

CHAIRMANS CORNER

By Paul Savage

Welcome to the Spring 2013 edition of Knoll News. Very pleasingly, there was a full house at the 2012 AGM in November to ask questions of local Councillors and most importantly to hear Carl Shoben of South London Healthcare NHS Trust talk about the proposed changes to the Trust, following the Special Administrators draft report. This was followed by a number of probing questions from the floor, which reflected the widespread interest and concern felt by Members about the proposed changes. Councillor Douglas Auld then gave a short address about the Chislehurst Road bridge redevelopment and Councillor Simon Fawthrop followed this with a critique of the Government's proposed changes to planning rules, which would allow 8 meter house extensions without planning permission. A full report of the AGM can be found on our website (www.kra.orp.org.uk) or just Google "Knoll Residents Association".

Looking forward, we are arranging a meeting with local Councillors representing our area to discuss matters of common concern and to raise local issues with them. The date of this meeting is not quite settled but if members have any issues they would like raised please let me know (my e-mail address is given towards the end of the newsletter), and we will raise them either at the meeting or subsequently.

Finally, it is with this issue of the Knoll News that we ask for subscriptions. Elsewhere in this issue you will find a description of what we do to maintain the character of the Knoll area and to try to make it a better place to live. At only £1 per adult household member, subscriptions are modest and I would strongly encourage all local residents to join. Please complete the form on the back page and pass it, together with your subscription, to your local Road Warden, whose address is in the list also at the back of the Newsletter.

Thank-you.

TREE PLANTING

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.
The second best time is now! In fact you have just missed it.
The best time to plant large trees is the end of October & November.
Small trees in containers can be planted any time.

Planting tips:

CHOOSE your site away from buildings and overhead power lines.

PREPARE the ground, digging to a depth of two feet and working in lots of manure or compost.

DIG a hole deep & wide enough to take all the tree roots comfortably.

KNOCK IN a stake finishing just below the lowest branch of the tree.

REPLACE the soil, making it firm.

SECURE the stem to the stake, top & bottom.

After care:

WATER immediately after planting & weekly in first growing season.

DO NOT allow grass or weeds to grow within two feet of stem.

ENSURE stake remains firm, remove it when stem can support itself, usually after one to three years.

REMOVE dead or crossing branches, suckers rising from the roots or weak shoots from the stem.

Please remember to water any council trees outside your property during dry spells. Also cut back any of your foliage overhanging public footpaths.

WHAT WE DO

I am sometimes asked what does a Residents Association do? Obviously, I cannot say what other RAs do, but I thought it would be useful to try to explain what we at the Knoll Residents Association try to achieve and how we go about it. Our aim is to maintain, and if possible improve, the Knoll area as an attractive, safe and pleasant place to live.

Partly we do this by seeking to act where necessary as a bridge between local residents and LBB and other bodies and getting LBB attention through our links with local Councillors. Examples of this include making a number of representations over the years to South East trains about the poor state (rotting leaf fall etc.) of Station Approach and to LBB about refuse from Orpington High St, both of which have resulted in action. We have also discussed local parking issues with LBB, resulting in parking restrictions being introduced in St Kilda Rd, and we are currently trying to ascertain the implications of the proposed redevelopment of Orpington Station Car Park on local car parking (see separate article).

As part of this proactive approach, we also have regular meetings with representatives of the local SNT to discuss local crime figures and policing and have now introduced regular meetings with local Councillors to supplement the strong informal links we already have. We also attend public meetings and join in consultations on matters of local interest or which may affect local residents. This year we have attended LBB's "Tough Choices" meetings and raised questions, attended meetings on the future of Orpington Hospital, the draft report on South London Healthcare Trust, and engaged in the consultations on the Bromley Strategic Plan, the Government's proposed relaxation of planning rules and the draft Healthcare Trust report.

Members of the Committee also monitor local planning applications, the state of the trees in the area (the Knoll area is very fortunate in the number of trees and other greenery in the vicinity), and are represented on the local road safety panel and the Bromley Federation of Residents Associations. More details about these activities and the preparation and distribution of the Knoll News are given over the page in pieces by the Committee members who undertake these activities on behalf of the Association.

