



December 2012

The Citizen

Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Working for the social and civic life of our community

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

I will keep it very short this month because I haven't got the time or space to say much. My colleagues cover the issues more than well enough. Wishing you all a happy Christmas and New Year!

Katy Brookes-Duncan

A polite rant

Gordon Bluck

Having not written in the newsletter for a number of years I am taking a huge risk as my last attempt was marked by a retired Guardian newspaper reporter and sent back to me with all the mistakes annotated. Some members will remember me as past Chairman who has been in the background for some years. I have given some 20 years to the BCA. Now the rant.

My colleagues and I willingly give our time to represent us all in ensuring our Berkhamsted remain a great place to live. The BCA because of its longevity and past influence in the town represent you on more bodies and committees than you may realise.

We try and work with the Borough and Town Council to support the Town without being patsies. As usual the past year has been full for the BCA and we have risen to the challenge despite falling membership and difficulty in filling main committee posts. We have been joined as "the voice of the town" by several new single interest groups who feel that Berkhamsted is full and are principally trying to stop any large developments in the town. The BCA has always opposed the building on green belt and this will continue. However the Town is not set in aspic. As a civic body our brief is much wider and although we do not shout the loudest we continue to work for the good of the town and members, through our representation on the Canal and Riverside Partnership, the Berkhamsted Community Partnership and other bodies.

I have done a lot of research regarding Section 106 money; which is paid by developers to compensate local communities for the inconvenience involved. This has resulted in finding £1.3 million unspent in the borough and about £250,000 for Berkhamsted, some dating back to 1984. Even the interest on the money held by the Borough on behalf of the town is over £25,000. Following a press campaign initiated by the author the Borough quickly released nearly £80,000 for two play areas and there is more to come.

All in all with our other success, the BCA continues to nourish and support the town.

BCA Environment Award Your views are sought!

The Environment Award is an integral part of the BCA's Annual General Meeting programme. Past award winners can be viewed on the BCA website, www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk.

Last year, the full Award was not made as none of the contenders were deemed worthy. Instead, commendations were given to the Nash Harris building at the Kings Road campus of Berkhamsted School and to New Manor Croft in Manor Street.

It is time consider candidates for this year's Environment Award. Have any developments or improvements to our town's environment caught your eye? Conversely, do you feel the town's environment has been adversely affected in the past year? Your committee keeps their eyes open to what is happening, but they can't cover the whole town! The membership's opinion is important, so please give your views to the Town Amenities Sub-committee Chairman, Paul Crosland, on 873813 or peejaycee@yahoo.com.

Tree Planting

If anyone noticed the three young trees planted on the corner of Lower Kings Road and Brownlow Road near to the station, these were planted under the auspices of the BCA – your subscriptions (and sales of the footpath map) helping to improve the Town's environment. Unfortunately the summer downpours which soaked the soil didn't create conditions to promote root growth. Should any die within two years of planting they will be replaced by Dacorum Borough Council, free of charge.

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby

For many years now, we have included with the last newsletter of the year, a renewal slip for the following year. If you were to consider paying a three year subscription (£15), it would make my life all that much easier this time next year. We have a number of subscriptions for 2012 still outstanding too. If you do not intend to renew it would be good to hear from you giving your reason so that we may learn what we are doing wrong.

We have tried in the past to encourage you to recruit a new member. Have you thought about buying a friend or neighbour membership for Christmas?! If so, please send me £5 together with their name and address. It would be marvellous if we could increase the membership and our influence.

Town Amenities Sub-Committee

Paul Crosland

It has been another busy summer for those of us who keep an eye on developments affecting the amenities of Berkhamsted and Northchurch.

