



**NOTICE OF MEETING**  
 YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO  
**The 53rd Annual General Meeting of  
 MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**  
 on  
**MONDAY 17th April 2023 at 8pm**  
**at St.Johns Centre and on Zoom**  
 Full Agenda enclosed separately

### Trodds Lane

Trodds Lane, the hill that runs from *The Horse and Groom* in Merrow to Newlands Corner, has been in the local news recently. The gas company SGN closed the road for some weeks to replace the existing gas main, which caused a lengthy detour for those wanting to use Trodds Lane, but the work stalled as the subcontractor went out of business.

Unfortunately, the gas main replacement work wasn't finished so more road closures are planned for later this year to allow it to be completed. This will cause more anguish for drivers although those living there will appreciate the peace!

SCC had promised to fund a review of the traffic and speeding problems in Trodds Lane but

this has not yet materialised. Instead, following representations from residents and our county councillor, SCC is consulting on extending the existing 30mph speed limit in Trodds Lane by a short distance of 90 metres uphill towards Newlands Corner and also reducing the permitted speed in the rest of Trodds Lane from the current 60mph to become a 40mph limited area, between the last of the houses up to Shere Road at Newlands Corner.

Time will tell whether this will cut down speeding in Trodds Lane!

### Merrow Park Surgery

The surgery is looking for five new members for its *Patient Participation Group* which meets every 4-8 weeks, currently on Thursdays at 11am, in person or online through Teams. The group dis-

cusses a range of topics raised by its members, the surgery and other local forums, aiming to enhance and improve the patient experience.

The group hopes to attract people who are able to communicate the outcomes of its discussions into the wider community. If you would like to be involved and help improve services for all its patients, contact Ross Mackenzie (Practice Manager) at [manager.merrowpark@nhs.net](mailto:manager.merrowpark@nhs.net)

### Merrow Depot

The question of unacceptable industrial noise at Merrow Depot has arisen again, affecting residents on Merrow Common.

MRA is making representations to both SCC and GBC. ❖

### Surrey Hills ANOB

One of the things many of us treasure most about living in Merrow is the proximity to the wonderful Surrey Hills; we are so close to the town yet within a short hop of stunning countryside, woodland and views.

The *Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)* is a nationally designated landscape with the same protection as a National Park, and in December I was fortunate enough to be appointed as the new Chair of the Surrey Hills Board.

The Board includes local authority members and interest groups such as landowners / farmers and the National Trust, and its role is to try and ensure that the Surrey Hills environment is protected and enhanced. In these challenging times that means encouraging more diverse nature, healthy and abundant wildlife, and minimising the damaging effects of climate change.

As I have lived in Merrow for sixteen years and

spend time in the Surrey Hills almost every day (whether with family members or our dog) I want to do everything I can to protect this amazing environment.

It's a really exciting time for the Surrey Hills as the government has commissioned a review of the AONB boundary, with the possibility that the area included within the Surrey Hills may soon increase.

*Natural England* has just launched a consultation to invite comments and evidence on a new boundary, one which could potentially increase the size of the Surrey Hills by a whopping 25%! The Surrey Hills already reaches right into the heart of Merrow (so, for example, Merrow Downs is all within the existing Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), but nearby there are new areas of land proposed to be included within the protection offered by the AONB including Hatchlands / East Clendon and a large swathe of countryside south and east of Shalford. This area is particularly welcomed for inclusion as would effectively 'join up' the two

separate parts of the existing AONB and bring Wonersh, Chilworth and the area down towards Cranleigh into the fold.

As well as being a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to increase the protection afforded to this wonderful area, the review is a fantastic chance to remind politicians and the public about the importance of the Surrey Hills. There are lots of different ways for members of the public to get involved in the consultation on the new boundary, from drop-in events to online responses.

You can find out more at the Surrey Hills Boundary Review website [surrey-hills-aonb-boundary-review.org/review](http://surrey-hills-aonb-boundary-review.org/review) If all goes well, we hope that the government might be in a position to confirm a newly expanded Surrey Hills ANOB during 2024. In the meantime, enjoy the amazing landscape on our doorstep. If you would like to know anything more about the Surrey Hills you can find lots of information at : [www.surreyhills.org](http://www.surreyhills.org)

**Katherine Atkinson**  
**Surrey Hills Chair and MRA member**

### Subscription Renewal

If you haven't already paid your subscription for 2023 there will be a renewal letter enclosed with this newsletter.

