



FRIENDS OF BUTTS CLOSE

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER

April 2013

A busy month!

We didn't expect so much interest and activity, and it's all been positive. There are now 17 people wanting this newsletter and they - and no doubt many more - are clearly very interested in looking out for Butts Close. As one person said: "I regularly walk across Butts Close on my way into town; I regard it as 'mine'."

Crumbling Bollards

Andrew Mills (NHDC) has already said that he is aware of the deterioration of the concrete bollards on the Bedford Road side, and is thinking about the idea of replacing them with wooden rails to match those already in place on the Fishponds Road side. The Council has no specific budget for this however and it would have to be done on an ad hoc basis.

However – what do we think? Would that be the best solution? The bollards could just be removed, although the rails round from Fishponds Road could make it look a bit 'unfinished'. But rails along Bedford Road might have consequences for people attending the fairs and the circus. Our feedback would no doubt be welcomed by the Council, so do please email in any thoughts to buttsclose@gmail.com

Elmside Walk

Simon Maddison (Fishponds Road) had contacted James Bliss, Manager of the Swimming Centre, about the state of the verge along Elmside Walk. Lorries have been chewing up part the grassed area until it has become a mud-bath, and delivery vans and other vehicles were parking on the verge as well. We also took this matter up with the Council, in a report echoing Simon's concerns.

James advised us that this all started when the locking removable bollard at the top of Elmside Walk had to be dismantled on the advice of emergency vehicles to allow rapid access to the Swimming Centre and Archers' Gym. In addition, a bench on the verge was vandalised and had to be removed, making driving down the Walk and parking or turning on the verge possible.

Louise Randall (NHDC) has been working with James to rectify this. The bench will be replaced, as will a steel waste bin, which together should prevent vehicles turning on the verge. Delivery drivers have been told to stop on the Walk pathway near to the parking lot. The damaged verges will be reinstated and re-grassed. Louise expected this work to be completed by the end of May.

James also arranged for the graffiti on the Butts Close side of the pool building to be removed. Unfortunately it is now a potential blank slate for the next tagger. Although if Banksy visits us and leaves his mark, maybe we could raise some money for replacing the bollards...just a thought.

The Dangers of Over-Exercising...

Several residents alerted us to the increasing wear of the north end of the Close by the exercisers of Regiment Fitness, and the dangers of their van being parked close to the roundabout and pedestrian crossing. We sent a report to NHDC regarding this: no-one wanted Regiment Fitness to stop using the Close but we were concerned that if they continued on the same spot the grass would wear out and never recover. Andrew Mills of NHDC said he would tell Regiment Fitness to rotate their use of the Close. This seems to have worked. On Monday 15 April for the first time their exercisers were using the 'dip' area instead, and leaving the old patch alone. Time will tell...

Crocuses

Congratulations to Chris and Su Mennie (Bedford Road) who were the first to tell us where the crocuses were planted – between the pond and the tarmac path across the Close. Derek Wright (Firs Close) was also one of the planters in 2010. Apparently a total of 3,010 were popped into the ground! Not so many showing now, although you could still see the O, T, A and R of 'Rotary' spelt out in purple petals.

Litter Pick-up

Hitchin Forum have organised a litter pick-up for the town next week-end. So some 'Friends of Butts Close' are joining in – meeting Sunday 5th May, at 12 noon by the pond, with bags and grabbers or spikes. Do come if you can!

Did you know...?



A First World War tank, the 'Fearless', was presented to Hitchin in 1919 and was mounted on Butts Close. While it was being restored, it slipped from its pedestal and a live shell was found inside! The tank was taken away and melted down for scrap in the Second World War.

Does anyone know just where it stood?