



The Buckingham Society

Campaigning for a Better Buckingham

Newsletter April 2011

Update from our Acting Chair, Carolyn Cumming

To follow

The Civic Award

Now is your chance to nominate someone to receive a Civic Award and a prize of £100. The Buckingham Society in partnership with the Buckingham and Winslow Advertiser have launched the award to reward people from all walks of life who undertake exceptional work for their community, or who on a local level do their bit to enhance the environment of Buckingham. It could be a well tended garden or an attractive shop front. The winner will receive a prize of £100.

The competition is open to residents, clubs, societies and businesses in the parish of Buckingham. Publicly funded schemes are not eligible. You can nominate yourself or any person or project who you think have made a positive contribution to our town.

To make a nomination send the name of the person or feature who you think should be the winner, along with a short description, about 150 words, saying why they deserve to be nominated.



Here is an example of an early nomination: the newly refurbished Prebend House shown at the left. You can find more early nominations below.

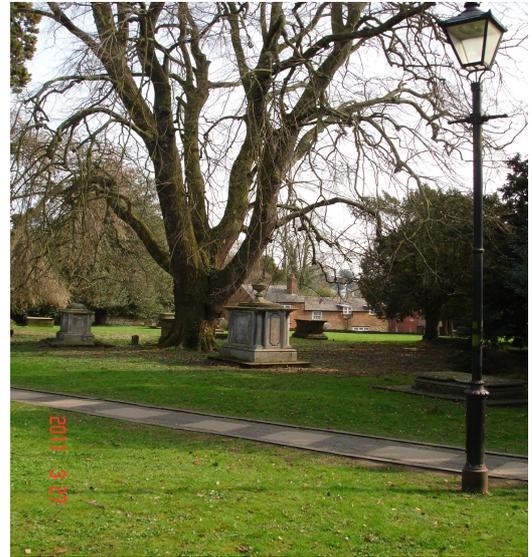
Nominations will be considered by a panel of judges including the Editor of the Buckingham Advertiser, the Mayor of Buckingham, and the Chairman of the Buckingham Society. The winning person or group will receive a cash prize of £100, generously made possible via the Waitrose community box scheme. The closing date is 18th June 2011 and the winner will be announced on Saturday 25th June 2011, the first national Civic Day. (More details of the Civic Day below.)

Another nomination is the Old Church Yard, maintained by the local residents and pictured right.

Award nominations should be sent by post to:

Civic Award,
Buckingham and Winslow Advertiser,
61 Well Street, Buckingham,
MK18 1EN

or via email,
editorial@buckinghamadvertiser.co.uk.



The Sun Dial on the front of Dial House, on Bristle Hill in Buckingham is another early nomination for the Civic Award and is shown left.

Congestion in the Town Centre – some Transport Issues by Geoff Shaw

In the Newsletter of August 2010 I talked about the problems of the growth of traffic using the Buckingham Ring Road and some possible answers to improve the situation. I promised then a further article on the transport issues of the town itself so here goes.

Like many small market towns Buckingham has seen a massive growth of competing traffic which needs to use the same road for different purposes. If one throws into the mix some other particular issues or complications, the road system finds it difficult to cope so leading to

unacceptable congestion and possible safety problems. This has been happening in Buckingham over the last few years.

A transport group was set up as one of the three consultant groups of local citizens in a Buckingham Community Plan way back in 2004-05 to research into the problems and to come up with recommendations to County and District Councils for action. We were given a budget to use for professional advice and I was a member of that group. What is so depressing about all this is that virtually no action has been taken and we are now going through another process to agree a new transport plan all over again. In the meantime traffic and the subsequent problems have increased not helped by some strange decisions on parking provision, which I will mention later. Exactly the same concerns are being raised again. I will now summarise some of these:

The first main issue is the flouting of the HGV limit by many lorries going through the town with no business within it. There is a weight limit and the police only make sporadic attempts to control it. What has brought the matter to a head is the invention of the wretched “sat-nav”. These devices direct drivers of lorries coming down the A43 North of Brackley that wish to go to South Bucks or the M1, down the A422 into the town. On reaching West Street they have great difficulties in negotiating the road between School Lane and through Cannon Corner, as you may well know if you have been standing on the pavement by Lloyds Bank or have been in a car going up West Street.