*Merrow Life* is published by Merrow Residents' Association for circulation to its members. Unless stated, the views expressed may not always represent the views of the Committee of the Association or those of individual members of the Committee. Any enquiries can be sent to [secretary@merrowresidents.org](mailto:secretary@merrowresidents.org) or to 28 Trodds Lane Guildford GU1 2XR

# MERROW LIFE

The Newsletter of the



## MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

*your community voice for over 50 years*

Spring 2023

Issue No 53

[www.merrowresidents.org](http://www.merrowresidents.org)

Don't forget

AGM

Monday

17th April

at 8 pm

### Chairman's Report

In spite of the periods of icy winter weather that seem to be continuing into spring, I send out the warmest of welcomes to all members. We continue to work hard on behalf of the local Merrow community, and you will see from the articles here that our activities are many and varied. We encourage anyone who finds a topic of particular interest to get in touch, to find out what else you might be able to do to get more actively involved. We are always on the lookout for more help, fresh ideas and energy, to do the best that we can for Merrow.

We provide a focus for discussion and comment on local amenities and facilities. We represent local views on planning and provide help to neighbours on planning issues - both within Merrow and across the wider Guildford area. We keep in touch through emails, website updates and some social media. We organise two social evenings each year, to bring

members together and to discuss local issues. We are active in local environmental projects and programmes - encouraging as much local participation as possible. We promote and lead regular litter picks on pavements and pathways around Merrow. We work actively with local GBC and SCC councillors to promote, drive and resolve local concerns. We hold an extensive online repository of local history and knowledge. We also seek to spread knowledge, experience and expertise on local actions that can be taken to promote *Zero Carbon* and combat global warming - at a practical and local level.

We keep a look out for local causes that we could be supporting and work hard to leverage other organisations and associations that work in parallel fields to help the local community. Some examples, not explicitly reported in this edition, include *Guildford in Bloom*, where Merrow consistently receives awards for the flower tub displays in front of the *Horse and Groom*, with the support of *Edwins Garden*

Centre and Kate Dumbleton's team of watering volunteers; *Beating Hearts Merrow* and its programme to install more local defibrillators; our links with *Guildford Environmental Forum* and *Zero Carbon Guildford*; our support of the warm spaces initiatives in Merrow at St John's and in Merrow Methodist Church.

We look forward to welcoming as many members as we can to the AGM on Monday 17th April. This is your opportunity to raise local issues and then round off the evening with a social chat, nibbles and a drink. If you prefer to listen in from home, the meeting will also be available on *Zoom*.

I thank all members of the committee who have coordinated all the activities reported here, members who have been involved in these activities throughout the year, local councillors who are supporting the work that we promote and the community organisations and associations who help us so much too.

**Andrew Strawson** Chairman ❖

### Update on Tyting Farm Farmland and Restoration Project

In April 2021 we informed members that GBC is restoring over 40 hectares of historic farmland which connects Chantry Woods and St Martha's Hill, for residents to enjoy. As part of the redevelopment of Council-owned land at *Tyting Farm*, the site's meadows and pond will be restored and a 50-tree heritage orchard will be planted, to make the area one of our most diverse areas for local wildlife.

The conversion of the original farm buildings to residential use has now been completed. Work is currently being carried out behind the converted farm buildings that will create paths connecting with St Martha's car park and improve links to Chantry Wood. The farmland will become a *Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space (SANG)*. This is the name given to green space to be used as mitigation within the *Thames Basin Heaths Planning Zone*, which covers most of the heathland areas in the Borough. The SANG's role is to provide alternative green space to divert walkers and

their dogs away from *Special Protection Areas*, eg Whitmoor Common, where ground nesting birds such as Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark are protected by EU legislation. GBC expect to open a reduced size SANG towards the end of the year on the part of the farm to the south of the bridleway.

The above plans are being adapted to fit Thames Water's proposal for a new water pipeline link between Guildford and Shere. The current understanding is that there will be a 20-30m corridor running east-west along the length of the valley/base of the farm and that the work may take up to two years to complete. As a result of this GBC are revising their plans to keep the SANG south of the bridleway alongside St Martha's Hill and will extend it on the north side of the bridleway when the pipeline is complete.

