

Voice

Gerrard's Cross
Parish Council Newsletter
March 2010

Packhorse Road Bridge Works

Between May - November this year contractors will carry out major works on the Packhorse Road due to the rebuilding of the railway bridge and road widening.

The work involved will be to both the Packhorse Road and to Station Approach. There will be 2 major phases, the first to rebuild the west (station) side of the bridge and the second to rebuild the east side. Pedestrian access over Packhorse Road bridge and to the railway station will be maintained safely at all times.

Initial works are planned to commence late April, through to end of May, to divert services behind the east parapet wall, demolish the parapet and provide a new/wider east footpath. Traffic flows will not be disrupted through this time, but access along the east footpath will be altered to permit works to progress.

The first major phase will last for 3 months. The footpath on the west side of the bridge will be closed and pedestrians should use the footpath on the east side.

The major disruption to traffic will be from around late June to the end of August. There will be single lane traffic across the bridge and into the station, controlled by 3-way traffic lights. Packhorse Road will return to 2-way for a single week in the

middle of this period, although Station Approach will be single lane throughout.

The second phase will then last for 2 months until the end of October / early November. The footpath on the east side of the bridge will be closed, with single lane traffic for just 1 week in October for road resurfacing.

From June to August, drivers should allow extra time to cross the Packhorse Road bridge and to access the railway station. If possible, we ask that you avoid Packhorse Road at busy times.

Rail passengers may consider walking to the station, or they could be dropped off by the footbridge in Layters Way or at the end of Orchehill Rise and avoid Station Approach altogether.

The Parish Council appreciates that this will be a difficult time and we have worked closely with both Costain and the County Council to ensure that disruption is kept to an absolute minimum. We ask residents to please be patient and we can look forward to this being finished as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us either by telephone on 01753 888018 or by email at clerk@gerrardscross.gov.uk.

What's on

The **2010 Annual Parish Meeting** will be held on **Tuesday, 27 April at 7.30pm** in the Colston Hall, Memorial Centre. The Agenda will be displayed on the Parish Notice Boards. Refreshments will be served and all residents are most welcome.

Gerrards Cross Traders Association

Under its energetic Chairman Peter Banner, good progress is being made in bringing the Traders together and getting involved in new areas such as having Hanging Baskets in the main shopping streets.

The support of all Traders is urgently required to achieve this, particularly the multiples who, apart from Tesco, made no contributions towards the Christmas Lights.

Residents thanks are due to all Traders who did contribute to the Lights and they are listed on the Parish Notice Boards.



House Numbers

Residents are urged to display their house numbers in a place clearly visible from the road so as to help Emergency services and anyone else seeking a house to find it.

TESCO

Parish Councillors meet regularly with Tesco's builders, Costain, to monitor noise, pollution and dirt and to discuss residents' complaints and concerns.

Costain are encouraged to keep their website updated so residents can be informed about progress on the project, the completion date for which is estimated as December of this year.



Keep fit in Gerrards Cross

Run for Fun

You can practise for the Gerrards Cross Fun Run (Sunday May 23, 2010) by using the two new running routes on Gerrards Cross Common.

Each starts on Packhorse Road in the vicinity of the flagpole and the bus turning circle. On West Common the first marker post will show you the direction to run and you follow the arrows on the posts out to a turnaround point near Latchmoor Pond and then back to the start for a 1000 metre circuit.

On East Common, the marker posts, a metre high and made of oak, will lead you to a turnaround near the underpass on the A40 and then back alongside East Common Road in a longer circuit of 1500 metres.

Each marker post tells you how far you have run already and points you in the direction of the next one.

If you run both circuits twice, you will have covered the exact 5 km distance of the Gerrards Cross Fun Run.

So please go to www.gxfunrun.co.uk, download an application form and start training now!



Marker post at the layby on West Common Road where the 1000 metre circuit turns back for home

Simply Walks

Simply Walks is a walks programme run by the Bucks County Council in conjunction with District Councils.

Its aim is to help you improve your health and to meet new friends - it is simple, easy and free!

The walks are guided by trained volunteer walk leaders who will help you get started and encourage you to walk at your own pace.