We tried to get the whole A422 reclassified as a B road and to impose a weight limit throughout its length. We also asked for large warning signs on the A43 and also on the A422 East of Buckingham. Nothing has been done on the latter but a sign was put on the A422 East of Brackley. We have pointed out to the County Council that this is of little use, because once a driver has turned the corner, he is extremely unlikely to make a U turn but he will shrug his shoulders and drive on.

Once a driver enters Buckingham we have found that all too often he has followed his “sat-nav” up such roads as School Lane, Well Street and even Church Street! - ask Kathy or Gill what has happened outside their homes.

The second issue is of course the Old Gaol junction. The County does not accept our view that the sight-lines are poor here (these would be helped by a minor adjustment of the mini-roundabout). Increased housing up the Moreton Road has (and will continue to) put extra pressure on this junction. Making Addington Road one-way North-South would help the problem. We got over 90% agreement from the residents for this proposal. It has been accepted by the Council that it is a good idea but they state that it has not been done because of cost. Cost? - they did not take kindly to my offer to personally put a one-way sign at the top and a no-entry sign at the bottom totally free of charge.

The arrival of Waitrose and the subsequent increased use of the Cornwalls Meadow Car Park has made the junction with the High Street difficult and the congestion can be excessive at

times. The pavements are quite large here so there is room for a mini-roundabout, which we feel would help the situation a good deal. Further up the road the sight-line for traffic leaving Wharf Yard looking East is very bad indeed. The lines on the road need remarking and we need a warning sign by the BP garage. Neither of these measures would be difficult.

We went into some detail with the suggestion of a one-way system for Castle Street, the top of Nelson Street and School Lane. Some of us feel that this would be a major improvement. Unfortunately the corner for traffic turning right from West Street outside Lloyds Bank is too sharp to allow West Street to be one-way also. This is a possibly contentious issue but I feel this idea has been dismissed as unfeasible too easily and is worth looking at again.

What has made the congestion so much worse is of course the changes in parking regulations within the town. A lot of us are willing to accept small charges but, once you charge £2.50 per day to park in an official car park, those who work in the town day by day will find a street to park in instead. Hence we now have a Stratfield Road Car Park completely empty and a Western Avenue one only half-full. We now have very congested conditions owing to parked cars in Western Avenue, Chandos Road, the bottom of the Bourton Road and many other smaller roads in the town. It does not help to find parking wardens putting penalty notices on cars in Market Hill, when it is perfectly sensible to allow short term (say 30 minutes) parking to allow the purchase of a newspaper, some pet food or a bag of chips.

I suppose the final straw is the lack of consultation that resulted in the extraordinary situation now in the Cornwalls Meadow Car Park. It has become more dangerous and frustrating to only allow cars to travel along narrow pieces of roadway so one has to wait for a car to back out, before making progress. I cannot understand the need to block the end of each group of parking bays rather than allowing drivers to exit the car park by two ways instead of one. Perhaps one should ask why it needed to be changed at all, as none of us can remember any accident or difficulty with the “free-for-all” system which we had before.

I suppose the stupid parking arrangements in this car park bring home to us how out of touch our district and county officials are. Our elected representatives seem powerless to alter the situation, which comes from our rulers in Aylesbury. We are told that they wish to consult us but they seem to take no notice of what we say. However you can be assured that I and other members of the Transport Group in the Society will go on trying. If you wish to join our small band, do let me know.

HS2 – a Personal View – Geoff Shaw

I am puzzled. In spite of every bit of evidence that would lead any sensible person when money is short to abandon this expensive project, the Government is ignoring all such advice and is pressing ahead. This is a vanity project on a par with the Dome, Concorde, Humber Bridge and also probably the Olympic Games, which never will produce the promised returns, financial or otherwise, and at the same time cause massive misery while it is built in a corridor some 75 metres wide through our countryside.

