

Beating Hearts Merrow - update

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In July we provided defibrillator training to all the pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 at Bushy Hill School, to very responsive children. We met some of those same children when we trained Cubs, Scouts and Explorers at 1st Merrow Scout group, and were delighted by the information they had retained and their continued enthusiasm

We are now looking to raise money for a 5th defibrillator, in addition to raising the £1,000 per year required to maintain the current defibrillators. If anyone else wishes to enquire about training, or wishes to donate, please let us know on savealife@beatingheartsmarrow.uk

Judith and David Hunt
MRA members



Water Wells

We are currently living with a hosepipe ban but before the era of piped water homes in the vicinity of Merrow Street were supplied with water from wells (some of which still exist). We found Edgar Tunnell's memory -

"Houses and cottages used to get their water from wells, again most of these have gone. There was one for the Windgate Cottages, one between Coxhall Cottages, one inside the parlour of Hall Place Farm, one opposite the Old Cottage in Trodds Lane and one at the rear of St Catherine's Cottages.

In summer, the water from these wells was beautifully cool, and usually we were jokingly told to look out for frogs. Mother used to live in Church House when young and she said that if the bucket was not fastened well on to the hook it came off, and usually lost."




DIARY NOTE

Autumn Meeting

**on Monday
17th October 2022
at St John's Centre**

**Protecting our
Pollinators**



**Merrow Residents' Association
Autumn Event**

Protecting our Pollinators

by Peter Smith, local beekeeper and amateur entomologist

We are living through what has been described as an 'insect apocalypse'.
By 2050 we could have lost half of the earth's insect biomass.
This illustrated talk will explain the problems insects face and how we as individuals can help.

On Monday 17th October at 8pm
at St. John's Centre, Epsom Road and online via Zoom

Followed by wine and nibbles

Contact secretary@merrowresidents.org to register for the meeting link if you are joining remotely or for help to use Zoom

Merrow Community Highways Volunteers

This summer has been a quiet time for volunteering but our Highways volunteer teams continue to litter pick on local pathways (with SCC collecting and disposing of the green waste).

In June two of our volunteers removed a couple of tree roots from the upper part of the footpath



Epsom Road before ...

which runs from beside the cricket pavilion alongside Clandon golf course (near the large water tank). These tree roots had been trip hazards in the past, especially in autumn when they were hidden by leaves.



... and after

In mid-August a couple of our volunteers removed the low hanging branches at the crossing opposite Clandon Park gates, which had obscured the view of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists from each other.



MRA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2022-2023

Chairman	Andrew Strawson
Vice-Chairman	Vacant
Treasurer	Dave Smith
Environment Officer	Stephen Rudd
Membership Secretary	Claire Rymell
Secretary	Henriette Whitehead-van Prooijie
Webmaster	Dave Smith
Publicity Officer	Vacant
Committee Members	Keith Meldrum, Gordon Farquharson, Denise Hilton, Chris Holliday, Lorna Seymour, John Pitkin and Clare McVicker

For more information on MRA's activities see merrowresidents.org.uk

Subscriptions

If you haven't paid your annual subscription for 2022 you will have received a reminder letter with this newsletter. Preferably pay by bank transfer Sort Code **30-93-74** A/c **01511541** with your surname, initials and postcode as the reference to identify you on our bank statement or by enclosing a cheque to 'Merrow Residents' Association' **MRA Treasurer, 6 Swaynes Lane, Guildford GU1 2XX.**

To receive emails from MRA of events/local issues contact secretary@merrowresidents.org and include your full name and address.

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MERROW LIFE

The Newsletter of the



Autumn 2022

MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

your community voice for over 50 years

Issue No 52

www.merrowresidents.org

Don't forget

Autumn Event
on Monday
17th October at
St John's Centre
and on Zoom

Chairman's Notes

We came into this year with some sense of optimism and a feeling that we were slowly returning to a new normal, more like pre-Covid times. This was all upended in February with the Ukrainian war. We have since then lost Queen Elizabeth, our dear monarch, and Charles has been proclaimed King. We are facing major cost of living increases, NHS backlogs, energy and global geopolitical challenges and a new prime minister with a set of new and urgent government interventions. Whilst many of us remain relatively fortunate here in Merrow, for others there is uncertainty, concern and anxiety, and we all need to be alert for our neighbours, who may be in need of our support.

Within MRA your committee continues to focus on local issues and activities, and the protection of Merrow's interests within the broader Guildford community. Planning issues proliferate, governed by the Guildford Local Plan, on strategic sites along the A3, brownfield developments in the centre of Guildford and increasing pressure on the green spaces around Guildford and Merrow. As these plans mature, the detail becomes more important and we work on many of these issues alongside other local groups -

Guildford Residents' Association, Guildford Environmental Forum, Guildford Society, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Council for The Preservation of Rural England, Carbon Zero Guildford, and Surrey Hills AONB.

