

This exceptional year continues, with general agreement that the third lockdown seems more draining and demanding than the first. The sometimes bitter winter weather and flooding have not helped. However, we are all fortunate in Merrow to be surrounded by beautiful countryside and we have focused our MRA talks this year on local nature, covering Merrow Downs in October and Thames Basin heathlands in February, both held necessarily by Zoom.

We have deepened our relationship with the Guildford Environmental Forum (GEF) and their broad reservoir of expertise, enthusiasts and activities across a wide spectrum of environmental campaigns. Many of these issues are fundamental to addressing global warming issues and your committee believe that the local community can only benefit from partnering with GEF on these concerns.

One positive feature throughout the lockdown has been the willingness of people to help others. Our Coronavirus Volunteer team remains available to help those in need. Neighbours have been looking out for neighbours. The latest MRA initiative has been to start publishing details of the weekly North Guildford Food Bank requirements and the Wednesday and Sunday collection times at St John's Centre.

Our other recent volunteering initiative, the Merrow Community Highway Volunteers, has been badly hampered by lockdowns – but has still managed significant pathway clearance, cleaning and tidying – and is champing at the bit to do more, as more opportunities begin to open out.

Major planning and development changes continue to move ahead inexorably:

- strategic sites alongside the A3, including Gosden Hill Farm locally
- major sites in central Guildford, often piecemeal and poorly integrated into any overall plan,
- significant proposals from government for streamlining (or in effect removing) planning controls, and
- domestic and commercial development in Merrow.

These keep us very busy

If you are interested in finding out more about any of our activities or in helping out with our volunteers, don't hesitate to drop us a line, to the Secretary – Secretary@merrowresidents.org. There is always opportunity to take part, whether it is an hour a day or an hour a month. It is great to be involved!

Keep safe.

Andrew Strawson

Chairman

Merrow Residents' Association