

NEWS IN BRIEF FROM ACROSS PARKLANDS WARD

What a Load of Cobblers

We've had complaints about the state of the cobbles at the **Wansbeck Road** end of **Park Avenue**.

Their repair or replacement is the responsibility of YHN, so we contacted them. Their response was that as there are only 6 YHN properties out of 34 in the area, it is "not appropriate" for their "You've Got the Power - Round 3" project funding. This scheme sets communities against each other to "bid" for funds for important local works.

As you might imagine, we're not impressed by this answer and will continue to press for action.

Parklands FOCUS Comment

Local People Let Down by Labour

The money we used to have for local works has been slashed by the Labour Council. They blame Government cuts in grants - which there have been - but they make the choices about what's important. So they are spending millions on Council offices while taking away services like road and pavement repairs, and crossing wardens to keep our children safe going to school and coming home.

We say: Labour has its priorities all wrong.

We also say: use all those fines from bus lane cameras on pavement repairs, don't just tuck away the millions of pounds in reserves. We have a tiny amount of local money so we can't get stuck into replacing trees and repairing the damage their roots have done in several roads on Grange.

Finally, we are sad to see local Labour politicians resorting to "post-truth" politics when confronted by opposition to their proposals - see the local park tax story reported elsewhere on this page.

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Surgeries :

Gosforth High Street - 1st Saturday of month 10 - 11 am

Gosforth Library - 1st Saturday of month 11:30 - 12 noon

Could you help the Parklands Focus Team?

Your regular Parklands Ward FOCUS newsletter is written, produced and delivered by voluntary effort. It is paid for by local donations - not from your Council Tax. Could you spare as little as one hour each quarter to help deliver FOCUS in your neighbourhood or help with some clerical work at home? If you would like to get involved please contact the Focus Team - see the contact details above.



New Trees Planted

Following completion of the Brunton Park Flood Prevention Scheme, new trees were planted to commemorate the 90th Birthday of HRH, The Queen.

Parish Councillor Derrick Phillipson is pictured above planting one of the trees at **Lincoln Green**, supervised by the Chair of North Gosforth Parish Council, Cllr Adele Mears, and Newcastle City Councillor David Down.

Labour Denies Park Tax Plans

Residents living close to well-maintained parks should pay extra tax. So said Labour's Cllr McGuinness, who is responsible for Newcastle's parks, in evidence to a Parliamentary Committee.

This would mean local residents paying more tax for Gosforth Central Park, despite it being maintained largely by local volunteers.

When the story appeared in the local press, the Council issued a denial - but the evidence is printed in Hansard: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/parks/written/39528.html> (See Paragraph 5.3)

Gosforth eFOCUS

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Parklands Ward FOCUS

Delivered free throughout
Parklands Ward for over 40 Years
Paid for by Pauline, David & Robin
Edited by Cllr Pauline Allen
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ROUNABOUT VICTORY

Plans for a massive motorway-style junction at Blue House Roundabout were ditched by the Council, after protests organised by Gosforth's Lib Dem Councillors.

Over 2,000 people, plus many four-legged friends, took part in the March around the Moor in August after the plans were made public. The event made headlines on local TV news and within days the Council backed down and set up a working group to explore other options.

No decisions have been taken yet, but you can view details of meetings, blog posts and relevant documents at <http://bluehousegroup.org>.



The FOCUS Team & friends at the March around the Moor

Broadway Junctions - Fighting On Three Mile Foot Bridge Proposal

Cllr Pauline Allen, Cllr David Down and Cllr Robin Ashby are continuing to fight for improvements to the crossings at Broadway East and West, at the junction with the Great North Road, supporting the concerns about road safety raised by many local people.

Council Officers argue that the siting of the crossings are at points where people are most likely to use them, and moving them 30 or 40 metres away from the junctions would lead to pedestrians and cyclists ignoring them and taking their chances crossing the road by the roundabout.

The Council agreed to carry out a safety audit with an independent assessor. So far, the auditors have commented "that they do not feel enough time has passed since completion to fully judge some discreet elements such as the collision statistics at Broadway Roundabout. The levels are lower on average than previous years."

Robin also presented a petition to the City Council meeting on 3rd November asking for improvements to the junction. The Labour Councillor responsible for roads responded that there would be no changes to the junctions until the audit had been studied properly.

Separately, Pauline asked the police to install cameras at the crossings to identify drivers putting pedestrians at risk, but was told they did not have cameras to do this job. The Police did indicate that they are aware of the problems and have spoken to Council Officers - but received a similar response to ward councillors.