Other environmental improvements are also taking place. *Surrey Wildlife Trust* is working

on some of the hedges and many of these have now been laid and *Butterfly Conservation Society* volunteers continue to monitor species. Although the pipeline affects the orchard, the current SANG works include removing the rubble and restoring the natural levels. The seeds planted on the cleared ground will complement what is already starting to resemble an open mosaic habitat. The grazing cattle will be fitted with GPS collars which are designed to train cows to restrict their movements to a specified audio zone. This will be the first site where they are used and it is hoped they will help separate visitors and cows. However, they are also important to deliver better biodiversity gains and crucial to reduce the need to replace established hedges with fences.

Finally, if you are interested in visiting the site GBC's SANG officer would be happy to show people around. Please contact the MRA secretary and we will try to arrange a group visit. ❖

## Planning in Merrow

The number of planning applications being submitted for developments in Merrow remains at a low level after the coronavirus surge but the MRA Executive Committee still receives regular requests from members concerned about the scale of proposed developments in their neighbourhood. On this point, it is worth being aware that the size of a proposed extension to a residential property is a major factor in the decision by GBC planning - the general principle is that an extension should be subordinate to the existing building and a recent application was refused robustly on these grounds.

**Urnfield** (at the end of Downside Road, bordering Merrow Downs)

We were disappointed that the appeal by Guildford County School and Tormead School against the GBC Planning Committee decision to reject the proposal for a major upgrade of the sports ground was upheld. Residents from

## Changes to Local Bus Service

Members have continued to complain about the poor bus service in Merrow since *Arriva* withdrew their services from Guildford over a year ago.

There was some earlier optimism that the service provided by *Stagecoach* would improve but this hasn't materialised yet. Cllr Deborah Seabrook is to meet *Stagecoach* again soon to raise our concerns.

In the meantime, *Stagecoach* have announced timetable and route changes which will affect buses to Burpham and Merrow from 2nd April. Merrow will no longer be served by the number 1 bus as it will stop running east of the town centre. A dedicated number 7 bus will instead run between Bushy Hill and Guildford on the current route.

More details can be found on SCC's website, search for *Forthcoming Bus Timetable Changes*, and click on number 7 to see the new timetable.

We will also put the link on our website. ❖

## Major Developments in Guildford

Members will recall various reports in Merrow Life, in emails and at MRA meetings on various major proposed developments in Guildford, some which are making progress and others which are on hold. I will touch on a number of these, some of which have been the subject of heated debate in the press and on social media. You will have the opportunity at our AGM to ask any questions that you may have.

**St. Mary's Wharf** (the old Debenham's site) This planning application was approved by the Planning Committee in November 2022, notwithstanding concerns about the height of the two buildings and the adverse impact on the town centre, the river and views across Guildford.

**North Street** This planning application went to the Planning Committee in January this year and was refused on the casting vote of the chair. The grounds of refusal are particularly detailed and cover inadequate bus station and services, harm to heritage assets, height, scale and mass of the proposed development, affordable housing and infrastructure provisions.

**Wisley Airfield/Wisley New Settlement** This hybrid application has been submitted for the development of the old airfield at Wisley to include about 1,800 homes. Two smaller

Downside, with support from the MRA, are subjecting the various plans that are being put forwarded to implement the appeal conditions to close scrutiny to ensure that they meet the pPlanning Inspector's requirements. We do understand and support the desire to improve sports facilities but have major concerns over the erection of tall floodlight masts in a prominent position in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their impact on wildlife.

**Westthorpe** (on the corner of Holford Road and Epsom Road)

The very controversial planning application for demolition of the existing property and construction of a block of eleven flats received 157 objections and 23 submissions of support. The application was withdrawn last year and no fresh application has been made as yet.

**Merrow Lawn Tennis Club**

A number of MRA members in the Trodds Lane area had concerns about the proposal by Merrow Lawn Tennis Club to resurrect a long unused court and install floodlights for

## Highway Maintenance Schemes

SCC's budget allocation for small highways schemes in Merrow and Burpham combined is £100,000 per year. For the 2022/23 financial year about £77,000 of that budget has been spent in Merrow as listed below, versus £13,000 in Burpham. This is due to how quickly various schemes could be delivered, so in the 2023/24 financial year we can expect slightly less of the budget to be spent in Merrow and slightly more to be spent in Burpham, but overall both communities should receive a fair proportion of spending.

Schemes already being delivered in Merrow in 2022/23: Footway resurfacing in Martins Close and Bushy Hill Drive, Finches Rise and Martins Close / Carriageway patching at entrance to Levylsdene / Footpath repairs outside St John's Church / Posts to prevent parking on the verge at Sheeplands and Bushy Hill Drive / Epsom Road tidy-up works.