We are currently involved in Appeals on the Urnfield and Merrow Lawn Tennis Club planning applications, which are examples of the types of pressures that will continue, especially on green space and the environment.

We have strong and regular communication with local borough and county councillors and value their help in sorting out local issues - mitigating the worst impacts of the local bus contract changes and in selecting sites for road and pavement improvements under the new SCC funding process.

We are building stronger links around Merrow Downs, with Guildford Golf Club (the user) and GBC (the owner), regarding the environmental management and sympathetic development of the Downs.

We have just started conversations with the new administrator at Merrow Park Surgery, who is trying to develop connections with the local community.

Finally, and as ever, great thanks to all the

Committee for all their work in support of the membership and of Merrow with a warm welcome to new Committee member Clare McVicker from Bushy Hill, and in turn our thanks to all members, for staying actively involved with the Association through all the difficulties of recent years.

I look forward to seeing you at our Autumn Event *Protecting our Pollinators* on Monday, 17th October, in person or on Zoom. We are living through what has been described as an 'insect apocalypse' with, by some estimates, over 50% of our insects lost over the last 30 years and it has been estimated that by 2050 we could have lost half of the earth's insect biomass. This matters because we simply don't know what will happen to the planet's ecosystems if we lose organisms that form the basis of most food chains. Awareness of the problem is growing. The evening will look at some initiatives and focus on what we as individuals can do to help protect our pollinators. You can find full details of the event on the back page.

All queries or assistance with any of the above are always most welcome.

Andrew Strawson
Chairman
chairman@merrowresidents.org



Environment Report - ZERO Carbon 2050

MRA has close links with Guildford Environmental Forum (GEF) and Zero Carbon Guildford (ZCG) on matters related to energy, sustainability and the natural environment. Our Environment Officer Stephen Rudd deals with green space and natural environment matters and I focus on some of the recent initiatives and contribution for the other important aspects of our environment. The drive to ZERO carbon 2050 is the target we can aim for. However, whilst there is a broad objective for huge carbon reduction, how we individually and collectively get there is much less clear.

Several of the meetings hosted by ZERO have focused not only on road-mapping a per-

sonal strategy, but also providing information on heat loss reduction, improving efficiency of existing heating systems and options for low carbon heat sources. ZERO held a very interesting debate on attitude to heat pumps and use of smart meters. Whilst no black-and-white conclusions or requirements are defined, there is a clear direction of travel that homeowners might consider, starting with installation and draft proofing (the fabric first approach), and then working through to replacement of existing carbon-based heating sources with electrical alternatives.

This approach is predicated upon the UK's policy to move from carbon intensive energy

sources to low and zero carbon renewables and nuclear power. Most recently ZCG started to search for individuals in the Guildford area who have implemented various elements of energy reduction and low carbon heating. ZCG intends to share experiences to help recognise solutions that do achieve our 2050 net ZERO objectives. If you've got any questions please contact me.

Other talks at Zero in Friary Street include *How to Save Money on your Energy Bills* on Saturday 29 October from 2-3pm. Full details of this and all Zero's activities are listed on zerocarbonguildford.org

Gordon Farquharson
MRA committee member and Zero Carbon Guildford volunteer.



PLANNING REPORT

A number of long-standing and controversial local planning applications have been determined:-

TRETOWER HOUSE, MERROW STREET

The development of six new houses in the garden of *Tretower House* in Merrow Street was approved in April. The developer, Aspen Homes, has informed us that they remain committed to work with local residents and are happy to discuss any concerns arising during the works, where to date their efforts have been exemplary.

20 MERROW CROFT

An appeal lodged to hasten a long-delayed planning application on a proposed new three bedroom house in the garden of 20 Merrow Croft was dismissed in April. MRA had objected on the grounds of the proposal being out-of-character and over-development for the location and fortunately the inspector agreed.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS in GUILDFORD

As members will be aware we have covered a number of the major developments in Guildford in previous editions of Merrow Life and a video of my presentation in May can be watched on the MRA website merrowresidents.org.uk/planning. There has been no let-up in the last few months and comments are being requested by GBC on a number of new and amended proposals - some of which have led to considerable discussion on social media. I will touch on three of these, all of which have yet to be considered by the GBC Planning Committee.

ST. MARY'S WHARF (The old Debenham's site)

Amended proposals have been submitted and are a distinct improvement on earlier versions but there are still real concerns about the height and massing of the two buildings and their proximity to the river.

NORTH STREET

Following a number of public discussions and exhibitions a planning application has been submitted which has resulted in a great deal of discussion both on the Guildford Dragon

GBC Updates

Customer Services - A huge thankyou to the residents who helped GBC to improve its website by completing the testing. Some improvements have been made already and others are underway.

