



The Citizen

Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Working for the social and civic life of our community

www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

February 2016

Annual General Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the 91st Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association will be held in the Great Hall of the Town Hall, Berkhamsted on

Thursday 17th March 2016 at 8 p.m.

Nominations for the posts of:

- Chairman
- Vice-Chairman
- Hon. Treasurer
- Hon. Secretary
- Hon. Membership Secretary
- Committee Members

should be submitted to the Hon. Secretary (Miranda Cummins, 27 North Road, Berkhamsted HP4 3DU) in writing 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 AGM held on 19th March 2015
- 3 Chairman's Report
- 4 Hon. Treasurer's Report
- 5 Election of Officers
- 6 Election of Committee Members
- 7 Appointment of Independent Examiners of Accounts
- 8 A discussion concerning whether to increase the membership subscription from January 2017

Following the formal business of the night there will be a short break to include wine or soft drinks and nibbles, courtesy of the Association. Then the following:

Environment Awards for 2015

There are 15 contenders for the Environment Award, all completed by the end of 2015. The selected sites are listed in the pages of this newsletter.

Guest Speaker

The Association hopes to secure a speaker from Dacorum Borough Council to speak about the proposal to build a multi-storey car park off Lower Kings Road.

An Open Forum

A Forum will round off the evening. This will finish proceedings, we hope in a lively fashion.

Chairman's piece

Susan Johnson

My tenure as Chairman is coming to an end, and with it my service on the Committee. After 25 years on the main Committee and 6 as its Chairman I'm hanging up my gavel (figuratively) and retiring. I've loved every minute of it, but it's time to make way for someone new. Not that I'll disappear for good. I have volunteered to stay on TASC and continue to make its planning submissions to Dacorum Borough Council; and take part in the judging of the Environment Award.

So thank you for all your participation over the years; and for your support of the organisation. Let's see if we can make another 9 years to our Centenary! I hope I'll still be here!

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association

Contributions and comments to:
chairman@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

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A Reminder: only paid up members present at the AGM are allowed to vote

Berkhamsted Citizens Association: increasing the subs?

In the last couple of years there have been a few requests from organisations, generally with whom the BCA has representation on outside bodies, for contributions towards projects we are jointly preparing. These projects are over and above anything the Association is financing. Last year the AGM approved making small grants to these organisations' projects under the terms of our present Constitution.

However the BCA does not have the resources to fund substantial new projects of its own. Should we be building a treasure chest to do this? Or first find a project and then fund it?

The Committee would like to hear your views at the AGM. We have put an item on the end of formal business to discuss increasing the subscription in order to increase the BCA's activities and the way to fund them.

Susan Johnson **Christine Manning**
Chairman **Hon. Treasurer**

Environment Awards: Review & contenders

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Environment Award 2015

The most significant change to the Town Centre in many years occurred in 2015, which was the demolition of the old Police Station at the cross-roads. It was unloved behemoth, some would say 'carbuncle' on the face of the town, dating from the early 1970s. In recent years, reductions in police budgets led to streamlining of services and the building was too large for the services it provided. Being unsuitable for conversion to much else, it had to go. The site has been sold to Beechcroft Developments for sheltered housing which signs on the building before its demolition optimistically suggested would be delivered in 'late 2016'. At the other end of the 'main drag', the site of the new Lidl store and affordable apartments has now been hoarded off, following Roy Chapman Limited vacating their premises.

Housing developments of various types along the High Street and its extensions at New Lodge (market residential), Sheldon Lodge (sheltered accommodation) and Farm Place (local authority) were completed and feature in the Environment Award shortlist. As part of the New Lodge development, a section 106 Agreement requires the developer to provide access for the public and residents across the site, including a new footbridge across the Bulbourne at the junction of Bank Mill and Bank Mill Lane, and also an access point onto London Road at Hall Park. These have not been completed and the Association continues to press for these improvements.

More housing development is underway at Shootersway, between Durrants Lane and Coppins Close, providing 92 new houses. Below ground drainage and foundations for the properties were commenced during the autumn, and the development has acquired the name "Bearroc Park".

An unusual item has been considered for the Environment Award this year, which is the introduction of LED 'white lights' along main ('A') roads in Hertfordshire. In some ways this is like going back in time to the old 'white lights', before the now familiar orange sodium lamps were in place. LED lamps use much less electricity than sodium lamps and are therefore much cheaper to run. They produced a much more intense light, which arguably leave an area of shadow between each street light. Existing lamps have been retained through the Conservation Area.