Potential schemes for Merrow in 2023/24: Footway resurfacing in Carrol Avenue, Four Acres and Three Gates /

planning applications for sites adjacent to the airfield have yet to be submitted by the developers.

We have stated in earlier editions of *Merrow Life* that development of this site is very contentious, judged by the number of objections and the concerns raised by neighbouring parish councils and other statutory consultees. There had been over 1,400 objections by the middle of February and no date has yet been set for the application to go to the Planning Committee.

The MRA have raised concerns about the road infrastructure in the area, taking the view that infrastructure should be approved before any development is considered. We are concerned that the current roads around Wisley and between Wisley and Guildford are not sufficient for all the additional traffic that will come from this site, from the new site at *Garlick's Arch* at Send Marsh that is now being developed and from the proposed development at *Gosden Hill Farm*. We are aware that the A3/A247 Ripley South improvements scheme is one of a number of schemes being considered as part of National Highways Road Investment Strategy 3 by National Highways, the Highways Authority, for possible construction after 2025, but there is no Government commitment to the funding of this strategy so any decision is a long way off.

**Weyside Urban Village** Outline planning permission for this

evening use. The court in question lies in the Green Belt and in an area of Great Landscape Value and we felt that the use of floodlights in particular was inappropriate. As in the case of Urnfield above, after refusal of the application by GBC, the applicant went to appeal and won the argument.

**176 Epsom Road**

An application for outline approval of the redevelopment of 176 Epsom Road has been submitted. The large site of the existing property sits at the end of a track that runs beside the *Cape Veterinary Clinic* and the proposal is to demolish the house and build six new dwellings. Neighbours of the proposed development, which borders properties in Grove Rand, Epsom Road and High Path Road, are concerned about loss of privacy and woodland while the need for a number of additional vehicles routinely to access the site very close to the Epsom Road pedestrian crossing is of significant concern.

MRA have written a letter objecting to the application. ❖

Posts to prevent parking on the verge at Grasmere Close, Whitehouse Drive and Levylsdene / Road surface repairs to Epsom Road cycle lanes / Pedestrian refuge on Epsom Road near Horseshoe Lane East junction. I need to confirm these shortly but we are still waiting on estimates before I can discuss with ward councillors, MRA and Burpham Community Association and make the final decision on how to spend the money.

It is also theoretically possible to have a complete resurfacing of roads such as Merrow Woods and Levylsdene, but right now SCC is insisting that to do any one of these would cost the full annual budget of £100,000, and therefore it is unlikely to be included.

Once the 2023/24 budget is confirmed we will be able to start involving the public in choosing schemes for the 2024/25 financial year.

**George Potter**  
**Surrey County Councillor for Guildford East** ❖

GBC site was granted some time ago and a plethora of subsidiary applications have now been submitted on the technical detail of the development, one of which is the relocation of the sewage works run by Thames Water. It is clear that the development of the site will be extremely challenging technically, practically and financially and will certainly keep GBC on its toes as the development progresses.

We are also keeping any eye on the development of the **Cathedral Site**, the solar site at **Blackwell Farm** and the **Guildford Park Road car park** and '**Shaping Guildford's Future**' through our involvement with the Guildford Residents' Association. There is never a dull moment!

**London Road Burpham** No report would be complete without a mention of SCC's proposals for the partial closure of London Road in Burpham to allow road modification works to make it safer for buses, cyclists and pedestrians, which resulted in a storm of protests leading to a public meeting in January, ably chaired by MRA member and retired MP Anne Milton.

We now wait to see the revised proposals in the hope that they will reflect some of the excellent suggestions put forward at the public meeting. We now understand that a new formal consultation will commence shortly with which the MRA will be involved.

## Insect Pollinator Reserves in Merrow

Those of you at the Autumn Meeting will remember Peter Smith's inspiring talk on the importance of insect pollinators and the huge problems we all face as a consequence of their decline. The main reasons for this are their loss of habitat and the impact of pesticides (including insecticides, herbicides and fungicides) - both directly (when insects are killed outright) and indirectly (where food sources for insects such as 'weeds' are removed) but also when insects are exposed to sub-lethal doses of these chemicals which affect their fertility and, in bees for example, their ability to navigate and return to their nests.