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE...? Your KRA committee give a short description of their roles & responsibilities

Planning Secretary - Carol Gray

My role is to keep an eye on planning applications locally, and report back to KRA committee meetings. I look at applications inside the KRA area, and also more broadly in Orpington as a whole. One of our main concerns is the local environment. While we rarely seek to get involved in ordinary house extensions etc, we do object to new build or other developments that amount to over development or otherwise spoil the environment and amenities for local residents.

Details of planning applications are available on the Council's website, together with agendas and minutes of Planning Committee meetings. If you are interested, you can register on the council's website to receive emails about planning applications in your immediate area.

The KRA committee also receives details of applications for alcohol licences and sends in comments when appropriate. If you are concerned about the rise in the number of High Street shops selling alcohol, you might find it interesting to read the council's licensing policy document on the council's website here:
http://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/226/statement_of_licensing_policy_2011-2014

Bromley Road Safety Consultative Panel - Miriam Harries

This group meets at the Civic Centre about once every two months. It is attended by the LBB Road Safety Officer, the LBB Traffic Engineer, the Police attends and representatives from Residents' Associations across the Borough.

The panel discusses:

Accident statistics

Any serious accidents and also operations carried out by the police, for example: seizing uninsured vehicles
Reports on work in schools to do with Road Safety, cycling and preparing young adults to become drivers
Road improvement works, reducing excess signage and so on (we were given regular updates on the progress of the Chislehurst Road railway bridge while it was being replaced)

All the representatives from Residents' Associations have the opportunity to raise any road traffic/road safety issues that affect their particular areas.

Tree Warden - Richard Healey

Part of my job as tree warden is to liaise between KRA members and the Council. If you have any queries concerning trees in our area, or hedges overhanging footpaths etc I can either give you a contact email or phone number at Bromley Council, or write to them on behalf of the Residents Association. The Council are not always prompt in their replies or actions, and have been known to take several weeks or months to respond.

Another thing I do each Spring is once the trees are in leaf again, I check on all our street trees to see if any have not survived the winter, and notify the Council. I also have a map of all those trees in our area subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

The KRA Secretary - Hilary Robson

The Committee meet about eight times per year and I prepare the agenda beforehand, take minutes and (try very hard to) get the notes and action points issued by the end of that week.

London Borough of Bromley Residents' Federation - Janet Whitehead

Representatives of all the borough's residents' associations are invited to meet bi-monthly to discuss issues which concern the local area they represent, as well as issues concerning the whole borough. Approximately 40 Residents' Associations are members of the LBBRF.

Issues recently discussed include the following:

The breakup of the South London Healthcare NHS Trust and how this will affect the residents of Bromley.

Bromley Area Action Plan, including redevelopment of Queen's Gardens.
Biggin Hill Airport & proposed Heritage Centre

The LBBRF has developed a good rapport with Bromley Council and delegates believe the Federation is valuable in highlighting issues happening in one part of the Borough which could happen elsewhere.

KRA Treasurer - Ian Black

I have two roles in the KRA. As Treasurer I am responsible for the Association's finances, recording and banking all the subscription receipts and of course paying the bills, most of which are for printing the Knoll News. I have to prepare accounts each year, which are audited and presented at the AGM.

My other role is to maintain the KRA's database. This holds a list of all the addresses in the KRA area and the road wardens covering those addresses. There are 3 issues of the Knoll News. The first is delivered to all residents of the KRA area. In this case the database is used to provide the road wardens with sheets listing the addresses in their road so they can record the subscribers and the amounts paid. They then send this to me along with the subscriptions collected so that the database can be updated and the money banked. Once the subscriptions are all collected I use the database to print lists of members in each road so the road wardens know who is a paid up member and therefore who should receive the subsequent two editions of the Knoll News.

Road Warden Co-ordinator - Chris Tait

This is just a brief note to tell you what I do behind the scenes to help the Knoll News get to your door. As you will appreciate there is much time and effort taken in writing the newsletter and we get them back from the printer after the articles have all been formatted and printed. There are usually two boxes containing over a thousand of them which need to be broken down into manageable delivery numbers.

We have four Road Warden secretaries and I break down the letters from the printer into four

Throughout the year I receive regular post and email from LB Bromley, councillors, adjoining associations etc. I circulate, forward or respond to these as necessary.

