

Chorleywood Matters



Issue No 30 Autumn 2013

NEWS & VIEWS FROM CHORLEYWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

PLAY AREA DECISION

At the meeting of the Parish Council on 1 October it was agreed that the proposed Play Area could not be installed on the site close to Shepherd's Bridge. This decision was not made lightly and Councillors spent many hours discussing the issue prior to the meeting and over one and a half hours on the night. However the Council does strongly support having a new play area within the parish.

The Chairman took great care to ensure that all who had indicated to the Parish Council staff at the door that they wished to address the Council had an opportunity to do so. The time allotted for the Open Forum was extended to allow residents to raise all the issues that they felt were important. Councillors listened carefully to the points put forward, both for and against this site, by residents and representatives of local organisations. The concerns included parking, road and footpath safety, child safety, dog fouling and the increased possibility of antisocial behaviour.

The Higher Level Stewardship, which brings a grant of over £6,000 per annum from Natural England for the protection of the Common, identified the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ruling that no development could be within 200 metres of a pond in which there are Great Crested Newts, an internationally endangered and

therefore protected species. As the initially selected Christ Church site was so close to a breeding pond for the newts, the Parish Council were unable to go ahead with their first choice of site and the only appropriate site left which now met the criteria was Site 13 near Shepherd's Bridge. Whilst the Council agreed in principle to this location with Three Rivers DC, who are financing this project, the agreement was subject to four conditions. Two of these were met. The other two, in the opinion of the Council, had not been adequately addressed. These were "lack of parking and lack of a footpath".

The permissive parking area at Shepherd's Bridge is small and heavily used, especially by dog walkers, and our concerns were that vehicles would either park on the road in the area of the bridge or use the parking area at the Old Shepherd public house, which incorporates designated parking areas for the residents of Ellwood Terrace and vehicle access to Shepherd's Cottage.

The Parish Council also considered that at present the bridge represents a significant risk to pedestrians, especially for parents with buggies and children on foot. In addition, there is no footpath on the roads leading up to the site and there is a steady flow of traffic all day, increasing in the rush hours due to the proximity of the station.

The visual and environmental impact of a play space tucked in the wooded area of the Common would be minimal but the risk of an injury to a child on its own not being immediately discovered and that of vandalism and antisocial behaviour is a major concern. An independent report to the Council from the Safety Advisor for Hertfordshire Police also expressed concerns about the safety of the site.

There have been accusations that the Parish Council has not listened to the community. This relates to the survey by TRDC. However, a subsequent audit of the figures in this survey demonstrates that there were



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PLAY AREA DECISION **Cont'd**

under 400 residents of voting age in favour of a play space on the Common out of an electorate of over 9,000. The Parish Council received almost equal numbers of letters for and against the play area on the Common.

Moreover, many letters made the point that they had assumed that the area under consideration was still the Christ Church site. They had also assumed that the play area would be fenced, but fencing anywhere on the Common is prohibited under the 1954 Scheme of Regulation of the Management of the Common, a binding legal document which dictates what may or may not be done on the Common. Several people said that they had changed their minds when all of these facts were known. The Parish Council had to take all of these matters into consideration and made their decision accordingly.

The Parish Council has asked the District Council to consider placing the play area in Chorleywood House grounds, which is currently the home of the Tennis Club, the Youth Football Club and the Youth Club. Three Rivers Leisure Committee meet in November and we await their decision on the way forward.

CHORLEYWOOD PRESENTS ...

Chorleywood Presents ... is an exciting new event to start the New Year in style and to promote Chorleywood's largest venue - the War Memorial Hall.

The original date of Saturday 7 December has been postponed due to technical issues but we hope you will be able to come and enjoy some great performances from many of the stars of our community – all of whom are regular hirers of the Hall. As well as great entertainment, there will be refreshments served by the WRVS volunteers.

So far, the line-up includes Carol Kristian, something special from Chorleywood Bookshop, Chorleywood Choral Society, HartBeeps (children's music), Blag Theatre Group, the Rock and Roll Dancers and demonstrations of Zumba, Keep Fit and Pilates. And there's lots more to come.

Our website will give you all the information after the Christmas break.

RATTY IS DOING FINE ON THE RIVER CHESSESS

Last month you may have seen reports in the media that a recent survey was reporting a further decline in Britain's water vole population. Cornwall apparently now has none at all. But the chalk streams in the Chilterns are bucking the trend and, particularly on the Chess, water voles are thriving.

Loss of habitat, especially the loss of cover vegetation along our river banks, has been part of the problem but Alan Beechey, Chalk Streams Officer at the Chilterns Conservation Board, has no doubt as to the main culprit – the American mink, which started to appear in our rivers early this century. Mink are fearsome hunters with a voracious appetite for water voles and are slim enough to get into the underwater entrances to vole burrows. One mink can wipe out a whole population of voles in no time. In 2001 around 350 water voles were recorded on the Chess; two years later, after the arrival of the first mink on the river, the population had declined by 97%!

But since then Alan has been working with environmental groups such as the Beds, Bucks and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, local volunteer groups and landowners with river frontages to restore a water vole friendly habitat along the river and to eliminate the predatory mink.

Mink rafts have been installed along the Chess and are monitored regularly by dedicated volunteers. These wooden tunnels contain a clay pad which reveals the paw prints of animals going through. When mink prints are spotted, a trap is installed, the mink is captured and humanely destroyed.

Now, at each count, the water vole numbers have risen and the latest figure, for 2011, is 345 individuals.