You will have read Ed Grimsdale's interesting article on the subject last August. A visit to our AGM of Bernie Douglas and Mark Barton of the anti-HS2 pressure group, Voxopp, and a meeting arranged in Aylesbury to promote both sides of the story has prompted me to state some views myself.

Those who support the HS2 emphasise that we should not stand in the way of progress and cite the fact that on the continent we have had such trains for many years. They ignore that, apart from the obvious point that rural France has much less population density than the UK, these trains (such as the TGV) travel at a much slower speed than that envisaged from the ones proposed for HS2. This means that they do not have to run on ultra straight lines but can go round bends. It could be said that the Virgin Pendolino trains that we already have in the UK are more modern than the TGV ones and are almost as fast.

It is accepted by most of us that rail capacity has to increase and there are already plans for both the NW and GW lines to do this by using longer trains running more frequently using more up to date signalling. If a new line is needed, it should be built to run alongside either existing railways (Ed feels that this would be unacceptable in suburban London) or arterial highways such as the M1, M6 or M40.

What has surprised and disturbed me is the way the case has been presented with some much vagueness, misconception and misinformation. I now know that it is planned to reduce the train capacity of the existing NW line by some 40% at least, to encourage the diversion of existing traffic. What is not realised is that existing London-Birmingham trains carry a lot of passengers who are travelling between intermediate stations like Watford, Milton Keynes and Coventry. Many of those who commute between these stations use the long-distance trains and they are travelling near capacity at the moment. It is hidden that the planned Birmingham terminal will be a long way from Birmingham New Street, forcing would-be passengers to make a transfer to continue their journey north. I believe that their prognosis of a large transfer of traffic is false. If in the end the HS2 trains are taken north of Lichfield they will be forced to travel on existing lines at slower speeds than the Virgin Pendolino owing to their inability to cope with bends.

Another dangerous myth that is being promulgated is that HS2 will lead to economic



regeneration of the Midlands and the North. A lot of experts are saying that it will lead to the reverse and will further enhance the prosperity of London at the expense of the rest of the UK.

Do people really want to save such marginal amounts of time? Another point that seems to be ignored is that those who use premium travel services work during their journeys. In fact one

might say that the future increasing cost of all travel will cause an upsurge of multi-tasking through conference calls and other electronic media. Will they transfer from air services? - certainly not between Birmingham and London. There may be a transfer for longer distances but we are really looking very long-term and it must be stated that HS2 Ltd's figures assume an extra Heathrow runway.

I could go on and on. There are considerations about noise, use of energy, green-carbon considerations and of course the massive possible damage to an area of outstanding natural beauty. Please read some of the documentation for yourself. Pro: <http://highspeedrail.dft.gov.uk>. www.hs2.org.uk Anti: www.hs2aa.com www.stophs2.org. www.voxopp.org.uk (our local one). We are now going through the official consultation period ending in July. You can order a consultation form by ringing 0300-321 1010. The nearest official HS2 “road show” will be in at the Olympic Lodge Hotel in Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury on 10 and 11 May.

The Buckingham Society AGM and HS2

At the Buckingham Society Annual General Meeting on 27th January 2011, Mark Barton and Bernie Douglas of VOXOPP (Villages opposing HS2) gave a talk explaining the facts and myths behind the headlines of the proposals to bring high speed rail across the Buckinghamshire countryside.

A lively debate followed their presentation with a range of views expressed both supporting and opposing the proposals.

The next step is a period of public consultation, closing on July 29th 2011. The consultation will include a series of road shows. Those nearest to Buckingham are:

The Olympic Lodge Hotel, Stoke Mandeville Stadium on **10-11 May**

Greatworth Sports & Social Club Car Park on **17 May**.

