conservation Area in particular, I cannot help feeling that other community issues are somehow going begging.

Where we can raise stink about over development and unsightly buildings, I have yet to see a concerted attempt to bring for example, builders to book for not including green space or play areas where houses are being aimed at young families. Having good play space close by will be critically important to families as their back gardens and internal space shrink. These family friendly factors are seldom included when planning applications for larger sites are being considered, yet Councillors and their Officers can negotiate for their inclusion.

One reason I suspect is that those who are in a position to look at these issues have long forgotten what mothers and children need. The MORI poll for the Audit Commission in 2001/2 brings the profound insight that it's the 'oldsters' who consider that rubbish bins and clean streets are of greater concern, while younger folk focus on issues that are important to them and their families, such as affordable housing and activities for children.

Which leads me to Amenity Space. Have you wondered why Berkhamsted has such little amenity space? Can it be that we so enjoy the wide-open spaces of Ashridge and the Common that we don't feel we should provide sufficient good space for young people to play football or rugby or which can be used for Adventure Playgrounds, or even a Skateboard Park?

The Town has grown by creeping increments. Without a plan for adding amenity space we shall find that developers have taken all the best sites and the cost of bidding against them is beyond the means of local councils. So when the Inspector [of the Local Plan] remarks on the relatively poor provision of public recreational space, perhaps it is time Citizens' members join in a campaign for more green space that we can all share.

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Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

What do we get up to?

Summary of January Committee meeting.

A member had written to the chairman complaining about the standard of the current newsletter. The Chairman had replied and reported that the offer to become a proof reader had been declined.

Concern was expressed on the low turn out at the Christmas party - although those who attended, thought it was very enjoyable. It was suggested a different night was tried for the next one.

A member expressed concern over the condition of footpaths in and around the town. This will be followed up and more news provided in the newsletter.

The Town Amenities Sub-committee had objected to several planning proposals including 23 Kings Road and the Quaker meeting house notice board. Nominations for the 2002 Environment Award have been drawn up.

It was reported that membership was increasing (in spite of my efforts!).

As you can see, we are involved in many aspects of local affairs.

Would you like to have more information provided in the newsletter?

Why not get involved yourself by putting yourself forward at the AGM (details on front page)?

Corrections to last issue

(bound to become a regular section!)

I confused some with the location of the photograph details and the usual errors in grammar. However, at least it means I do something right - you actually read it!

Please remember this is put together like a newspaper with a very short ('spare') time between copy received and actual printing.

We welcome all your suggestions and contributions, so why not contribute?

Most formats can be accommodated, but we even accept real letters.

e-mail to: bca@normcall.plus.com

or

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