Councillors have recently received an update on the customer service improvement programme. Whilst there is still some way to go and we have staff shortages, call wait times are reducing and so is the length of time taken to respond to online enquiries. We have also implemented a call-back function to reduce excessive waiting, with all call backs actioned within 24 hours.

The Development Management planning team, which deals with planning applications, is still struggling to provide a good service. There are several reasons for this, including a high number of applications, but no quick fixes, as there is a national shortage of planning officers and we are finding staff are being poached. Despite putting in a number of measures over the last few months, we are not yet seeing the

MERROW CROFT LODGE, 175 EPSOM ROAD

A planning application to construct a new house in the garden of Merrow Croft Lodge, 175 Epsom Road, was approved at the beginning of September. Together with most other objectors to the proposal, MRA had objected on the grounds that the plans provided insufficient space for the turning of vehicles so that it was likely to result in vehicles reversing directly onto the busy Epsom Road. However, Surrey County Council as the Highways Authority decided that the proposed manoeuvring space was adequate. They do require a Construction Traffic Management Plan to be submitted and approved before the commencement of development.

WESTTHORPE, HOLFORD ROAD

It has been a relatively quiet summer with respect to significant new planning applications but one major proposal attracted 179 public comments at the time of writing this report, 156 of them objections. The proposal is the demolition of Westthorpe on the corner of Holford Road and

and in social media. The proposals include the erection of buildings ranging from four to fourteen storeys comprising over 470 residential dwellings, but without any affordable homes at all, and new areas to form pedestrianised streets and public space.

Many people have expressed relief that at long last some plans have been brought forward to deal with this derelict part of Guildford and that the bus station will be retained. However others have expressed concern at the height and appearance of the buildings which are fourteen storeys high on the side furthest from North Street. MRA will be commenting on the application majoring on the height issue and views across Guildford.

WISLEY AIRFIELD

At long last a new hybrid application has been submitted for the development of the old airfield at Wisley to include about 1,800 homes. This will also be contentious as an earlier planning application was refused both by the planning committee and on appeal.

We have moved on since that time and the site is now owned by Taylor Wimpey and has been earmarked in the

improvements we would all like. Further measures are being implemented, including outsourcing some of the work to a consultancy. Those applicants affected will shortly be receiving a communication, to explain what is happening.

Deborah Seabrook
Borough Councillor and MRA member

Surrey Hills AONB

The *Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* boundary review process continues and it will be for Natural England to decide whether or not a particular area is of such national significance that it should be designated as an AONB and managed to achieve the statutory purpose. There will be an opportunity for everyone to comment on any future proposed AONB extension, including the boundary, during the Statutory Consultation which is expected to launch in the new year. Latest information about the review can be found at surrey-hills-aonb-boundary-review.org/home.

Epsom Road and construction of a block of eleven flats. MRA objected on the grounds of style, building bulk, parking and vehicle access; the proposal is inappropriate for the location at the bottom of a pleasant 1930s - style road. We await the planning officer's recommendation which will have to go before the GBC Planning Committee.

URNFIELD, DOWNSIDE ROAD

As anticipated, *Guildford County School* and *Tormead School* have appealed against the GBC Planning Committee decision to reject the proposal for a major upgrade of the sports ground at Urnfield (at the end of Downside Road, bordering Merrow Downs). Our belief remains that while the improved sports facilities are to be welcomed, the erection of 13.5m tall floodlight columns would create a bright glow visible from a considerable distance in an *Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* and is not acceptable. We responded to the appeal submission and spoke at the hearing on 13th September to underline our concerns. We hope that the objectors have done enough to get it rejected by the Appeal Inspector.

2019 GBC Local Plan for development but subject, of course, to planning consent.

This application has some relevance to the improvements now taking place to the A3/M25 junction. In addition it will be interesting to see the recommendations of National Highways on possible improvements to the A3 around Guildford which are due out this autumn and which will include the possibility of new slip roads onto the A3 from the A247 at *Garlick's Arch* (Burnt Common).

The Wisley application has some interesting features including increased green space spread over the whole site and the building height issue seems to have been resolved. On the other hand there are still infrastructure/access/transport issues that will have to be sorted if the application is to have any real chance of success.

Above all, this application underlines the need for all new developments to be considered side by side with infrastructure improvements. To consider one without the other could lead to disaster.

Keith Meldrum
Executive Committee Member

Beating Hearts Merrow - update

At *Beating Hearts Merrow* we are delighted to be able to tell everyone that we have now installed four public access defibrillators in Merrow. These are sited at Merrow Village Club/Hall, Merrow shops (on Garden Cottage wall outside the barbers), Bushy Hill Community Centre and Aspen Close in Merrow Common.