Waddesdon Church of England School Car Park on **21 May**

Calvert Green Community Centre Car Park on **26 May**

Brackley Leisure Centre on **27-28 May**

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Map of Proposed Route – Blue dots showing key Wildlife Trust, Reserve, Ancient Woodland, SSSI or Local Wildlife Sites.
 Four Wildlife Trust reserves, 10 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), more than 50 ancient woodlands and numerous local wildlife sites lie in the route of the proposed High Speed Rail route.
 Blue dots show Wildlife Trust Reserves, Ancient Woodland, SSSI or Local Wildlife Sites

Special Interest Group Reports

Planning – Helene Hill

The Tesco extension plan has still not been determined. The Town Council are trying to get their voices heard in the negotiations over the 106 monies arising from this and the 700 houses opposite, to obtain the benefits that Buckingham needs, not what AVDC thinks we should have.

The application by Dominos Pizza for change of use of The Old Telephone Exchange was turned down, the Town Council and AVDC both agreed with our comments and worries over traffic. Dominos could go to appeal, or they may try elsewhere, possibly on the industrial site. The movement of retail units onto the industrial site is a trend that we and the Town Council are both concerned about. AVDC are aware of the affect this trend could have on the vitality of Buckingham town centre shops, and they are looking at individual cases alongside the plethora of road side signs I mentioned last time.

There have not been many planning applications since Christmas, a few conservatories, some retrospective, porches, conversion of garages to residential use and a few extensions.

Taylor Wimpey gave an informal presentation to Buckingham Town Council on suggested proposals for re-developing part of the Tingewick Road industrial site, with most of the site being residential. They went away with plenty of ideas of what the town would like to see, an example of the new localism ideas at work!

Green Spaces Report – Ted Farmer

A substantial programme of tree planting in Heartlands Park has been carried out during February and early March by AVDC Green Spaces and Biodiversity Team aided by Vale Countryside Volunteers. With agreement of the Environment Agency, twenty Black Poplars have been planted in the floodplain area between Eider Close and the river. These are female clones and widely spaced to become mature standards, pollinated by existing males nearby. Save for a margin, the mound over the former sewage works has been densely planted with a mix of Alder and Black Poplar with Oak and Ash on the higher slopes, where there is an established shrub area. Under the snow a few weeks ago, this was a popular nursery toboggan slope. The proposed woodland will make Heartlands look very different in time.

Smaller areas around Bourton Park identified by the Town Council, have also now been planted with a similar mix of trees, including Black Poplars, where some previously planted Alders have succumbed to disease. A diseased Horse Chestnut in Chandos Park has been replaced by a more resistant Indian strain.

The long running saga of the proposed restoration of Maids Moreton Avenue, bordering Page Hill School, must, regrettably, be regarded as a lost cause. There is clearly no willingness to compromise and the gap between the County Council, as

school owner, and Wren, the main source of grant finance, remains unbridgeable. The opportunity to right a wrong situation has been lost.

Dates for your Diary

Civic Day 25th June



The day starts at 11.00 and includes:
The Town Crier, The Acoustic Society and a guided walk led by Ed Grimsdale or Lillian McDonald, stalls and tea and cake will be in the Old Gaol for the whole day.

The Mayor will present the Civic Award at 2.00 pm followed by two displays by the Rose and Crown Morris Dancers. There will also be a second guided walk.

Buckingham Society executive meetings

All meetings are held at the Villiers Hotel, starting at 5.15 pm and finishing by 7pm. The meetings for 2011 are scheduled for May 26th, July 28th, September 29th and 24th November. Members are very welcome to attend.

Buckingham Society Lecture and Garden Party 21st July

The annual lecture and garden party at Walnut Yard will include canapés, cava and the very popular fiddle band once again. More details to follow.

Halloween Talk 3rd November

David Pickering is to give a talk “Superstitions” with a Halloween theme on 3rd November at 7.30 for 8.00 at the Radcliffe Centre. Wine will be served prior to the talk.