



ST STEPHEN PARISH COUNCIL



Autumn Newsletter Issue 30 - 2015

Greenwood Park quality recognised

Greenwood Park has won the prestigious Green Flag Award for the third time, recognising it as among the best parks in the country, following 'mystery shopper' visits by Green Flag inspectors who assessed grounds management, innovation and the way facilities are tailored to the needs of the community. The inspectors commented: "... an extremely good park, well managed by an enthusiastic and committed team of staff" and "Wood and meadow areas excellently maintained. The staff have a clear commitment to nature conservation."



The 62-acre park, managed and run by your Parish Council, is used by a very wide variety of community groups in addition to being the location for many of the Council's popular community events. It is one of the largest and most diverse public parks in the area, with facilities ranging from a large children's play area to ancient woodland, football and cricket pitches to wildflower meadows, plus a Community Centre, Sports Pavilion, tennis courts and allotments.

Bricket Wood Common and Hanstead Wood also received awards, further reflecting the quality of the open spaces in the Parish and, in the case of Hanstead Wood, which received the Community Award, the dedication of the volunteers from the community.

Your Parish Council is responsible for two parks, six children's play areas, two ancient woodlands, three allotment sites, the Parish Centre and the Community Centre, all of which it manages and runs for the benefit of the local community.

See 'Facilities': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Parish Bus Shelters

To retain a rural feel for our three Parish villages, it was decided many years ago to give our local bus shelters a more countrified look, as opposed to the conventional style found in towns. Some of these little wooden shelters had been starting to look a bit tired and weather-worn. You may have noticed that, after many years of loyal service, all are now refurbished from top to tail and in fact so cosy that you may even forget to get on the bus!



Bluebell walk

Determining the optimum time to see bluebells can be tricky because of seasonal weather variations. This resulted in a slight source of embarrassment on our first foray into this adventure a few years ago in early April when there wasn't a bluebell to be seen! This year the weather came up trumps as Cllr Bell led an enthusiastic band of 30 residents through Jack Williams Wood and Bricket Wood Common, where the bluebells were seen in profusion. If you missed this year's walk, keep an eye on your Parish Noticeboards, website and newsletter next Spring.

Position on the rail freight terminal

At its July meeting, your Parish Council issued a statement on the decision by St Albans District Council (SADC) not to request a Court of Appeal hearing on the High Court's refusal of permission to appeal the dismissal of its case against the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government regarding the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI): "It is the people of St Stephen Parish who will suffer most directly if the monstrous SRFI goes ahead. We recognise that SADC, despite its vigorous opposition to the scheme, has drawn to a close its legal battles. This leaves Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), the majority land-owner, as the only group of elected representatives with options to prevent the SRFI. We urge HCC Councillors to consider all such options, including finding alternative uses for the land. This Parish Council has a long-standing commitment to oppose inappropriate Green Belt development, and that will continue. In this case, however, we reluctantly accept that there are a range of uses to which HCC could put the land, the benefits of which would overwhelmingly outweigh the disastrous results of allowing the SRFI to proceed."



See 'News': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Armed Forces Day

Your Parish Council held its parade and gathering in June at the Parish Centre as part of the national Armed Forces Day celebrations. Members of the Navy Reserve, Air Cadets, and Scouts and Guide Associations took part in the parade through Bricket Wood to the Parish Centre. The Armed Forces Day Flag was raised by an officer and an Able Seaman from *HMS Wildfire*. Watford Brass Band played music throughout the afternoon, and tea and cakes were taken on the lawn. There was a display of military memorabilia, with many of the articles being loaned by Parish residents. A charity bucket collection raised £100 for the Gurkha Welfare Trust, this year celebrating 200 years of Gurkha service with the British Army. There are plans in place to hold an Armed Forces Day next year in June.



Safeguarding valued assets

Scrubbs Wood and Park Wood have been confirmed as Assets of Community Value (ACVs), following a review by St Albans District Council of appeals by the landowners. Cllr Bell led your Parish Council's original nomination of the land for listing in 2013, and its contribution to the review. Under the Localism Act 2011, if an AVC comes up for sale, community groups will have six months to prepare a bid to acquire the asset in order to further social wellbeing or social interests of the community.

These are the second and third AVC listings achieved by your Parish Council so far, the first being Hanstead Wood and the adjacent field.

