



Welcome to the ABOYNE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION newsletter for FEBRUARY 2016

This newsletter aims to keep our members up to date with any developments, major and minor, that may have an impact on where we live.

2016 - IMPORTANT DATES

In case your diary is looking a little bit empty - there's no harm in looking ahead...

- Strategic Local Plan response - by February 19
- The Big Litter Pick Up - on Sunday February 28 (more details below)
- The Queen's 90th Birthday Big Clean-Up - on March 4-6
- AGM Thursday - on April 21
- Larks In The Park - on June 26

THE BIG LITTER PICK UP

Inspired by the regular litter pick-ups in Verulamium Park - and the HUGE difference a little bit of community effort can make - ARA Vice-Chair Brian Benson is keen we have one of our own. It will also give you a chance to meet others in your neighbourhood and give it a spruce up at the same time.

We're going to meet on Sunday February 28, at 11.30, by the salt bin at the corner of Russell and Britton. We've been able to borrow (from the Council's contractors) equipment for ten people. That might not be quite enough, so if you have the appropriate gloves, litter-pickers, or bags, please do bring your own. At the end, all bags and equipment will be returned to the corner for collection later in the day.

It's an event for all age-groups and everyone is welcome. We reckon a collective hour of picking up litter will make a big difference to our area and be a rewarding way to spend a very small part of the weekend. Please join us, and if you really enjoy this kind of things, see below...

THE QUEEN'S 90th BIRTHDAY BIG CLEAN-UP

Clean for The Queen is a campaign to clear up Britain in time for Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday, which will be officially celebrated in June 2016.

This is the thinking behind the initiative - ***when the Queen came to the throne litter was not the problem that it is today. Food packaging, plastic bottles, takeaway meals and cigarette butts have all contributed to a growing menace that affects our wildlife, streets, countryside and sense of pride. What better way could we show our gratitude to Her Majesty than to clean up our country?***

The ARA, along with our fellow St Albans Residents Associations, are calling on individuals, volunteer groups, local councils, businesses and schools to organise an area to clean up on the birthday weekend of 4-6 March We will register our bid on the official website - <http://www.cleanforthequeen.co.uk/home/2365>. You can go there too for further information. And do let us know if your local organisation is planning a clean-up of their own.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's AGM will take place on Thursday April 21 at Aboyne Lodge School, from 8.00. Everyone is welcome and we hope as many of you as possible will be able to join us. We've had to move from our usual March date because of the very unusual early Easter and the various holiday complications that has created. And we'll be in the dining room as the Lodge Room is not free. Drinks and nibbles will follow the usual updates and discussions. An agenda and more details, such as speakers, will be released closer to the date.

CHANGE OF CHAIR AND NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

This year we will be saying goodbye to our superb chair Mary Conneely. Her three years of hard work on behalf of the revived ARA are much appreciated. Mary will be missed, but will not be far away. It's fair to say we love-bombed Mary into staying for a year more than she originally planned, which allowed the rest of us on to turn our minds to succession planning. This has worked - Brian Benson, our current vice-chair, has indicated he is happy to assume Mary's role.

However - we have room for more! If you're interested, we're happy to talk about what it involves, and why it's an enjoyable and satisfying thing to do and be part of. You don't need to have any specialisms or experience to be of value to our association. Please contact us to get more information and it really is not that onerous - honest.

This is a crucial time for local government - national government budget cuts are increasingly eating into the workings and the effectiveness of local authorities, and it's more important than ever that local residents stay engaged and active on behalf of all of us who live here. The bigger we are, the more we can achieve.

STRATEGIC LOCAL PLAN - NOW OUT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

St Albans District Council has now published the draft Strategic Local Plan for a 6-week period of consultation, **finishing on February 19th**.

It's all very formal - this consultation, unlike the one in 2014, is restricted to comment regarding only two aspects of the plan: the correctness of the way it has been prepared, i.e. in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and the "soundness" of the proposals it contains.

