

Doing more for Hill Dyke

In keeping with our ethos of 'Keeping Wheathampstead Wonderful' we wondered how WDPS might best engage with the residents of Hill Dyke Estate. We hoped we might encourage a useful response by asking for their suggestions and ideas on how we could work together to improve the area.

So back in the Spring we posted a leaflet through every door on the estate asking for feedback. We had some response and now, with help from residents, we will need to engage with other organisations including St Albans District Council and their contractors (Veolia, Morgan and Sindall & John O'Connor) and with Wheathampstead Parish Council, to try and bring some of these ideas together...



There has already been progress: **Cllr Kristian Gavan** arranged a 'Community Day' on Thursday September 1st, and Morgan Sindall and SADC were present on site. Rubbish was cleared by Morgan & Sindall, questions were raised (and answered) about various outstanding repair issues and residents had the opportunity to speak directly to SADC about any other problems.

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Public inquiry launched into Luton Airport expansion plans



A public inquiry has just begun following Luton Borough Council's decision to allow London Luton Airport Operations Ltd. (the airport operating company) to increase annual passenger numbers from 18m to 19m. The airport is owned by Luton Borough Council's company, Luton Rising. The expansion plan also includes amending the noise contours, so that all night noise conditions would be removed.

The inquiry is scheduled to last until late November with the possibility of no decision until early 2023. It is therefore a detailed and thorough process, overseen by three independent inspectors representing the Secretary of State.

Members of the public and local organisations were invited to speak at the inquiry. Julie Bell spoke on behalf of WDPS and Nigel Oxley spoke as a private individual. We attended on the second day, when a number of other people also gave their statements. There were many very powerful and influential arguments against the expansion plan, including several from residents of Luton itself.

Much of the remainder of the time will be taken up by legal counsel, no doubt generously remunerated, presenting the case for Luton Borough Council and Luton Airport. Thanks to the generosity of their many supporters, LADACAN (Luton and District Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise) has been able to employ legal counsel where necessary.

The inquiry is important not only to determine whether it is fair for Luton Borough Council to grant permission for the expansion given that one of its subsidiaries owns the airport, but also because it delays what we know is the airport's next expansion plan for 32m passengers per year, representing a staggering 77% increase over the current 18m. This second point is particularly significant because one of the arguments why any expansion, let alone an increase of 77%, is inappropriate at this time is that a review of air space for Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, London City and Luton airports is underway. That could well mean that the air will become less congested in this area, allowing planes leaving Luton to gain greater height more quickly and so cause less noise on the ground.

We must say a massive thank-you to Andrew Lambourn from LADACAN, who will be attending the inquiry every day and spearheading the opposition to the expansion proposals, arguing against the highly professional and well-paid representatives acting on behalf of Luton Borough Council and Luton Airport.

We shall be watching developments with great interest.

Doing more for Hilldyke

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One of the areas we are very keen to focus on is improving the three playground areas (Hill Dyke Road, Davy's Close and Caesars Road) so that the youngsters have somewhere interesting and fun to play.

The 'Hillydyke Play Areas Working Group' has already been formed with members from WDPS, the Parish Council, residents from the estate and Cllr Kristian Gavin.

The Group will be looking at possible future funding through grants etc. but in the meantime will ensure that ongoing maintenance of the play areas is completed to a high standard.

The first 'Play Area Working Party' met at Caesars Road Play area on 1st September and, with the help of a few children who were present on the day, had a very successful few hours cutting back the overgrowth and fallen trees and generally tidying up the 'secret pathways' in the wooded areas around the park. Many thanks to Veolia who removed the three huge piles of green waste, along with a few bags of litter that was picked on the estate, the following day!

Paths and verges have been tidied and hedges cut. Most, if not all, come under the John O'Connor contract – either directly for SADC, via Wheathampstead Parish Council or by other sub-contracts. Cllr Gavin will ensure hedge-cutting is completed late Autumn.

WDPS will continue to work with Veolia to get graffiti removed when reported.

Other ideas for future consideration include:

- replacing the two existing bus shelters with something similar to those in the village centre;
- tree and shrub planting;
- improvements to the garden areas at Hill Dyke Community Centre (we are awaiting feedback from the Community Centre management);
- assisting residents in forming a 'Resident Association';
- enlisting 'resident volunteers' to form working parties;
- Siting a bench at an appropriate location.

It is an ongoing project and we will continue to consult with people who live nearby. We hope to persuade more volunteers to join us to help take this forward. It may take time but by working with everyone involved, and with their goodwill and assistance, we know we can make a difference.

WDPS AGM 2022

At a lively AGM, Parish Councillor Anne Howie gave an interesting talk on wilding, and there is a brief report on the subject on page 4.