See 'News': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk



Taking play seriously

The play area at Greenwood Park is a major attraction, with children coming from near and far. Some of the equipment, including the aerial runway and the wooden bridge, will have to be replaced or removed. Our intention is that other play equipment will be realigned in order to provide space for a new large rope construction, with a variety of built-in activities to suit all ages. It will also allow children to use the sand on which it is to be sited. Already being put to good use is a new 'spinning bowl' (pictured) at Park Street Recreation Ground. Testimonials so far include: "This is epic." Give it a spin when you're next at Park Street Rec.

Park Pavilion extension approved

Improved sports facilities are a step closer with the granting of planning permission for a single-storey extension of the Pavilion at Greenwood Park, including construction of decking with storage underneath, facing the tennis courts. The application was submitted by your Parish Council in cooperation with the Greenwood Park Tennis Club, which is awaiting the result of a bid to Sport England to fund the work.



See 'News': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Educational day in St Julian's Wood

St Julian's Wood became an 'outdoor classroom' for Killigrew School, thanks to Cllr Bell's enthusiasm. He accompanied children, parents and members of staff to the woods to share his wealth of knowledge. The children were interested to find out the names of different trees and plants, and to learn the different ways that trees can be categorised. They were fascinated by the walkways that had been made using the tree branches and shrubbery. They enjoyed collecting items from the woodland floor to bring back to the classroom to look at in more detail. Future use of the woods for outdoor learning is planned.



Supporting local rail services

Your Parish Council supported preservation and improvement of the Abbey Line in its response to the County Council's Draft Rail Strategy. Objecting to a proposal to convert the Abbey Line into a Bus Rapid Transit system, or 'busway', Cllr Tyndale commented: "Instead of an environmentally destructive 'busway', people deserve the restoration of the Abbey Line's passing loop at Bricket Wood. This would improve the service frequency, making it easier for people to choose rail travel over road journeys. We



should be investing in – rather than discarding – rail services, particularly now that Watford Junction has been reconfigured to allow Abbey Line trains direct access through to London Euston." Your Parish Council responds to many public consultations on behalf of its Parishioners. Over the next six months, we will provide robust responses to consultation over the awarding of the next West Midlands rail franchise, which will run from October 2017.

See 'News': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Safeguarding local green space

Planning permission for the development of a Sainsbury's Local on land adjacent to Three Hammers public house was recently rejected, after objections from your Parish Council. Quoted in the *St Albans & Harpenden Review*, Chairman Cllr Freeman commented: "This is good news, for not only the residents of Chiswell Green, but also for St Stephen Parish as a whole. Hopefully, the local retailers can now continue to provide the excellent services to the community that they have done for many years, without the fear of having to close due to competition from one of the supermarket giants. ... The Three Hammers Public House can continue to retain its area of green space without being swamped by another development. The 'green' is still retained in Chiswell Green."



Camera Club gallery

Hirers of the Parish Centre's Tennyson Hall will have noticed the addition of 12 large photographs brightening up the walls. The idea came from the Park Street Camera Club, who hire the hall. The pictures displayed are available to purchase from the club and will be changed regularly. Please do have a look, and thanks to Clive, our Maintenance Man, for constructing the fixings on the walls. Pictured (l-r): Sue Anderson, Rosemary Wenzelul, Connie Fitzgerald, Terry Day, John Jennings & Chris Gilbert.

See 'Facilities': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk



Parish in Bloom

You may have noticed that the large bed at the entrance to Greenwood Park has recently been replanted. As part of the 2015 Parish in Bloom initiative, a range of grasses were planted to complement the large boulders in the bed. We hope that they will become a permanent feature as they mature. Some bedding plants have been added to provide extra colour and the intention is to plant spring bulbs.

Meanwhile, the First Park Street Brownies have been at the forefront of helping with the Parish in Bloom initiative. The Brownies meet at the Parish Centre and they have been working towards the 'Gardener's Badge'. Dave Williams, one of our Groundsmen, spoke to the Brownies about how to use a range of gardening tools and about other related gardening issues. The Brownies tell us that the talk was "brilliant and really useful". This was followed up by 20 or so Brownies planting up the two beds outside the Parish Centre with petunias and coleus. The beds look wonderful – thank you, Brownies.

Woodland management on the Common

Following approvals from Natural England, the Forestry Authority and St Albans District Council, the Bricket Wood Common woodland maintenance and improvement will commence shortly. This work will progress over five years and will include some timber extraction to improve the remaining trees and woodland structure.

Two timber stacking points and loading bays are being constructed on land belonging to Munden Estate, with access to both sites from School Lane. Some work is also being carried out to remove small trees and scrub close to the sides of School Lane to facilitate vehicle access and safety.

