



FRIENDS OF BUTTS CLOSE

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER

May 2022

Greenspace Action Plan 2022-27 Final Version

This is attached to the circulation email.

There are few changes from the last draft that we circulated. We'd like to add some comments:

- 2.3 - we have additional information on the history of archery and Butts Close if anyone is interested
- 2.4.3 – to clarify, the water derives from the Gaping Hills to the west and emerges on the Close through the Capswell Springs, which feed the pond. The culverted flow from the pond east down to the river Hiz is Capswell Brook – giving its name to Capswell Court, at the bottom of Fishponds Road. The concrete works that enable the pond to hold water back (creating a so-called balancing pond) were carried out in the 1930s or 40s.
- 3.0 (B4) and 4.2 – last paragraph– we have responded in detail to this request for lighting along the central pathway: see below
- 4.5 – last paragraph – Local Wildlife Site. Realistically, we had no chance of getting Butts Close designated. There are nine criteria for this, each of which has to be supported by a detailed analysis of species, rarity etc, and even at a cursory level we don't come close. While we won't get a LWS designation we do appreciate the Council's commitment to continue to preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the Close.

Toilet Facilities for Funfair Customers

Andrew Mills, NHC has confirmed that the approvals for the fairs and circuses at Butts Close include sanitary arrangements and a sound management plan as part of the Land Licence agreement for each individual event. The proposed arrangements submitted by the event organisers will be considered in conjunction with NHC's Environmental Health Dept to determine satisfactory provision prior to the Land Licence being approved, which should be some 14 days prior to each event.

Lighting along the central pathway of Butts Close

The FoBC Steering Group researched the evidence on this matter and then discussed the proposal. We unanimously opposed the provision of lighting on the central pathway on the Close. We have sent a memorandum to Andrew Mills, which is appended.

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

Well of course we know it is, informally!

But we were indeed perplexed by the inclusion of Butts Close on the map of commons within the formal Chilterns AONB. See <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/ccbmaps/1487/137/butt-s-close.html>. Although Butts Close is topographically isolated from the Chilterns, it is geologically contiguous, being part of a dip slope of clay with flint and alluvium upon a chalk bed.

So please may we join?

Alas, the AONB boundary stops at Pirton Cross. However, their map of commons includes those that are outside of the AONB area but within 3km of its boundary – hence our entry¹. There is also an entry about Henry VIII and his hunting mishap near Hitchin, most likely on Purwell Meadows (related in *Wolf Hall*, the book and the TV film).

Events

Provisional dates for funfairs and the circus are:

Thurston's Fair 13th – 26th June
Abbott's Charter Fair 23rd – 25th September
Circus Wonderland 9th – 23rd October

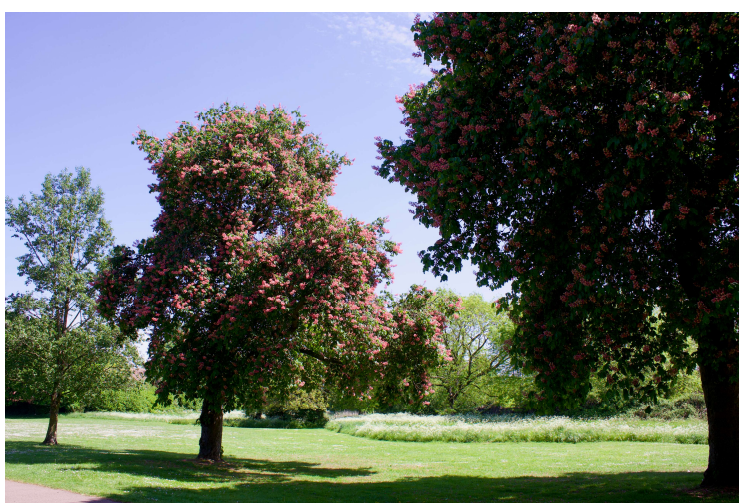
But as indicated above these are provisional bookings only, due to outstanding information that is required from the organisers prior to the Council issuing a licence.

Early Summer Images

And finally, overleaf are some photos by Simon Maddison. All beautiful, but I found the one of horse chestnuts poignant, as they are all slowly dying of canker.

Tony Riley
for FoBC
18 May 2022

¹ Our thanks to Cllr Steve Jarvis for getting this clarified.



Contact Friends of Butts Close at buttsclose@gmail.com and Hitchin Forum through www.hitchinforum.org.uk

APPENDIX

Butts Close GAP 2022-27 Consultation: Should the central pathway be lit at night?

Consultation on the Stage 2 Draft has included a suggestion that the central pathway of the Close should be lit at night in order to reduce the risk of personal crime and/or to engender a feeling of safety for people using the path after dark. Suggestions have ranged from ornate Victorian style lamp standards to solar powered lights inset into the pathway.

There is considerable research on how this might reduce risk and also increase feelings of safety of pedestrians². The findings however indicate that although the pedestrian may experience a feeling of security by walking along a lit path, there is no evidence that actual crime is reduced by lighting. Indeed, the enhanced feeling of safety may result in more risk-taking by the pedestrian and thus potentially have the opposite result. Furthermore, the central path is relatively isolated from casual surveillance, whereas a pedestrian taking the longer walk using the Bedford Road and Fishponds Road will likely be in full light and also under casual surveillance from vehicle drivers, which would be a safer option.

Pedestrians will therefore have a choice. This would not be the case for wildlife. There is ample evidence that lights at night are deleterious for many insects, bats and birds³.

Many animals are active at night, such as owls, moths, bats, some badgers, some mice, and some frogs. It is the attraction to or avoidance of light that cause species to act in an unnatural way, may disrupt their circadian rhythm and affect their foraging and mating activity⁴.

The Friends of Butts Close Steering Group have discussed this matter, taking the research evidence into account. If Butts Close is to increase and retain a higher level of biodiversity – which is a Council strategy – the central path should remain as it is.

We hold a unanimous view that the path should remain unlit.

Tony Riley, Coordinator, FoBC

5/4/2022

² https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Street-Lighting-Policy-Note_Final.pdf

³ <https://www.rhs.org.uk/wildlife/garden-lighting-effects-on-wildlife>
<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/145767/night-lights-can-disrupt-wildlife>
<https://www.darksky.org/light-pollution/wildlife/#:~:text=Scientific%20evidence%20suggests%20that%20artificial,%2C%20mammals%2C%20insects%20and%20plants> <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/light-pollution.html>
<https://www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/news/guest-blog-how-light-pollution-impacts-wildlife>

⁴ Light wavelength plays a part in this. Bats for example are unaffected by red light. In a Netherlands town a bat-sensitive area is now lit by red street lamps. See <https://www.greenmatters.com/news/2018/06/11/Z15Pp47/dutch-community-red-led-street-lights-bats>