As usual there was an election for committee members. Sue Hemming stood down and Christine Boyles left more recently, and we are very grateful to both of them for all the work they have done for WDPS. The committee is now as listed below.

We have some vacancies on the committee which we are hoping to fill very shortly. If you think you might be interested in coming on the committee – or in volunteering for projects and working parties – please get in touch. We would be delighted to hear from you.



The Committee for 2022 -23 is:

Diane Black	Iain Begg	Julie Bell
Nigel Oxley	Jan Knights	Richard Brett

The Queen's Green Canopy Project

As part of the late Queen's Green Canopy Project, WDPS and many other volunteers are organising to plant a large number of tree saplings at Coleman Green.

The woodlands to the south west of the John Bunyan Public House are owned by two different estates - Ayot Estates and Althorp Estates.

Last February's strong winds blew down many of the existing trees in the woodland on the land owned by Althorp Estate. This was largely brought about by the trees being left exposed because woodland management tree clearance works had been carried out on the adjacent land owned by Ayot Estates.

WDPS were very concerned about the devastation to the area and we wanted to make sure that the woodlands were going to be replanted. We firstly contacted Ayot Estates and they assured us that following some ground works they are intending to plant new sapling trees this autumn/winter. We then arranged to meet with the Land Agent from Althorp Estates. We had a very positive meeting with him along with a number of local residents and the outcome of the meeting was:

- Althorp would fund some clearing works of the fallen trees and areas of scrub. This would be done whilst the work on the adjacent land was being carried out.
- WDPS would prepare a plan of the proposed tree planting and agree this with Althorp Estates.
- In late autumn Althorp would provide WDPS with approx. 250 saplings and tree protectors. WDPS would then arrange for the saplings to be planted. We have had offers of help from the two local junior schools, Scouts, Brownies, Cubs and the Wheathampstead Open Spaces Volunteers.

We are pleased to report that half of the Althorp Estate land has now been cleared ready for our volunteer tree planting in late autumn. We are hoping to carry on next year and organise a similar project on the other half of the land.

Before the clearing:



After the clearing:



Donations to campaign against Luton Airport



Our lead story is about the public inquiry into the planned expansion of Luton Airport. The key player in the campaign against expansion is LADACAN, (Luton and District Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise). The particular focus at the moment is to support LADACAN with the momentous task of representing groups opposing expansion of the airport at the public inquiry.

Andrew Lambourne from LADACAN is doing the lion's share of arguing against them. But to do this, he needs the support of legal counsel from time to time, and WDPS is trying to raise funds to help facilitate this.

LADACAN have set up a GoFundMe page so that anyone who wants to can make a donation. It would be great to show Andrew that he has the support of most people in the local community. WDPS has made a donation to the campaign of £250.

All the fun of Village Day

Wow! What a scorcher Village Day was! And it was also a good opportunity to meet up with many WDPS members and have a chat about local issues.

It was an occasion too to welcome new members. To celebrate our membership, we held a prize draw for new and existing paid-up members. The lucky winner won a local village hamper.

As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter (page 6), we are keen to encourage people to dispose of dog poo bags appropriately, and a good way to do this is to use a doo-kee.

To raise the profile of the campaign and show how useful doo-kees can be, we held a competition to pin the doo-kee on the donkey, which proved very popular especially with children.



Wilding Wheathampstead

We reported on the Wilding Wheathampstead project in our last newsletter. Anne Howie is leading the project on behalf of the Parish Council, and the good news is a lot is going on.

At a recent meeting at Croft Farm, Tessa Reason showed project supporters round her wild meadow, where she proudly pointed out the splendid wild orchids.

The wild meadow has developed over a number of years and search is on for other suitable sites. The Parish Council are talking to their contractors about maintaining some of their land in a more natural way. St Helen's Church meanwhile are undertaking a study of their graveyard area.

Most of us sadly are unable to contribute to wilding on a large scale, but what many of us are able to do is allow part of our garden to become 'wild'. One of our members has been doing this for several years.

WDPS is represented on the wilding project and so we shall keep you updated.



Are there any excuses for dropping litter?

Recently whilst out cycling, I saw a group of three young lads ahead of me and one of them threw a drinks can into the bushes. So, when I reached them, I asked, “Why did you throw that can into the bushes?” and I found their responses/excuses quite enlightening...

“**It wasn't me**” – denial is an instinctive response and comes naturally to many people but of course on this occasion I had witnessed it myself.

“**It's only a coke can**” – as they say, size doesn't matter, and litter is still litter regardless of its size.

“**Why does it matter to you**” – it matters to everyone who cares about their village and the planet.