I also edit the Knoll News, pestering Councillors and fellow Committee members etc for articles, and then arranging the bulk printing. In September I issue the AGM invitations, approach speakers and arrange the AGM catering. This is my busiest time and my kra.secretary@gmail.com in-box needs daily attention.

groups of about three hundred which I then take round to the various Road Warden Secretaries.

Along with the batch of newsletters, I type up a note to be sent to the seventy or so road wardens who actually finally deliver the documents to each of our members' houses passing on any information that needs to be shared.

It is with relief that I dump the batch of newsletters into the eager hands of the Road Warden secretaries who then pass them on to the long suffering road wardens who deliver them to you. I do appreciate the hard work they do in this regard.

We are grateful to our MP Jo Johnson for the following item

PROTECTING OUR GREENBELT

I want to take this opportunity to reassure residents that changes in planning laws announced by the government to boost the economy will not have a negative impact on our treasured greenbelt.

I have sought and received assurances from the Planning Minister, Nick Boles, that our constituency's green and open spaces will be adequately protected. The Government will ensure that these changes do not lead to a planning free-for-all, and that local authorities that wish to preserve the special character of particular residential areas are able to do so.

The results of a public consultation run by the Department of Communities and Local Government are due shortly and I will report on those when they are available.

I can assure you that the Coalition Agreement commits the Government to safeguarding the Greenbelt for future generations.

ORPINGTON STATION CAR PARK

South Eastern Rail is planning to redevelop Orpington Station car park in the near future by introducing a new floor level. In a measure which cannot do other than increase the confidence of commuters in SE Rail's service, the materials for the redevelopment will be brought in by road as the rail link is not considered to be sufficiently robust in relation to the timeliness of deliveries. While we understand that the car park will not completely close during the redevelopment, up to 60%/70% will be closed at various times. We are concerned about where the cars decanted from the car park will park during the redevelopment and have raised the issue with both SE Rail and LBB.

KRA has written in to the Consultations on the Government's proposals objecting particularly to the proposal to allow the maximum depth of single storey rear extensions to be increased to 8 metres without planning permission.

SITUATIONS VACANT

We have vacancies for two road wardens: one covering 17A to 31 and 34 to 50 Knoll Rise and the other covering 8 to 62A Broomhill Road. Duties are relatively slight: delivering the Knoll News three times a year and receiving subscriptions. The Association really does depend on its Road Wardens to exist and thrive so I would urge anyone with a little spare time to think about volunteering. Please contact Richard Burton (Knoll Rise) or Ray Vaughan (Broomhill Road).

Following the increase in the number of Committee members at the last AGM, we also have four vacant places on the Committee. We would love to have some new members, so if you would like to do "your bit" for the area, please contact me (contact details for Richard, Ray and Paul Savage are in the Contact Us box below).

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING- the first step to a healthier lifestyle

GET FITTER

Do you want to be healthier and feel fitter? The way to improve health and well being could be just one step away - and what's more IT IS FUN. Research shows that dancing, and particularly Scottish country dancing, is one of the best forms of activity for keeping the body active and the mind alert. It can reduce the risk of osteoporosis and help prevent or complement the treatment of serious and chronic conditions.

REDUCE YOUR STRESS LEVELS

It is known that regular exercise increases the level of chemicals in the brain, notably serotonin, the 'happiness hormone'. As well as an increased sense of confidence and general happiness, a link has been established between dancing and a lowered risk of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia compared to other forms of exercise.

BOOST YOUR SOCIAL LIFE

Scottish country dancing is very sociable with a great sense of enjoyment. It is an activity suitable for all ages and levels of ability and fitness. Also, it is an ideal way of meeting people and making new friends. As well as bringing a wealth of physical health benefits, studies show that regular participation in Scottish country dancing leads to positive self-esteem, overall good health and longevity.

IT'S SO EASY TO GET STARTED

No partner necessary - No special clothes, just soft shoes - Lively music - Inexpensive

So, take the first step to improving your lifestyle and contact your local Scottish country dance group, the Orpington and District Caledonian Society, tel. 01689 828994 / 818153 or 0208 658 9188. Beginners meet Mondays, Advanced meet Thursdays.

CONTACT US

The contact details for specific officers & committee members are:-

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