Chemicals are still being used in domestic gardens and many of us are unaware that some banned chemicals are still available in domestic garden products. Surrey Wildlife Trust estimates that there is over 20,000 ha of private gardens in Surrey, over 12% of the total land area, so what we do in our gardens matters to wildlife.

GBC has committed to becoming a pesticide free borough and is currently conducting trials to evaluate alternative methods to using pesticides in the spaces they manage. What can we do as individuals? Insects need enough safe pockets or corridors to provide sufficient forage and habitat throughout the year in a chemical free environment. By working with the Guildford Environmental Forum and Guildford Zero, we want to help create insect friendly and pesticide free pollinator reserves in Merrow.

Anyone with a piece of garden can join the Merrow Pollinator Reserves initiative, it doesn't matter how much outdoor space you have. You commit to a few principles of pollinator friendly gardening, including zero use of pesticides, being mindful of which plant species benefit insects, avoiding being too tidy, tolerating weeds in some areas of your garden, covering bare soil areas over winter (e.g. with fallen leaves) and having a year-round planting plan which results in plants suitable for both short and long-tongued insect pollinator

We have concerns about the relationship between this proposal and the proposed **Sustainable Movement Corridor** (SMC) (that is envisaged in the Guildford Local Plan to link the Weyside Urban Village, the University and the Royal Surrey County Hospital with Burpham and the proposed development at Gosden Hill Farm). We hope that these two projects will be coordinated to avoid repeated road closures and traffic congestion during construction. We are particularly concerned here in Merrow because of the suggestion that the SMC might continue on from Gosden Hill Farm up Park Road and into the Epsom Road in Merrow.

If you have any questions about any of this why not come to the AGM and talk to us? We would like that!

**Keith Meldrum**  
**Executive Committee Member** ❖

## Cost of Living Concerns in Merrow

MRA is a member of the *Cost of Living Forum* that has been set-up by Surrey County Council's *Community Wellbeing Team*. The Forum includes Council staff, councillors, and representatives from local charities, organisations and churches and it meets regularly to identify activities in the community that can support local residents and identify ways to work together.

## John Dumbleton - 1948 -2022

We are sad to report the death of John Dumbleton - a member and supporter of the MRA. John was a lawyer who retired from corporate work in 2011. Thereafter he became a mentor for the *Surrey Care Trust* and an invaluable advisor to the MRA on legal and planning matters even when he was affected by Motor Neuron Disease.

He was involved with *BLISS*, a national charity for the new born for over 30 years and became their honorary secretary and solicitor. He was awarded a MBE in 2011 for his services to healthcare. John was married to Kate, a long-standing member and Environment Officer of this Association.

Our sympathy is with Kate and the family.

species. You could team up with your adjoining neighbours to create bigger mini-reserves - insects don't mind fences - and each garden or space will be a slightly different habitat.

If you would like to create a reserve or want to discuss your ideas further, email me at *environment@merrowresidents.org.uk* including as much information as possible including your address, postcode and the size of your garden. I will then work with Peter Smith and other experts at GEF and Zero Carbon Guildford to help ensure you and your neighbours are as supported as possible.

If you don't feel quite ready to make the plunge with every principle - for example you may wish to continue to use particular chemical treatments (even though garden chemicals are a big part of the problem) then we can also help with advice on how to make your gardens more pollinator friendly. There is more information on the Environment page of our website.

**Stephen Rudd**  
**Environment Officer** ❖

A key activity has been the hosting of warm hubs, which are free warm spaces for local residents to access. There are two warm hubs in Merrow, at St. John's Church Centre on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11am-2pm, where MRA are working in partnership with St John's, supporting the cost of hot refreshments for participants. The other local warm hub is at Merrow Methodist Church, Bushy Hill on Thursdays from 8.45am-11.45am. Further afield, Guildford Library is open as a warm hub from 9.30 every day all day except Sunday. For a full list of the locations and times that warm hubs are available, go to the Surrey County Council website and search for warm hubs.

Cost of living concerns are varied and include issues regarding the cost of heating homes, paying utility bills, rent and mortgage increases, interest rate rises, inflation and the affordability of food and health products. A large challenge for local residents is knowing how and where to access support. The Cost of Living Forum is planning to host monthly events, where multiple agencies and organisations are available to discuss needs and concerns. These events will rotate through Merrow, Stoke and Westborough over the next few months. Residents can attend any of the events and MRA will circulate details, and also post them on Facebook's Burpham and Merrow (Guildford East) Community Group. ❖