Walkers are registered with the leader and we are planning to use our beautiful Gerrards Cross Commons. There are many clear, level paths in a pleasant woodland setting.

Should you wish to train as a leader (we need 2 - 3) or just to take part please get in touch with Joe Sammon at South Bucks District Council on 01895 837200 or Simply Walks on 01494 475367.

More information is available on the website www.buckscc.gov.uk/rights_of_way.

No increase in Parish precept

It has been another busy year for the Parish Council. It has undertaken a number of new initiatives including resurfacing of East Common footpath, the upgrading of the Valley Way footpath with steps, the establishment of a running route on the common and improvements to our communication with residents through an upgraded newsletter and website content.

For the financial year 2010/11 The Parish Council has resolved that there will be no increase in the Parish precept for the forthcoming year. The Council is well aware that in light of the continuing difficult economic environment many residents are concerned about their finances. This decision is for one year only and will not affect our provision of essential services such as street lighting, maintenance of footpaths, The Camp and the Commons and many others.

Within the limitations imposed by this cap on the precept, the Parish Council still plans to undertake new initiatives that will benefit the residents of the village. This includes the establishment of a Youth Committee with the aim of working closely with a number of interested parties in order to enhance the provision of youth services and a forestry project programme for The Camp. Nonetheless, some additional new projects may have to be deferred for one year.

Overall the Parish Council feel that this is a prudent decision in the current economic climate.



Increased demand for parish council taxi scheme

The Parish Council operates a Taxi Concessionary Fares Scheme, aimed at residents aged 60 and over, living in Gerrards Cross who have difficulties in getting to and from local medical appointments at doctors' surgeries, dentists, opticians and hospitals. This Scheme has been running for a number of years with a steady demand but over the last month this has increased dramatically - perhaps due to the fall in interest rates which has hit pensioners particularly hard.

In order to join the Scheme, pensioners fill in a simple application form - available from the Parish Office or its website. Once a member, they are able to telephone the approved taxi company to make a booking, paying the agreed fare and obtaining a receipt. This receipt is then taken to the Post Office - by the pensioner or a friend, where a rebate of up to 70% of the fare can be claimed. Further details from the Parish Office or www.gerrardscross.gov.uk

Youth of Gerrards Cross



We have fantastic youth in Gerrards Cross and we on the Parish Council are concerned that, and there is no easy way of putting this, Gerrards Cross may appear to be a bit of a dull place if you are lucky enough to be a young person. We also realise that many youth activities that GX young people get involved take place outside of Gerrards Cross meaning that we, Gerrards Cross miss out on the energy and vibrancy of its own youth and at the same time converts parents in to taxi drivers. To address this is not an overnight job but we have set ourselves 3 objectives for the coming year:

- Publicise better the youth activities in GX
- Establish a dialogue so we can understand better what GX youth would actually like

- Organise at least one event for GX youth

To help us, we have recruited 3 Duke of Edinburgh Students who are busy developing Facebook pages which we hope to launch in the coming weeks. We have also recruited an associate member to who will help us with our objectives. However, what we would really like is to hear from you if you have ideas for this initiative and particularly if you interested in getting involved. So if you are interested in starting up say a drama club, community choir, or anything else that can be done in GX then please contact us at clerk@gerrardscross.gov.uk, we would love to hear from you. We do have a small budget and other resources available to help get things started.



Our failing infrastructure

The recent freeze has caused immense damage to the already poor road infrastructure in Buckinghamshire. A policy of patch and mend over many years has been exposed as sub-zero conditions have produced many new and dangerous potholes. The County Council has had to allocate an emergency £2m from reserves to cope with the problem, but this can only be a short-term fix and experience suggests that many of the potholes will reappear in time.

Residents in Howards Wood Drive can testify to the problems of short-term budgeting. Four years ago I got agreement to a complete resurfacing of the road which had been completely ruined by a succession of housing developments. Unfortunately the Council decided to do the resurfacing in three parts over different budget years, and the last part was left undone when funds ran out. In November I presented a petition at County Council asking that the work is now finished, but even if it does go ahead

the overall cost will have been much greater than if all of the road had been resurfaced at one time.

