



BERKHAMSTED CITIZENS

*The heart of
Berkhamsted*

<http://www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/>

May 2025 Newsletter of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association

Chairman's Report

Ian Reay, Chairman

I was honoured to be elected the new Chairman of the BCA at its AGM on 27th March, particularly as this was at the end of the first 100 years of the organisation; a significant landmark. Over the years the Association has established a reputation, particularly for providing valuable comments to the Borough Council on planning applications across the town.

Susan Johnson, who stood down as Chairman after her latest period of a year as Chairman, will be a hard act to follow. She has been Chairman of the Association for 7 years in total and has played a major role in the Association for many more years. In recognition of their significant public service to the town, Susan and Gordon Bluck, who remains the Chairman of the Townscape Group, were presented with the 2024 Rotary Civic Award by the President of the Rotary Club, Jim Binyon, at the Council's Annual Town Meeting on 7th May. This was very well deserved.

At the AGM, the Association's Environment Award plaque was presented for the Berkhamsted Station Underpass Murals. These are a charming

and informative entrance to the town for those who come by train. A Certificate of Commendation also went to the refurbishment of 16 Shrublands Avenue. Much of the discussion at the Open Forum at the end of the meeting was

concerned with the need to widen the BCA's appeal across all age ranges in our community. On 8th May, in the evening, the town celebrated the 80th anniversary of VE day at Rectory Lane Cemetery by lighting a beacon. This was organised by the Royal British Legion, with Stuart Owen, the Rector of St Peter's Church, presiding over the prayers.

As is now clear to all, the town is increasingly being subjected to huge development pressures with the new Local Plan set to include provision for a significant housing development between Hall Park and the A41 by-pass as well as other so-called 'windfall' sites coming forward along Shootersway. The Townscape Group will be looking closely at these issues.

On the 1st May at the County Council elections, Nigel Taylor was re-elected to the County Council, to represent most of Berkhamsted - all except the postal district adjacent to Northchurch. At this election Hertfordshire was caught up in a nationwide political earthquake and now no political party has overall control of the County Council and coalitions will be necessary.

We are fortunate that Hertfordshire did have a County Council election this May since many counties across the country had elections cancelled because of the imminent local government re-organisation. This may still affect Berkhamsted eventually as there are plans being mooted to turn HCC into a unitary authority, which would mean the abolition of Dacorum Borough Council. It will be of interest to see if such a move leads to more responsibilities being devolved to the Town Council! The Association will be watching these developments with interest and whenever possible we will be submitting our views.

At the AGM several people expressed concern about the need to recruit more, younger people as members of the Association. This has been an issue for many years, and we will try to address



this by putting together a programme of speakers over the coming months to talk about issues that are of interest to the town. The first of this series will take place on **Friday 6th of June at 7pm.** **Dominic Miller, a retired airline pilot, will give a talk in the Clock Room at Berkhamsted Town Hall on "MH 370: Where did it go?"** MH370 was a Malaysian Airline flight which disappeared in the Indian Ocean with no trace ever being found, despite extensive searches. Dominic will give a talk about the mystery surrounding this strange event. His talk will be free to members, but an entry fee of £5 will be charged for non-members.

We are also in the early stages of planning a child friendly event on August Bank Holiday Monday, probably in 2026. We will provide members with information on all these activities in due course.

Townscape Group *Gordon Bluck, Chairman*

I am delighted to report that the BCA has submitted its recommendations concerning the Regulation 19 Draft Local plan 2026 to 2041. As I stated in my last report we were represented on the Berkhamsted Town Council Working Party by Susan Johnson (BCA Chairman at the time) and myself, and we actively involved it in the submission of the WP draft. Susan felt at the time the BCA should submit its own thoughts and she has done this. We have had confirmation that the BCA submission has been included in the report and is with the Planning Inspector. By way of an update, we now have before us the detailed proposal for **168-192 High Street** and we are in the final stages of deciding on our response to the whole plan. Anna Barnard and Simon Heywood have spent an enormous amount of time in producing our response which we believe will enhance the scheme in the context of design. One primary concern is the exclusion of the public toilets from the scheme. I attended the Town Council meeting to consider the planning application 25/00682/MOA and for me to observe the comments, with two representatives speaking for the developers, Sorbon. They revealed that they have had no success at all in contacting Herts County Council (Freeholder of the Water Lane car park) and Dacorum Borough Council (Leaseholder of Water Lane car park) to start negotiations to find a acceptable site for a new public toilets. I think the view is they are ignoring the problem and hope it goes away. This is not acceptable.