The improvement work and some timber extraction is planned to start this autumn.

The Neighbourhood Plan – shaping our long-term future

The creation of a Neighbourhood Plan is underway, aiming to give the local community a strong voice on how the Parish area develops and ensure that we receive the maximum benefit possible from the new Community Infrastructure Levy. With oversight by a Steering Group comprising Parish Councillors and representatives of the three residents associations, five Working Groups (Community, Housing, Green Space, Transport and Business) have been established. It's not too late to get involved.



See 'Your Parish': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Christmas Carol Concert

Don't miss the annual Community Carol Concert, with performances and contributions from local choirs and schools, supported by the Watford Band and followed by refreshments. There will be a charity collection in aid of the Stroke Association. 4-6pm, 6 December 2015, at Greenwood Park.

See 'Events': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Remembrance Day service

The very first Remembrance Day service, organised years ago by the Park Street Residents Association, attracted 12 people. Last year's service, a Parish Council event led by Cllr Getley, was a truly significant community occasion, attracting more than 600 people and with wreaths laid by many local groups. We intend to arrange road closures this year to enhance safety, and hope to see you there, 2.45-3.45pm, 8 November 2015, at the Park Street War Memorial. If you wish to lay a wreath at this year's service please contact either Cllr Getley 01727 872507 or Cllr Freeman 01727 873543.



See 'Events': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Dates for your diary

12 Sept: Hanstead Wood volunteer day, meet at the entrance from the car park, 10am, 01923 673169

15 Sept: 'Hedgehogs & Hedgehog Rescue', Park Street & Frogmore Society, Park St Village Hall, 8.15pm, £1, 01727 873612

19 Sept: Charity Jumble Sale, St Bart's Church Hall, 10-11am, 50p, 01727 873672

22 Sept: 'The River Ver', Bricket Wood Society, Bricket Wood URC, 8pm, £2, 01923 279870

25 Sept: Macmillan Biggest Coffee Morning, Greenwood Park, 9.30am-12.30pm, 07778 855875

26 Sept: St Julian's Wood Volunteer day, meet at Greenwood Park top car park, 10am

27 Sept: River Ver litter Clean-up, Park Street Neighbourhood Watch, 10am-2pm, 01727 751319

17 Nov: 'Park Street, Frogmore & Colney Street in Old Images', Park Street & Frogmore Society

24 Nov: 'Medieval St Albans', Bricket Wood Society

Main Parish Council Meetings:

17 Sept, 15 Oct, 19 Nov, St Stephen Parish Centre, 7.30pm

2015 Parish Council events

10 Sept: Parish in Bloom Awards Evening, Greenwood Park Community Centre, 7pm, 01923 681443

8 Nov: Remembrance Service, War Memorial, Park Street, 2.45pm for 3pm, 01923 681443

6 Dec: Carol Concert, Greenwood Park Community Centre, 4pm, free, 01923 681443

See 'Events': www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Abbey Line Trail launched

The Abbey Line railway, between Watford Junction and St Albans, has a new walking trail, so why not give it a try and enjoy the beautiful Ver and Colne valleys? Developed by the Countryside Management Service for the Community Rail Partnership, this trail gives the option of walking the entire nine miles or just short sections, using the Abbey Flyer to get to your starting point. The Trail is way-marked in both directions and has links to each of the stations.



Beavers litterpick

1st St Albans Beavers went litterpicking in Greenwood Park, to help us to earn our Global Challenge badge. 24 Beavers and adult helpers rummaged in bushes for around 40 minutes and we were surprised that in such a short space of time, we managed to collect 10 supermarket bags full of litter! What surprised us most was that there are loads of bins at Greenwood Park – why do people just throw their rubbish on the ground?

We are always looking for people who could spare an hour or two each week to help the young people in our local community to experience Scouting. Find out more (www.firststalbansscouts.org.uk).

Julie Webb, Beaver Scout Leader



St Stephen Parish Council

Parish Council Meetings

Main Council and Committee meetings are held in the Council Chamber at the St Stephen Parish Centre in Station Road, Bricket Wood. Times and dates are displayed on the Parish Noticeboards. Residents are welcome to attend the meetings.

The Parish Office

First floor, St Stephen Parish Centre, Station Road, Bricket Wood, St Albans, AL2 3PJ

Open Daily from 9.00am to 5.00pm or by prior appointment. Contact either: Juliet Pienaar, Clerk, or Carol Hardy, Assistant Clerk

Tel: 01923 681443 Fax: 01923 681338

Email: clerk@ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

www.ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

