



Message from the Chairman

Welcome to the spring 2017 edition of the WMG newsletter. Well what a year 2016 was from the very beginning to the very end. I look forward to 2017 having fewer surprises and new possibilities. Now that the new paths have weathered in, our main challenge this year is to clear the pond of some of the weed but more on that later.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

NOTICE is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of WOODCOTE MILLENNIUM GREEN TRUST (Registered Charity Number 1075872) will be held at 8.00pm on Wednesday 8th March in the Epsom Sports Club, Woodcote Road, and all residents in the area are invited.

The Agenda is as follows:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of last meeting
4. Trustees' Report and Accounts
5. Future plans & suggestions
6. Any Other Business

Under item 5, we would welcome any suggestions about improvements including ideas about funding for the pond work. If you cannot come to the AGM please contact any Trustee with your ideas or comments. We are managing the Green on your behalf, and look forward to hearing from you.

Refreshments will be available following the formal business, with an opportunity for informal discussion.

Duke of Edinburgh Scheme Volunteers

We have been especially happy to welcome a team of Duke of Edinburgh Scheme students to the Green. Alongside the many other volunteers who contributed to the sapling planting project in 2015, they helped with the preparation of the area for the saplings, clearing the areas to be planted, digging the holes and finally the planting. They then moved on to helping keep the paths clear and collecting numerous bags of litter. Their time with us concluded with a study of the wildlife in the area which will be published on the WMG website in the near future. This will help to inform the investigation into what can be done to improve the area for wildlife. Something to look out for!

Some feedback on the planting experience from one of the students: 'It was really lovely when people walked past and noticed the changes we had been making and thanked or congratulated us. It made us feel a sense of pride and achievement.'

Well... their contribution is very much appreciated. A big thank you to them all and we wish them all the very best success with their award.

Tree Surgery

We had some major tree surgery earlier in the year. A large horse chestnut had at some time suffered fire damage to the base causing a cavity that was starting to decay. The tree was in decline and at risk of becoming a hazard. We therefore had to take the decision to have it removed. Although very sad to take down such a large and old tree, a substantial proportion of the trunk was left to provide a habitat for woodpeckers, stag beetles and other wildlife. It has also cleared the tree canopy in the area allowing much more light through which will be a big help to the saplings planted close by.

Smoking

The litter generated by discarded cigarette butts around the benches continues to be a problem; it is unpleasant and unsightly.

As part of our on-going efforts to encourage those that smoke on the Green to be more responsible and to either take their cigarette butts and litter with them or dispose of them in a bin rather than on the ground, we are working closely with the Epsom & St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust. They have kindly offered to provide (and service) some cigarette butt boxes on a trial basis. We hope to have these installed in the coming weeks.

We do hope this will solve a problem which spoils the Green for many people.

Substation near Woodcote Hurst

Following demolition of the old building by the substation, we recently contacted Freedom Group (the contractors for UK Power Networks) and they explained that the temporary fences will be replaced and the trenches back filled by the end of February. This will be a welcome improvement to the area.

The Pond

You will have noticed that the pond is in desperate need of attention and is fast becoming clogged up and overgrown with bulrushes, lilies and reeds. We also have a serious issue with New Zealand Pygmy weed, which is currently forming a dense mat of vegetation around the outer edges. Alarming this has been referred to as 'the deadly and invasive pond-killing plant'. The species is now one of the biggest threats to ponds in the UK and, alongside the infamous and more widely known Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed, is one of the top 8 invasive plant species in the country.

The dense vegetation shades out other plants, leading to oxygen depletion and a resulting decline in the wildlife living there. If left, it will eventually completely overrun the pond. Ironically it was originally sold as an oxygenator but now that its impacts are understood it has been banned from sale. What can we do about it? We have sought professional advice and been advised that the pond will need to be mechanically dredged and the waste disposed of by removing it to another part of the Green. We have approached several companies that specialise in this field and expect to receive a number of quotes in the near future.

Needless to say, this will be an extremely expensive project and a significant drain on our financial resources but we feel that we must do something in order to save the pond. The pond forms such a pleasant focal point for the Green and attracts much wildlife such as ducks, moorhens, fish, butterflies, dragon flies, frogs etc.

We are currently looking at ways to secure the necessary funding to enable us to do this work. We are keen to find opportunities for grants or other funding. Any suggestions would be most welcome.

Accounts

These will be available at the AGM, but if you are unable to attend and would like a copy, contact the Chairman after 8th March.

A summary of our accounts follows which, at the time of writing, is still subject to change:

Payments & Receipts	£
Donations	547
Gift Aid	1,673
Other Income	2
Income for the Year	2,222
Tools & General Maintenance	(1,050)
General Admin	(150)
Expenses for the year	(1,200)
Total Cash In/(out)	1,022

Tents on the Green

In August last year we had reported that there were two tents in the back woods of the Green. This is the first time that we have had this since the trust was formed. We do not encourage camping on the Green under any circumstances and were grateful that this was reported to us. We acted swiftly and the tents and other equipment were removed.

Maintenance Sessions

Our maintenance days have continued to be well supported. It is encouraging to see some of the younger generation coming out to help. The main objectives have been to clear the undergrowth around the saplings planted in 2015 to give them a better chance of survival and to keep the paths clear of weeds, leaves and over hanging branches.

We appreciate the fact that, in-between times, some of you pick up litter and specific thanks to Ian Atherton, Gary Mayle and Derek Warrilow for regularly cutting the grass and leaf blowing to keep the paths clear.

We would also like to thank local professional Arborist Dan Nicholls, who donated his time and equipment during the recent maintenance session in December. Dan grew up on the estate and his mother tells me that he planted one of the trees in the lime avenue. Was it this perhaps that sparked his great interest and love of trees?

Whilst we are lucky to be well supported on our maintenance days, there is always more to be done than the time allows and new faces are therefore always welcome. Perhaps we can tempt you with tea and cake?

The maintenance dates for 2017 are:

Saturday 1st April 2:00 to 4:00pm
 Saturday 24th June 2:00 to 4:00pm
 Saturday 9th September 2:00 to 4:00pm
 Saturday 21st October 2:00 to 4:00pm (Pond Clearance)
 Thursday 28th December 10:00 to 12:00 noon

We usually meet by the human sundial; more details can be found on our website.

Patrons

If you are a Patron and you are planning to move away or you know of a patron that has moved, then let us know by sending us your email address should you wish to receive the Newsletter and be invited to future events.

Trustees

The current trustees are:

Andrew Broadbent	Epsom General Hospital
Jason Cowling	34 Sunnybank
Chris Frost	8 Warren Hill
Liz Frost	Woodcote Residents' Soc.
Jeremy Hawken	35 Sunnybank
Helen Heath	2 Wilmerhatch Lane
Luke Jennings	10 Sunnybank
John Parsloe	1 Woodcote Green House
Brian Saxby	59 Sunnybank
Mark Swan	6 Sunnybank

Please do get in touch if you have any ideas for future articles we could write or if you would like to be featured in one of our articles. Are there any young aspiring reporters out there that would like to contribute an article?

We're always interested in ideas to improve the news letter. We would be very pleased to hear from you.

Mark Swan, Chairman

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