In addition to this we are very grateful to community minded Eurosurgeon in Merrow Lane who have moved their defibrillator to an external wall so that it is available to everyone (If any other premises would like to make a similar move, please let us know)

All these defibrillators are registered with the ambulance service and should anyone need to contact the emergency services they will be directed to the nearest defibrillator. As anyone who has attended our training will know they are open access, no code required, very user friendly and will talk you through CPR and how to save a life.

Continued on Back Page/...

Local Buses

You may recall that we reported that local councillors had a meeting with *Stagecoach* and Surrey County Council (SCC) at the beginning of the year, to discuss the deterioration in the local bus service. At the time *Stagecoach* were optimistic about making improvements during the course of this year, but unfortunately this hasn't occurred. Continued difficulties have led to a further reduction in scheduled services, in an attempt to target resources and make the remaining service more reliable.

Borough Councillor Deborah Seabrook has received anecdotal stories about the failings of the digital display at many bus stops, which should give reliable information about the actual arrival times of buses. The *Real Time*

Minor Highways Improvements

George Potter our County Councillor requested suggestions from MRA for minor highways improvements to be covered by the Burpham and Merrow Highways budget. Many thanks to all those who responded with ideas.

SCC have now agreed which improvements will be carried out during the 2022/23 financial year:-

Epsom Road: Patching the damage/cracks/etc in the cycle lanes (and repainting the cycle lane markings if possible)

Bushy Hill Drive / Sheeplands Ave: Patching/resurfacing of damaged footpaths (and painting double lines at the Bushy Hill Drive junctions with Hall Dene Close and Kingswood Close if possible)

Grasmere Close / Whitehouse Drive: Putting in posts on the verge to prevent vehicles from parking on the verge

Levylsdene: Putting posts on the triangular verge area at

Guildford in Bloom

Kate Dumbleton and her watering team managed to maintain the Horse and Groom planters, which was exceptionally hard this year through the heatwave and drought.

At the recent *Guildford in Bloom* awards ceremony at the Yvonne Arnaud theatre the MRA and Edwins' Garden

Butterflies on Merrow Downs

For the last seven years we have walked a transect on Merrow Downs weekly from April to September for *Butterfly Conservation*, to record the number of each butterfly species seen.

It is a fixed route of just over three kilometres that includes part of the golf course, *Brownings Down* (grassland to the west of the golf course) and nearby woodland.

Transects are the standard method for assessing butterfly abundance and there are many walked throughout the country. Over time, these give critical information about the impact of climate change as butterflies are used as indicators for changes in the wider natural environment.

By the start of September we had recorded 30 different species with a total of 1,910 butterflies, compared with 29 species and 1,354 butterflies in 2021.

Passenger Information System (RTPI) works on GPS and should track the journeys of buses around Guildford, enabling fairly accurate predictions. Frustratingly this does not seem to be the case. SCC receives vast amounts of data about bus journeys but needs specific examples of failures of RTPI in order to investigate further. If you use the buses and find RTPI lets you down, please email her at deborah.seabrook@guildford.gov.uk and include:

1. Date & time of arrival at the bus stop
2. Number of bus & your destination
3. Location of bus stop
4. What the RTPI display showed when you arrived
5. How the display changed during your wait
6. What time the bus arrived

the entrance to the road in order to prevent people parking on the verge

Not every scheme proposed by MRA and our members could be adopted for this financial year and there is already a provisional list for the next financial year. Other suggestions can be actioned from other budgets and SCC's Highway's online reporting tool surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roadworks-and-maintenance/report-a-highway-problem can be used to deal with minor issues quickly.

More ambitious refurbishments on the Epsom Road and Levylsdene main roadway surfaces and the cycle lanes in Epsom Road were also requested by members, but these are beyond the capacity of this minor budget. These large projects are being pushed forward for more major works, if the necessary funding can be secured.

A more detailed report on the outcomes from this process will be emailed to members and also put on the MRA website.

Centre enjoyed another successful evening, improving on last year's results with the planters being awarded Silver in the Best Container Garden.

Andrew Strawson as MRA Chairman took great pleasure in accepting the certificate on stage and taking all the credit for the watering team's (and Edwins') hard work. Very well done indeed to all!

Notable absences this year are both *Green* and *Brown Hairstreaks* and the migrants *Painted Lady* and *Clouded Yellow*.

However, for the very first time we saw a male *Purple Emperor* taking minerals on the Walnut Tree Bottom track, which is where we also see *White Admirals* and *Silver-washed Fritillaries*.

Another highlight was seeing a *Dark Green Fritillary* female laying on Hairy Violets on the 'wildflower slope' on the golf course.

The counts of butterflies are generally up compared with last year, but for the *Small Blues*, *Small White*, *Small Copper* and *Small Heath* the numbers are slightly down. *Small Tortoiseshell* numbers remain very low with only three seen in each of the last two years.

Gillian and Ken Elsom
MRA members