



**FRIENDS OF BUTTS CLOSE**  
**AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER**

March 2025

*Teasing Weather on the Close*



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The 'Three Sisters,' by the pond, were just beginning the transition to their green Spring dresses, and two weeks ago the dog walkers and runners were bare-legged. Now they are muffled and gloved. Likewise, the Close has taken deep warm breaths and coaxed out crocuses<sup>1</sup> and snowdrops, and the leaves have budded only to pull back from early frosts. But Spring and a new year of growth will come, and husbandry has made sure it is prepared.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2010 there was a mass planting of crocuses on Butts Close by Tilehouse Rotary Club to raise money for their global polio eradication programme. 3,010 crocus corms were planted in a single day, earning a place in the Guinness Book of Records. Neither crocuses nor snowdrops are indigenous to the UK, being introduced from Europe a few hundred years ago.

## Busy Butts Close

We would expect the Close to be dormant these last few months, but it has been the opposite. Herts' Countryside Management Service (CMS) Volunteer Team were busy in November and January, following the Greenspace Action Plan<sup>2</sup>. They focussed on the new hedges, the old hedgerows, and the pond area. Saplings planted for a hedge need to be cut down after a year or two – called coppicing – to develop the growth underground and produce hedging rather than a row of straggly trees.



The west-facing hedge (planted by Friends of Butts Close) was coppiced two years ago and you will now see that the tops of the growth have been trimmed level, and they will start spreading laterally.



Some gaps have been filled, especially along the north end next to the car park, where people would cut across the broken, slippery steps down to the Close. There is now a safer route.



The volunteer team also cleared, trimmed, and coppiced the hedgerows along the south-facing end of the Gym. They work on one third of this area at a time, so it may seem it's the same part being endlessly dug up, but it's actually in rotation. There is also cyclical work on the pond. The reeds are spectacular right now but will need to be cut

and thinned later this year or in early 2026, along with other work on the banks.

If you want to join the CMS volunteers, contact via [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cmsvolunteering](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cmsvolunteering)



<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/butts-close>

Then there's remedial work. All the benches now have paving slabs instead of muddy footwells. 'Everyone Active' who manage the Pool and the Gym used their fenced entrance to do some major upgrades, but left deep slashes in the ground. We understand that they will bear the costs of remediation.



And we may have caught up with the Night Detector! Using a metal detector on Council land is illegal – which is probably why he had only been seen on very early mornings or at night. But this time he was trailed to his car, and the Police were informed. He hasn't been seen since, and although it may seem a harmless hobby, it could well rob the Museum of any archaeological finds.

### **Main Events**

These are the bookings received by the Council so far:

- 6<sup>th</sup> April: A Triathlon Day "Go Tri Hitchin" (approved)
- 9<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> June Thurston's Funfair (provisional at present)
- 22<sup>nd</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September Abbotts Funfair (provisional at present)

### **Hitchin Forum Litterpick 23<sup>rd</sup> March**

Seven adults and one child have registered to litter-pick Butts Close on Sunday. This will be enough, but if anyone wants to help elsewhere please contact [hflitterpick@gmail.com](mailto:hflitterpick@gmail.com) .

### **And a Goodbye**

Andrew Mills, Greenspace Manager for North Herts Council, is leaving. He has been very supportive and responsive towards FoBC. He has always sought our input to the Greenspace Action Plans and brought a 'can do' attitude to our suggestions, whether on hedging, funfairs, benches, or bollards. We wish him well. We look forward to liaising with his successor, Alan North.

Tony Riley, for FoBC 17 March 2025

*Photo Credits: Simon Maddison except where indicated.*