Turning to the South Berkhamsted development, there is little or no movement and we still show serious concern on the single access and exit onto Chesham Road. This apparently has been caused by Herts County Highways wishing to deter motorists from using cars and heavily promoting cycling and walking. As I am 73, with restricted ability to walk and no balance for cycling, this is not good for me. The current plans are unacceptable.

Regarding the plans for a new Evangelical Church at the site at Kings Road following 248 public objections and our objection, the application has been withdrawn. The plans to construct a Dementia Nursing Home on New Road Northchurch is being discussed by Dacorum planning on 22nd May 2025. We have objected. Turning to 199 High Street (ex NatWest) we supported the application to convert to a luxury health and wellness facility and we are pleased it has been approved. We were involved in the application for a late-night licence by the Berkhamsted Golf Driving Range in Spring Garden Lane and I am pleased to report that it was modified to sell alcohol up to 10pm only and approved by the Dacorum Licensing Sub-committee.

We continue to look at every planning application and discuss on a monthly basis, concentrating on major schemes and protecting the conservation area with properties subjected to a Article 4 Direction a priority.

Susan Johnson, the BCA –nominated Trustee to the GGBT, writes:

26th Graham Greene International Festival
Thursday 25th to Sunday 28th September 2025.
Preparations are well underway for this year's Festival. We have the usual ingredients, plus a special guest speaker on Friday afternoon in the Town Hall in the person of Armando Iannucci - writer, satirist, comedian and broadcaster. You will be familiar with his work (*The Thick of It, Veep, In the Loop*) and know him to be very entertaining, as well as knowledgeable about Greene. So please buy tickets when they become available. Details to follow on the Festival website.

Paul Crosland writes:

ALL CHANGE ON THE BUSES: 500/ X500/ 560 REPLACES X5

By the time you read this the bus services on the Hemel – Berkhamsted – Tring – Aston Clinton – Aylesbury corridor will have changed (from 19th May). The long-established operator, Arriva, has withdrawn the X5 bus route (which, until January 2024, was the 500), citing insufficient passenger numbers as the main reason for the withdrawal. This marks a gradual retrenchment by Arriva from bus operations locally. In July 2024, the company withdrew all services from Aylesbury and High Wycombe and closed its operating bases in both towns.

Red Eagle Buses (<https://redeagle.org.uk>), who are based in Aylesbury, are operating a replacement service on Mondays to Saturdays between Hemel and Aylesbury, numbered 500, though at a reduced frequency (hourly) compared to the X5. Two additional journeys during Monday to Friday morning and evening operate as X500, missing out Aston Clinton, and there are supplementary buses between Berkhamsted (via Bridgewater Road, the Station then the High Street) and Hemel during the daytime on Monday to Friday, with the number

560. Buses will still run roughly half-hourly between Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead between 8.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. Timetables for the revised services can be found on the Intalink website by Hertfordshire County Council [here](#)

Fares may have changed as it is uncertain at the time of writing if Red Eagle will adopt the Government's £3 fare cap for the new services. Check with the driver or direct with Red Eagle.

No changes have taken place to the Sunday service, operated by Red Rose, and numbered 501.

A Facebook group has been set up to campaign for improvements to the service, including reinstatement of the half-hourly service. Search for 'Arriva X5 Action and Discussion Group' on Facebook. Our MP, Victoria Collins, is working 'cross party' with fellow MPs in Hemel and Aylesbury to endeavour to secure a suitable bus service to serve this important travel corridor.