The Focus Team will continue to press for action, but in the meantime it is worth noting that some of the problems occurring at the crossings are contraventions

We've written to residents close to Three Mile Bridge about Council Officers' proposals to install a Toucan pedestrian-controlled crossing and removing the bridge.

Some residents contacting the Focus Team support the ideas and some don't. On balance, we believe that a ground level crossing with traffic lights will make crossing the Great North Road easier and quicker, especially for those less agile or able.

The speed limit on the Great North Road between Broadway and Polwarth Drive is also set to be reduced to 30mph to improve road safety.

Sandy Lane Road Works Diversion

The A1056 Sandy Lane/B1318 junction ceased to operate as a roundabout from Monday 21st November, to enable the construction of further splitter islands.

This means that, until the scheme's completion, there will be no right-turn into the B1318 Great North Road towards Wideopen, from the A1056 Sandy Lane west-bound. Instead, vehicles will need to make a short diversion south to the Rotary Way roundabout (near the entrance to the Marriott Hotel), looping around the roundabout and heading north, then using a filter lane to access the B1318.

of the Highway Code and should be reported to the Police. Motorists should not be speeding at a junction and the Highway Code says - "you MUST give way when a pedestrian has moved onto a crossing".

We would urge anyone who is involved in a near miss or an accident to report it straight away to the police.

Working Together for Parklands

Liberal Democrats - Action All Year Round

THE PARKLANDS REPORT - LOCAL ACTION UPDATE

Council budget cuts means that there is now only one formal Parklands Ward Committee each year. The Council have also slashed the grant funds available to local councillors to support community activities within their areas.

Parklands' annual ward meeting took place on Thursday 22nd September, where we discussed priorities for the ward and Cllr Pauline Allen presented the ward report for 2015/16, detailing the activities and campaigns supported by your local councillors over the year.

Here we summarise some of the key items in the report and talk about how we will continue to keep local people involved in the activities and issues that may affect them in the future.

The 2015/16 Ward Report was sent to every resident who receives Parklands eFocus. If you would also like to receive a full copy of the report then send us an email request - details on the back of this Focus newsletter.

SUPPORTING ACTIVE PEOPLE

We encouraged the establishment of Gosforth Sports Association, whereby Gosforth RFC combined with the City of Newcastle Cricket Club and "came home" to Broadway West. This subsequently resulted in the relocation of the Tigers Australian Rules Football Club. We made a small grant to improve security in the clubhouse and we are very pleased that the clubs are making visible efforts to work with young boys and girls.

Red House Farm FC applied for planning permission for artificial pitches, fences and floodlights. While opposing their application, your Councillors made clear their support of junior football, and now chair a club & residents' liaison group.

The future of local football, here and elsewhere, is currently unclear because of a strategic review into the "hubs" at which junior football leagues play. However, the fields to the north of Kingston Park Road will remain an important leisure resource for residents whatever the outcome.

We were also able to help the Bohemians Tennis Club on Brunton Park to improve their car park so that there would be less parking on local roads and therefore less aggravation for local people.

CONTACT WITH THE POLICE

In the last edition of FOCUS we reported that formal (SNAPS) meetings with the Police would end due to Council cuts. So your ward councillors have arranged to meet regularly with the local community Police team independently. If you need to report non-urgent crime or disorder then ring 101 or follow the local team on Twitter @NPCNCLNorthNW.

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

The Gosforth Nature Reserve asked for and received our help towards tools for volunteers, and the grants we have given them have also been used to leverage more from other grant giving bodies.

We also made another grant to Gosforth Nature Reserve towards an ecotoilet, which now means that more school parties can visit the Reserve.

Allotments groups at Three Mile and Salters Bridge were given help to resurface access roads. The award-winning Three Mile Allotments entered into a partnership with the Ward to plant and maintain flower planters at Three Mile and Grange shops, with ward funds buying bulbs and plants. We aim to continue this into the 2018 planting season. (Note : The large numbers of planters at Brunton Park and Melton Park are provided and maintained by the North Gosforth Parish Council)

The Melbury & Warkworth Woods Residents Association asked for assistance with equipment for litter picking. It is held at the Ark in the Park (62 Featherstone Grove) and is available to any other groups (bulk removal of litter bags can be arranged). We also continue to share the concerns of residents about dog fouling left behind by irresponsible owners and are pushing the Council to fine offenders.

A series of No Cold Call Zones have now been designated covering the whole of Parklands. These zones are aimed at discouraging rogue and nuisance callers, particularly to the doors of our more vulnerable residents.

CARING FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

Using NHS funds delegated to local wards (something that has now stopped), we arranged for a series of information leaflet drops across the whole of the ward. They covered a diversity of topics, like help for carers, CRUSE support for widows, using local pharmacists rather than GPs for minor ailments, and a road safety campaign using images drawn by children at GEMS.