Of all the developments completed by the end of 2015, we have selected fifteen as contenders for the Environment Award, as follows, with a brief description:-

- 'Sandiford', Graemesdyke Road,
Two storey side rear extensions.
- 22 Castle Hill Avenue,
Extensions of existing property at front and rear (single storey), and at either side.
- 'Huntingwood', Gravel Path,
Construction of detached, 5-bedroom house.
- 'Saffron Lawn', Gravel Path,
Alterations to entrance driveway fronting onto Gravel Path.
- Sheldon Lodge, 380-392 High Street,
Construction of two storey, residential scale buildings proving 48 units of sheltered accommodation with colourful facade.



- Improvement of the Canal Towpath from Canal Fields to Lock 50
Re-surfacing and widening of the towpath along this heavily-used section to provide a combined walkway and cycleway, funded by Herts County Council and Berkhamsted Town Council and managed by Canal and River Trust.
- HCC Major Roads, LED lighting scheme
Introduction of LED lighting on London Road, High Street, Gossoms End and Kings Road

- Ashlyns Sports Hall, Ashlyns School, Construction of new sports hall in the curtilage of the Grade II listed school building, required as part of the transition to two tier secondary education in Berkhamsted.
- Farm Place, Durrants Lane, Construction of 26 apartments, originally for a Housing Association, taken over by Dacorum Borough Council for local authority housing.
- Installation of Lifts at the Station, Installation of passenger lifts to all three platforms, and associated works, at Berkhamsted Station as part of Network Rail's 'Access for All' programme
- 1 Park View Road, Demolition of 1930s bungalow and construction of two storey, 4-bedroom 'low energy' house with integral garage and garden, granted on Appeal.



- 23 Castle Hill, Construction of detached 5-bedroom house.
- 'Seymour House', 25 Montague Road, Two-and-half storey front extension to a 1980's bungalow providing a modern, contemporary residence.
- 51 Kings Road Construction of two-storey extension to existing house, alterations to windows, new detached garage and changes to driveway.



- New Lodge, Bank Mill Lane, New mixed residential development of 54 units of various types in the grounds of New Lodge, including the reconstruction of a facsimile of the former property, with new access road (Townsend Gate) and landscaping alongside the River Bulbourne.

The Sub-committee members independently complete a scoring matrix on the basis of design, compatibility with environment, quality of construction and benefit to the community. The selected developments are ranked, and the number of votes for each development is counted. The winner of the BCA Environment Award, or, if the Sub-committee feel it appropriate, a Commendation, will be revealed at the BCA Annual General Meeting on 17th March. The Sub-committee may also decide that no development is worthy of an award or commendation.

Town Amenities Sub-Committee

Paul Crosland, Chairman

Multi-Storey Car Park Proposals

Dacorum Borough Council's Commercial Assets and Property Management Department has submitted a Planning Application for a new multi-storey car park on the site of the existing Council car park off Lower Kings Road (between LKR and Waitrose). The car park would provide 312 parking spaces and 15 disabled parking bays, along with 12 bicycle spaces, compared with 122 parking spaces and 8 disabled bays currently – an increase of 197 spaces overall. The proposals were set out at a consultation event at Berkhamsted Civic Centre, arranged by Dacorum in early December, however, the format of the event was poorly publicised, meaning that many attendees arrived late. Many local residents and businesses felt that the car park proposals have not been fully explained and important aspects such as hours of operation and the charging regime have not been given due consideration. The view was also expressed that the Borough Council has failed to engage with the people of Berkhamsted in the planning of the car park, with the consequence that many feel that the multi-storey car park exacerbate existing congestion on Lower Kings Road and across the main crossroads.

The Association feels that the Planning Application should demonstrate a) that there is a NEED for additional car parking in the town centre, b) that the design of the ACCESS and egress has been duly considered in order not to cause tailbacks of traffic, even at the busiest times, c) that the DESIGN should be of a high quality, to provide the high quality environment consummate with its location in the Berkhamsted Conservation Area and d) that ALTERNATIVES to a new car park on the Lower Kings Road site have been properly established and robustly investigated before being rejected. The opening hours and tariffs must be given proper consideration and be tailored to optimise the usefulness of the building.

The Planning Application and its copious supporting documentation can be viewed on line via the Dacorum website, and can also be consulted at the offices of Town Council in Berkhamsted Civic Centre, during normal opening hours. It will be considered by the Town Council at the Planning

Committee meeting on Monday 22nd February, or later.

Mooring along the Grand Union Canal

The Canal and River Trust (C&RT) is consulting with interested parties over the arrangements for mooring of boats on the stretch of the Grand Union Canal through the town. The consultation ends on 29th February 2016, and the views of individuals is important.

Currently, boats are permitted to moor for 14 days alongside the towpath, away from locks and bridges. The C&RT's proposals for revised mooring arrangements are as follows:-

- from Park Street bridge to Lower Kings Road bridge : 2 day limit, all year round
- from Lower Kings Road bridge to Ravens Lane bridge : 7 day limit (April to September), 14 days (October to March)
- outside these areas : 14 day time limit for mooring to remain, and existing winter moorings to remain

The Berkhamsted Town Council-led Canal and River Partnership (on which the Berkhamsted Citizens Association is represented) believes the mooring time limit should be 2 days throughout the restricted area, all year round.