TREES

If you live in a road which has street trees, you may have been aware of works being undertaken on the trees by Hertfordshire County Council during the winter and early spring. It has been brought to our attention that this is part of a programme of works being undertaken by Herts CC, and which is still on-going. Details of the planned works on a street-by-street basis can be found on-line using the following link: <http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/highways/trees/berkhamstead-tree-works.pdf>. (note 'berkhamstead' with an 'a' towards the end is required)

There has been some disquiet amongst residents that the tree works are carrying on into late Spring when birds are nesting. It is not illegal to carry out tree (and hedge) cutting at this time of year; what *is* illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is if birds' nests are damaged/ removed whilst still in use or harm is caused to birds, so a survey should be carried out by a suitably-qualified person to ensure that there are no nests or nesting birds at the time when the works are due to be carried out. That said, expert opinion suggests that some tree works are better carried out during early spring when the trees are dormant, and thus are less likely to be damaged by severe cutting back.

It appears that many, but not all, of the trees to be felled are elm or ash which are dead or diseased and are at risk of dropping branches. The pollarding work can be very severe and results in trees with a stark appearance and limited foliage to provide shade and bird nesting opportunity.

If you are concerned about the effects of this programme of works to trees, please contact your County Councillor for Berkhamsted, Nigel Taylor by e-mail (nigel.taylor@hertfordshire.gov.uk). Members who live in (extremely) west Berkhamsted or Northchurch, your County Councillor is Caroline

Smith-Wright (caroline.smith-wright@hertfordshire.gov.uk). We understand that Berkhamsted Town Council has made representations to Herts CC about this matter, but Herts CC has not taken heed of these to date and is continuing undeterred with the programme of tree works.

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTION ON 1ST MAY.

At the local council election, held on Thursday 1st May, all 78 seats on Hertfordshire County Council were contested. Hertfordshire County Council is the upper-tier local authority and provides services for the region, including education, social care, highways and transport and libraries.

The election results can be found here: here:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/.../County-Council...>

In the Berkhamsted division, Nigel Taylor was elected for the Liberal Democrats, with 52% of the vote, whilst in the Bridgewater division (including western Berkhamsted, Northchurch, Potten End etc.), Caroline Smith-Wright, also a Liberal Democrat, was elected with 36% of the vote. In the County as a whole, no political party has overall control, which means that coalitions will be required in order to bring policies forward.

The turnout for the election in Hertfordshire was 32%. In both the Berkhamsted and Bridgewater divisions, the turnout was 36%.

Membership Counts

Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby
membership@berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk

Our membership stands at 258 households. We welcome the 9 households who have joined this year.

A reminder will be sent to the 45 households who are up for renewal for 2025. We hope you still wish to remain members.

Our preferred method of payment of your subscription is by Bank Credit Transfer (BCT) direct to our bank account: 60-02-21 (NatWest): 51 85 84 87 (Business). Please use your name as the 'Reference'. Cash or cheque is also accepted. Or, if you prefer to pay by credit card, you can pay as a 'new member' through our website at: www.berkhamstedcitizens.org.uk/membership

As mentioned in an earlier newsletter, we only send newsletters by email to members for whom we have email addresses.

We also fully understand the situation of those that do not have an email address. 25 newsletters are still printed.



E-Scooters

I would like to remind the public that the use of privately owned e-scooters on public roads, pavements, cycle lanes, and other public spaces is illegal under current UK law. Only approved rental e-scooters are permitted in designated trial areas.

Why Are E-Scooters Dangerous?

E-scooters pose significant risks to both riders and pedestrians, including:

- ✓ Serious Injuries – Many accidents result in life-threatening head injuries, fractures, and even fatalities.
- ✓ No Insurance or MOT – Privately owned e-scooters do not meet legal safety standards and cannot be insured for road use.
- ✓ Pedestrian Risks – Riding on pavements is illegal and endangers vulnerable people, including children and the elderly.
- ✓ Unpredictable Speed – Many e-scooters exceed legal speed limits, making them difficult to control.

Legal Consequences

If caught using a private e-scooter illegally, you could face:

- A fine of up to £300
- 6 points on your driving licence
- Seizure and confiscation of the e-scooter

We urge everyone to stay safe, follow the law, and avoid the use of illegal e-scooters. Let's work together to keep our roads and pavements safe for all.

If you need to report someone for driving an E Scooter illegally, you can call 101 or you can report anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Regards

PC 1407 Miles

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association
Contributions to the Editor: Christopher Talbot-Ponsonby, 15 Shrublands Avenue, HP4 3JH
or via email to:
Published by the Berkhamsted Citizens Association © & Printed by Gemini Print Services tel: 871017