From the last of our funds, we gave a grant to the Citizens Advice Bureau who will be working in conjunction with Grange First School this autumn to provide a series of advice surgeries for local residents.

Daft as a Brush is a charity based on the Great North Road which transports cancer patients to and from appointments. We gave them a grant which would help specifically to improve the safety of their volunteer drivers, many of whom live in the ward.

In past years we have given grants to support Gosforth Community Minibus. We will work with them in the future to find new sources of funds to replace ward grants, as we know how much the Minibus is valued by those it helps.

IMPROVING SCHOOL & ROAD SAFETY BETTER COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Parking around the Broadway schools has been a concern for many years. Finally, after long procedural delays, additional restrictions on parking have been introduced and the crossing of Strathmore Road and Granville Road made safer for pedestrians. Dropped kerbs will be installed on three of the main roads crossed by parents with prams and children with scooters at the entrance to Whitebridge Park. The area is also a school safety zone, covered by a 20 mph speed limit - and we'll push for Police action to enforce the rules.

Many years after starting "consultation", the Council installed cycle lanes on the Great North Road and new crossings at Broadway East and West. Poorly planned processes have meant that your ward councillors have spent many hours trying to get Council Officers to modify unacceptable or poorly thought-out plans.

As mentioned elsewhere in this edition of Focus, the crossings at Broadway East and West remain an issue and we are calling for raised beds for the zebra crossings.

Our pressure to reduce the speed limit on the Great North Road has borne fruit, with the stretch from Broadway to Brunton Lane coming down from 40 mph to 30 mph when lane changes are introduced.

We used some of our Ward funds to pay for a packed out public meeting at Northern Rugby Club on the cycle lane proposals north of Broadway, which was attended by Council officials. The scheme was modified and much of the work proposed will be carried out without the need for Traffic Regulation Orders, which will speed up the process.

As reported elsewhere in Focus, the Council plans to replace the footbridge at the Three Mile Inn by a Toucan light-controlled crossing. We believe that this will be helpful, particularly for disabled and elderly residents, and will reduce long term maintenance costs too. We recognise that not all residents will support the removal of the bridge, but believe that this is the best option.

MELBURY ADOPTION SAGA GOES ON

Pauline, David and Robin have been in contact with the consortium regarding the issue of broken street lights in Melbury, and on the issue of adoption of the area, and this is what they responded with: -

"Until adoption street lighting is the developer's responsibility. Any complaints should be passed to the individual developers or by reporting them to <http://www.newcastlegreatpark.com/contact-3/>."

Progress is slow and frustrating for everyone concerned, especially residents, but the Council insists that remedial work on highways and street lighting must be completed before they will adopt the area.

The Scout Hut at Brunton Park is not just for children in the scouts and guides families but has in the past been available for hire for events such as birthday parties. It had been very much showing its age, so we gave grants to make it weather proof again and to encourage its users to raise further funds for more upgrading.

The Community Centre at St Aidan's looks mainly to North Gosforth Parish Council for support, but we have been able to make some supplementary grants to enable it to continue to be a home for a wide range of community groups. The indoor bowls club based there asked for our help in replacing equipment worn out from long use, and we were happy to help.

The All Saints Centre in the centre of Gosforth is an important community asset used by people across the whole of Gosforth, so we were able to give it some small grants to support its work.

Gosforth Central Park is now mostly maintained by volunteers. Along with the Ward Committees from East and West Gosforth we supported the Friends of Gosforth Park with grants for maintenance equipment and consumable materials which hopefully would mean a continuation of this excellent facility despite Council cut backs.

KEEPING EVERYONE IN THE LOOP

As mentioned above, the Council has decided to remove support for three out of four Ward meetings held across the year. As your Ward Councillors, Robin, David and Pauline believe that it is important to keep in touch and keep listening to the views of local residents, so here are some of the ways we will continue to do this in future.

We have set aside a small budget to enable emergency meetings to be held when needed. Over the last year, we held one meeting to discuss road plans in the Three Mile Inn, who provided the room without charge. We would welcome feedback on using venues like this in the future, recognising that some might not be ideal.

Our ward surgeries on Gosforth High Street and Gosforth Library will continue. We also use social media, with our own Facebook and Twitter pages, as well as participating in other community forums, including the Great Park, Brunton Park and Melton Park Residents Associations. We are also trying to encourage a new residents association in Whitebridge Park. At least one Councillor attends the monthly North Gosforth Parish Council as an observer.

Finally, we will continue to publish and distribute, at our own expense, regular Parklands FOCUS leaflets as well as the increasingly popular eFocus - details on the back page.