Further details of the proposals for all south-east locations can be found on line.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/mooring-your-boat/south-east-visitor-moorings/south-east-visitor-mooring-consultation-january/february-2016>), where an on-line survey can also be found.

Activities

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Preserving a precious archive Thursday 4th February

Jez Stewart a curator from the British Film Institute National Archive gave us a historical and technical perspective about the work that goes into preserving all aspects of the moving image whatever medium it has been recorded on. We heard that since 1935 the National Film Library (later the BFI) has been through many re-organisations but throughout the conservation and protection work has remained at its core.

One clip, part of a magazine newsreel from the Central office of Information in 1943, showed four suited gentlemen approaching the great arch at Euston to visit 'somewhere in the country' where Rodin's Burghers of Calais and other notable statues had been stored. It didn't take long for the 100 plus audience to spot in the background our own Berkhamsted Castle. The purpose of the trip was to clean said 'boys in Bronze' pending their return to central London after the end of hostilities. Anyone missing the talk can see the clip via the BFI website:

<http://player.bfi.org.uk/film/watch-worker-and-war-front-no-7-1943/>

They were not the only artistic evacuees. The National Film Library had been located to nearby Aston Clinton. After the war it moved home again to Kingshill in Berkhamsted where it is now in
What impressed me was the ingenuity required to preserve the ever-changing media. In the early days there was no standardisation of formats so the first conservator Harold Brown had to build his own machine (Mark IV) to be able to copy films. Ernest Lindgren then head of the BFI was very strict about the route to preservation; no film could be played unless it had been copied first. This reputation for excellence and rigour meant that films were sent from around the world to be copied.

Even today the work at Kingshill (always done in white coats) still has an element of craft as well as plenty of technology. The age of films need to be assessed before restoration work commences. To do this they remove a sample of film from just one frame and dissolve the clipping in a test tube.

Some films have shrunk over time and so the pegs on which they are mounted to be run through 'the gate' have to be adjusted to make sure the film does not get stretched and so break.

Making sure that all of these treasures can be reached by as wide an audience as possible requires some very 21st Century technology. One metal can of film looks much like another so that the cataloguing and database management is key to making sure that if you do happen to link on the internet address given the correct film will be available for you to view.

Jez is very knowledgeable and has endless passion for his subject and happily answered all of the deeply technical questions from the chaps who were clearly good at Chemistry at school, but my favourite segment was a film from 1935. The Prince of Wales was visiting first the Girls school then the Boys in Berkhamsted before reviewing the local militia and Scouts and Guides in the grounds of the Castle. For this Jez had thoughtfully researched the relevant report in 'The Times' which he read with perfect precision as if he had been actually reporting it at that time.

To thank Jez for his excellent talk, the BCA has made a donation to British Film Institute of £40 to ensure that these national film treasures remain in safe hands.

New Year's Day Walk

The raw statistics of the New Year's Day walk make alarming reading. Twenty-seven walkers and two dogs left from Berkhamsted Station, only eight made it back. Well, we do say that walks are undertaken at own risk, however the 'backstory' is rather less dramatic ! The New Year's Day walk does tend to be quite a 'relaxed' affair. Traditionally the BCA walks to Aldbury on New Year's Day. A relatively short round trip, welcoming pubs, Morris dancers, a late night the night before and other social engagements are all factors that lead some to

decide that 'a half day walk is sufficient, thank you very much, we'll get a lift back from Aldbury'. This year we lost a Committee member to a twisted ankle within a half mile of the start, and another member (plus dog) decided there were just too many in the group. A good complement succumbed to the charms of Aldbury, others fancied a walk along the canal in the afternoon rather than a climb back up the escarpment. A trickle of Northchurch and west Berkhamsted residents left us on the way back across the Common and past Bridgewater School, and so it was only eight hardy souls who made in back to the Station, just as the winter's afternoon drizzle set in. A good days' walk, but maybe we'll break with tradition and go in a new direction next year.....

Membership Counts

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It is encouraging to note that membership is on the up compared to this time last year, with our household membership currently standing at 358. Thank you to those who have renewed promptly. 64% of those due have paid, leaving 45 subscriptions outstanding. A renewal slip will be enclosed for those still owing. It would be marvellous if we could perhaps increase our membership this year by, say, 10%.

Electronic notification

We must be doing something right! We have had many e-mails from members thanking us for notifying them on things that affect the town. Since our last Newsletter, we notified 50% of our members on three occasions, by e-mail, on things such as The Multi-storey Car Park application, Moorings on the Canal. If you would like to be included in this service, please contact the Membership Secretary. E-mail addresses are kept confidentially.