“**It's not that far in**” – this was an intriguing response implying it's not as bad as somebody who throws it further into the bushes. Maybe he thought that he was making it easier for us Wombles to litterpick!?

“**There's no bins**” – a classic and I had to agree with him because there were none in the vicinity but I said there would probably be a bin at the nearest bus stop.

“**We're making a job for you**” – another classic and I have become used to people thinking that because I'm picking up litter then I must be working for the council or doing community service. They were surprised when I told them how many volunteer Wombles there are who just want to Keep Wheathampstead Wonderful.

“**Oh all right, I'll pick it up if it makes you happy**” – I tried not to laugh and just said that it would make a lot of local people happy if there was less litter and thanked him.

We'll never know whether this intervention will have any lasting effect on them, but I hope that it does and at least it gave me some insight into how a person who drops litter justifies their actions.

What have the Wombles been up to recently?

You may have noticed that there is less litter around the village and our countryside so the unseen work of the Wombles of Wheathampstead is most certainly having an effect. We definitely have less litter today compared to pre-pandemic times and I believe this is due to the growing number of Wombles. Each doing their bit, however small or however infrequently, to Keep Wheathampstead Wonderful.

FYI – we receive litter pickers “free of charge” from Veolia because they value the help from volunteers enabling them to focus on the many other street cleaning tasks.



Every month we get requests from people who would like to do some Wombling and many of those are families who are getting their kids involved in litter picking.

Why don't you join in? The Scouts and Beavers organised their own litter picks and a local business also borrowed our Wombling Kit to have a team building (Corporate Social Responsibility) day. Sand on 1st September we supported the Hilldyke Community Day by litter picking round the estate.



What about grant funding?

We are excited that our Don't Mess with Wheathampstead (DMWW) litter campaign was awarded a grant of £2.5k from the Hertfordshire Community Foundation which will go towards three main initiatives:

DooKees – these are a simple device for dog walkers to carry dog poo bags to the next bin and (hopefully) discourage throwing them on the ground. These have been promoted through social media and the fun “Pin the DooKee on the Donkey” at village day.

Re-usable Pocket Ashtrays – following the success last year we are bringing back the small re-usable pocket ashtrays because the biggest source of microplastics in the oceans is cigarette filters!

Smart Bin Trial – these bins are solar powered, can compact the waste up to 10x, send email/SMS warnings when nearly full, can have in-built CCTV cameras. Our strategy is that these can be implemented at “zero cost to councils” through advertising.

[Contact info@wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk and we will be happy to supply you with a litter picker and enrol you to our army of Wombles.]



A DooKee holds the poo bag and hangs from the dog lead.

CPRE visit Wheathampstead

You may remember that WDPS won the Chairman's Award at the 2018 CPRE Herts Rural Living Awards ceremony. We had a nice surprise in September when we heard that Terry Over, a CPRE trustee and one of the judges, was interested in visiting the village to see how we are progressing.

Julie Bell and Nigel Oxley met Terry at East Lane car park and showed him round the centre of the village. It was clear that he was very impressed and was particularly interested in how we have so many volunteers who maintain projects like the lovely gardens, and that is all to the credit of our gallant WDPS members.

Terry's intention is to write an article about Wheathampstead for the CPRE magazine and website, and we are waiting to hear from him.



WDPS win the Chairman's Award at the 2018 CPRE Rural Living Awards ceremony

Christmas Cards and 2023 Calendars

WDPS is delighted to be selling our Christmas cards and calendar again this year, with photography from the wonderful Jo Barnes.

We have packs of cards in colour and packs of black and white cards. They are A6 postcard size and you can purchase a pack of 12 with 3 of each design for £5.

The calendar is A4 size when you display it, or A3 if you open it out, and it costs £10. The theme this year is local open spaces.

Both will shortly be available at Manor Pharmacy or you can order online at

[http://
www.wheathampsteadpreservation.
org.uk](http://www.wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk)



WDPS has recently replaced the old unattractive metal signs into the Crinkle Crankle Garden.

We have installed a new oak finger post in Rectory Copse and an oak sign on the fence leading into the garden from Tithe Barn Yard.

We hope that you will agree these new signs are much more in keeping with the character of our historic village centre.



Repositioning a favourite bench

Few benches can enjoy a better view than the one on the footpath leading from High Meads, with its panoramic vista over the Lea valley. But unfortunately, because nearby bushes had grown, the view had become partly blocked.

A member alerted us to the problem, and two WDPS volunteers dismantled it, moved it (with the help of a local farmer) and re-erected it in just the right spot, as the picture on the left shows.

And a date for your 2023 Calendar . . .

The next WDPS AGM will be at 7.30 pm on
Friday, 24 February 2023