One issue has dominated as a talking point for residents and local businesses alike, and that is the Town Council's proposals to create Residents' Parking Zones (RPZs) in several areas of Berkhamsted. The subject was the leading topic of debate at the Town Meeting in April and on several occasions, meetings had to be held on larger halls, such was the demand for attendance. As I write, a Consultation has just been held on the proposals by the Town Council, the Town Clerk has the voting papers under lock and key, and the results are awaited. At the eleventh hour, a proposal by Dacorum Borough Council to spend £3 million on a two-level car park on a site in Lower Kings Road adjacent to Waitrose emerged. The scheme is being 'sold' on the premise that it provides two hundred spaces. However, the net addition to the existing ground level is only around one hundred spaces. The Citizens Association has given its approval in principle to the creation of additional parking spaces, although consideration should also be given to ways of reducing the demand for additional car parking in the town centre.

The Dacorum Borough Council Core Strategy, which sets out the strategic vision, objectives and spatial strategy for the development of the borough for the next twenty years, has been reviewed by an independent examiner for 'soundness' at a public Hearing during October. The Citizens Association was not represented at the Hearing, where, I understand, a concerted effort was made by a prospective developer, Grand Union Developments, for the inclusion of lands to the south of the town to be included in the areas allocated in the Core Strategy for housing development (The South Berkhamsted Concept). Again, the independent inspector's report on his findings on the Core Strategy, and any recommendations made to Dacorum Borough Council are awaited as this newsletter goes to press.

Proposals to enlarge the Berkhamsted Conservation Area and to create 'locally listed buildings' which are afforded additional protection in the planning process are two elements of the Berkhamsted Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals, published in September. This review of the Conservation Area also came forward for public consultation during October. The Citizens Association welcomed the Appraisal and Proposals which creates an excellent reference document and benchmark for the future management of the Conservation Area. The proposals noted above, together with the application of Article 4 Directions recognise the hard work over the years by the Berkhamsted Citizens Association, and in particular the work of the late former BCA Chairman and Berkhamsted Town Mayor, John Cook, who created a photographic record of the heritage assets in the town and was instrumental in setting up the Berkhamsted Town Walk.

On a more local level, the Citizens Association supported the revised proposals for the redevelopment of the New Lodge site on London Road near to the Old Mill. We made several suggestions for traffic calming nearby on London Road, which were supported by the Town Council. We also welcomed the inclusion of a walking route across the site, affording improved pedestrian access from the east end of Berkhamsted to the canal at Bank Mill, avoiding the dangerous Bank Mill Lane. We continue to monitor all Planning Applications affecting the Town.

BCA Activities

Susan Johnson

Our first event this year, on Thursday 11th October, was an illustrated talk especially developed for this Association by Tim Amsden and Mike Bass (words and pictures respectively) of the Tring & District Local History & Museum Society, on how Tring became the first town in Dacorum to get its own local history museum. Thirty members braved the dreadful weather that night and thoroughly enjoyed a tour of Tring history both ancient and modern. Tim laid down the challenge to Berkhamsted to achieve its own museum; and we pointed out it wasn't for want of trying!

The following talk, on Thursday 8th November, was a rerun of the illustrated talk on College Lake, Bulbourne which unfortunately had to be cancelled earlier this year due to bad weather. The weather and the turn-out were equally good this time; over 50 including 5 non-members, one of whom joined. The talk was fascinating and beautifully illustrated. We couldn't wait to make a visit; or a return visit, as seemed generally to be the case amongst the audience.

All organisations giving talks receive a donation from our funds. Individuals who speak can receive expenses and a donation to a charity of their choice.

Look out for the posters for our future events. The next is the annual **New Year's Day walk** starting at 10.30 a.m. from the station forecourt.

As you may be aware, the Activities Sub-Committee which used to organise these events does not exist at present due to lack of volunteers. If we do not have some new volunteers to help with this task by the next AGM, the activities side of the BCA will disappear by April 2013, with the exception of the AGM and the walks; which would be a shame. I know it is something that the membership holds dear and enjoys enormously; and it often introduces us to new members. So think urgently about how you could help! Get in touch with Katy B-D as soon as possible.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association.
Contributions and comments to: Katy Brookes-Duncan 58 Woodlands Avenue
HP4 2JQ or k.b-d@hotmail.co.uk
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