Protecting Ratty requires constant work by a lot of people. You can help. If you walk regularly along the Chess, keep your eyes open and, if you spot a mink, report the time and place to Alan at the Chilterns Board abeechey@chilternsaonb.org or let the Parish Council know and they will pass the information on.



A COMMUNITY PLAN FOR CHORLEYWOOD PARISH

The Parish Council is excited to announce a partnership with local interest groups as work starts on a Community Plan for the Parish of Chorleywood.

What is a Community Plan?

- Also known as a Parish Plan or a Community-Led Plan
- It is a document produced by the community setting out its shared vision for the future.
- It identifies key issues that need to be addressed within the local area and actions needed to achieve them.

Why have a Community Plan?

- It celebrates the positive aspects of Chorleywood life and highlights areas of local need.
- It helps residents to become more involved in what goes on around them.
- It gives the statutory authorities, including the Parish Council and TRDC, vital information about the needs and views of our community.

Who draws up the Community Plan?

- ALL parishioners will get an opportunity to have their say about their community, how they would like it to develop and what they would like protected.

- The Parish Council will lead the process, in partnership with local interest groups such as the Residents' Associations and Friends of the Common.

How is a Community Plan produced?

- A Steering Group of Parish Councillors and members of local interest groups will be formed to take the process forward.
- A series of community consultations will take place to find out what issues need to be addressed.
- A questionnaire will be compiled and sent to every parish resident over 18, and the results will be analysed.
- An action plan will be drafted from the results of the questionnaire and feedback from the community will be sought.
- Once other consultees, such as TRDC, have had their input, the final plan can be put forward for adoption.

A steering Group is in the process of being finalised and we will bring you updates on our website and through the local press as work progresses.

LATEST NEWS

Grazing Returns

The Open Spaces Committee have agreed a scheme to reintroduce cattle onto the Common. English Long Horn cattle will be seen grazing off Dog Kennel Lane in the spring. There will be an open day which will explain the project and answer any questions organised in the new year.

Steward to the Commoners

We are looking for a Steward to the Commoners. This person should ideally have a legal background and an understanding of Common Land. The role will be to liaise with the five Commoners and the Parish Council as land owners and to inform and advise Commoners of their legal rights, duties and responsibilities. Anyone interested should contact the Parish Clerk.

CHORLEYWOOD YOUTH

One of our young residents, a member of the Hertfordshire Youth Parliament, has approached the Parish Council for support in setting up a Chorleywood Youth Council. We were happy to provide a meeting place and have given them a small grant to cover initial set up costs. Chorleywood Youth Council can now be found on Facebook and Twitter. They meet on the first Monday in every month at the Hollybush Hall from 7.00 to 8.30 pm. If you are aged between 11 and 18 and want to make a difference for the youth in our community, please come along. You would be made very welcome.

Cllr. Anne Shaw operates a Youth Council for Three Rivers District Council, details of which can be found on the TRDC website. Once established, it is felt that the CYC will feed up and link in with the one organised by TRDC.

Chorleywood Youth Club has operated from the Field Study Centre in Chorleywood House Estate for nearly 20 years. The location is perceived as being isolated, but the Club has plenty of outside and inside space and noise does not become a nuisance. Currently the operational aspect of the Youth Club is under review so watch this space in the New Year.

PLAY TRAIL

The unique biodiversity of Chorleywood Common is internationally recognised and is the reason why Natural England has granted the Parish Council a Higher Level Stewardship to help us further protect and enhance our special heritage. However, a recent RSPB survey discovered that sadly, too few children are "connected" with nature. Our Common offers a wonderful opportunity for young people to have fun, and at the same time, to learn more about the natural world around them.

So the Parish Council and the Rangers are working on setting up a Play/Nature Trail around the Common, linking play areas constructed of materials naturally found there, e.g. climbing logs, den building, holly tunnels, mazes and the use of features already present on the Common.

Councillor's contact details are available from the Parish Council Officers, Parish notice boards, or from the Council's Website.

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CHORLEYWOOD ON TV

Chorleywood residents are not the only people who appreciate the beauty of our area. Even if you have never heard of Chorleywood, it's very likely you will have seen it on TV or in films. The most recent is the BBC's *Escape Artist*, a legal drama that came out on 29 October, starring David Tennant and featuring the War Memorial Hall both inside and out, the Black Horse pub and the Common.

An episode of *Jonathan Creek* was filmed recently using the Black Horse and the houses on the Common. It is due to be aired either later this year or early in 2014.

Connect Films used an Octocopter (a radio guided helicopter that can be used for aerial photography) for an advertisement featuring a children's football match on the Common and the BBC History unit came to Chorleywood on 18 October to film on public footpath 25 (Copmanswick) for a forthcoming documentary.

Past highlights include scenes on the Common in the *Just William* series that was screened at Christmas 2011 and Miranda Hart's Christmas Party at the War Memorial Hall in 2009. The Common has also featured in various episodes of *Waking the Dead* and *EastEnders*. Money raised as a result of filming is ring-fenced for the maintenance of the Common and the Halls.

The trail will invite children to move from one area to another, encouraging exercise and broadening their knowledge of the Common: it will be accessible from anywhere around the Common. We hope to be able to provide information identifying interesting wildlife and environmental aspects at each area, the aim being to raise awareness and to educate through natural play.

Although the Trail and play areas can be achieved within the Parish Council's budget, we will be seeking grant funding to provide such things as small information boards, down-loadable maps, etc., which will enable those following the Trail, whether children or adults, residents or visitors, to understand the Common's habitats and special biodiversity and to enjoy the Common on its own terms.