Soundness is a somewhat tricky concept, but it is defined at para 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The link below will take you to the document.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

Ultimately, the SLP will form a key document regulating and determining the development of housing, commerce and infrastructure in our district. **This is effectively the last public consultation that will be held on the plan and it's a key plank to any development in the area for the next 15 years.** After the consultation, the plan will be submitted to be examined by an Inspector of HM Planning Inspectorate, who will review it in the terms outlined above. Meanwhile, SADC will continue to develop detailed plans based on the strategic plan.

It is therefore important that any concerns, especially regarding the soundness of the current proposals, are registered by February 19th. All such responses will be included in the Inspector's examination. No other representations will be heard.

It's a long and dense document, and we're fortunate that committee member Nigel Gale has a real fondness for such things, so he is leading the ARA response. Do get in touch if you have any questions or want to find out more. And of course we are all free to respond as individuals.

And it's worth celebrating the fact that while the SLP was in the preparation stage, the council did listen when the ARA, soundly supported by councillor Chris White, protested the inclusion of Aboyne Lodge School on the proposed redevelopment site and got it removed. Phew!

FRIENDS OF VICTORIA PLAYING FIELDS - THE BIG CROWD FUND!

FVPF are doing wonders with their crowd funding initiative. The campaign to improve the children's play area is going very well with only £8000 of the £90000 target still to be pledged by the end of this month. The ARA is happy to have contributed to this - £50 from our funds has gone into the project. Many congratulations to all concerned.

ST CLAIRE'S UPDATE

As we go to publishing this newsletter, a St Claire's meeting is set for 7.00pm, on Monday 8th February.

The Action group members are unhappy about how the meeting was scheduled, the short time frame and an agenda that appears to be very general and not inclusive of the key areas of concern raised by local residents.

We will update when we have more information.

ANNUAL SUBS AND MEETING OUR MEMBERS

Although the ARA is now very much part of the electronic age, we're sticking to our pledge to collect our very modest annual subs (£3 per household) in person and on foot.

This is done by our trusty and much valued band of Street Reps **(which is now depleted in number, so if anyone has a few spare hours on their hands and is interested, do get in touch - aboynera@gmail.com)**.

We did this at the end of 2015 and spoke to many households. We're able to update our contacts list, and hear what issues are causing you concern. As a result of these conversations, we've pushed the council regarding the empty property in Church Crescent - complicated in terms of ownership, but it's now been empty for over a decade! Hard to believe.

We also want to campaign in road safety terms for a wider pavement just where Folly Lane meets Church Crescent. The pavement, if such a description even applies, is dangerously narrow. There's a bus stop just a few yards up the road, and traffic is constant on this stretch - and very fast. We are hoping this can be tied into any structural work that might be done, should the St Claire's plans go ahead.

And though we enjoyed meeting everyone - it was often too cold and dark! So this year we will begin our subs collection in October, when it's lighter. And warmer!

THE BRICKYARD

A review of the licence was held 11 December 2015 and evidence of public nuisance in the garden was accepted due to recordings produced by local residents. The rear garden must be closed at 10.00 in future. The owner has now appealed and a preliminary hearing was held this week. Monitoring of noise from the property is continuing.

HGVS NO MORE?

Councillor Chris White has met with the ARA committee to tackle the issue of heavy lorries on Britton, Selby, Upton and Russell Avenues. Chris' proposal is to have Britton join the other streets in being restricted to lorries under 7.5 tons. The ARA fully supports this.

Chris has approach the County to seek an immediate change, and this is now out for consultation. If you live in the area, you should have had a letter delivered which explains the plans in greater detail.

A REMINDER - GET CLICKING! ENTER OUR PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION AND WIN A BOTTLE OF FIZZ!

We want to celebrate our streets and our neighbourhood - with the help of your photographs. Get clicking - any device, from simple phones to the most elaborate Leica is eligible for entry. Simply upload them to this link - aboynephotocomp@gmail.com. Closing date is March 28, 2016 - the winner will be announced at our AGM in April. (Sadly you are not eligible to win if you're on the ARA committee, a street rep, or a professional photographer - though we'd still love to see your pictures.)