County Councillors were told in January that the roads need an estimated £120m of capital expenditure to bring them back to a sustainable condition. The advantage then would be that annual maintenance costs would be contained.

The problem is that money on that scale simply is not available, and particularly not now given the crisis in public spending.

But we must at least make a start. We should have a five year plan to rebuild some of the worst roads, and borrow at current low rates of interest to pay for it. Borrowing even so is not free, but if we do nothing we will continue to have poor roads and ever higher maintenance costs – the worst of all worlds.

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Gerrards Cross status as a Quality Parish

Buckinghamshire County Council has confirmed Gerrards Cross Parish's status-first awarded in 2005- as a Quality Parish. This means that the Parish has met seven criteria laid down and checked by the County Council.

The seven criteria are:

- Promoting local democracy and citizenship – which is done by advertising vacancies on the Parish Council and holding elections where seats are contested
- Having a Parish Clerk who is qualified through passing all relevant courses
- Holding regular Council Meetings and an Annual Parish Meeting, open to all residents
- Communicating with residents through a Website, Newsletter and Notice Boards
- Publishing an Annual Report available to all residents
- Having its accounts audited by both external and internal auditors.
- Adopted the Model Code of Conduct for Parish Councils
- Offering training courses for all Councillors, Committee Chairmen and Staff



Richard Pushman, Vice-Chairman Bucks County Council handing the Quality Parish Certificate to Parish Chairman David Peters watched by the Clerk, Diana Hepburn-Park

Planning Developments

Year 2009 saw a steady flow of residential planning applications.

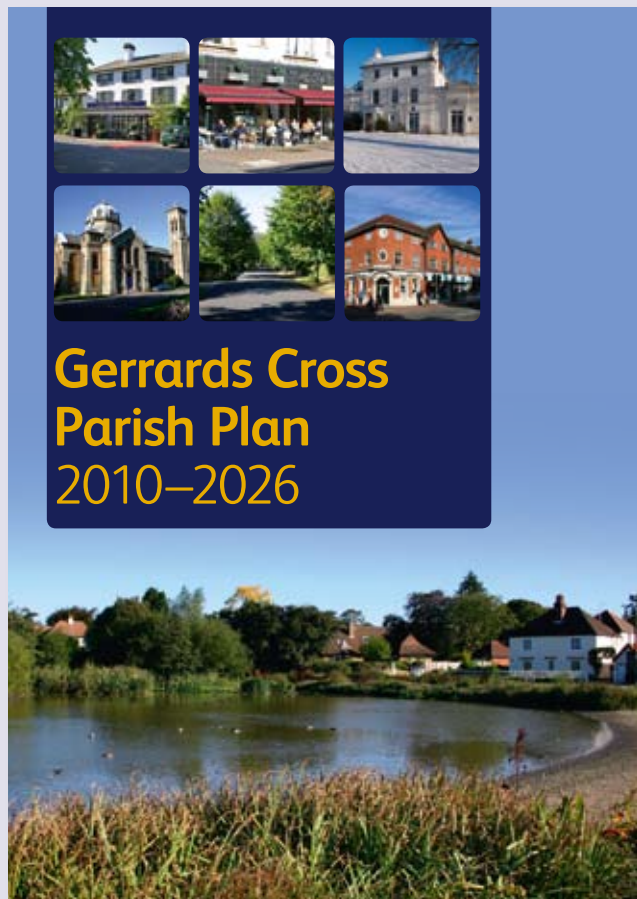
As always, the Parish Council is glad to receive comments from residents on any applications or other planning matters which require attention. They are always welcome to view any plans at the Parish office or they can now access plans on the District Council web site www.southbucks.gov.uk/environment.

The developers of the French Horn, Oxford Road, have been successful on their second application in achieving planning permission for residential accommodation for older people. The design has been greatly improved to enhance the prominent

position at the gateway to Gerrards Cross.

The developers applying to develop a Waitrose store with flats over in Station Road, after withdrawing their first application, subsequently informed the District Planning Authority that they had decided not to proceed with the project.

All plans coming before the Parish Council are examined in detail, either at a planning meeting or by our clerks under delegated authority in conjunction with the Chairman of Planning. Where appropriate an appointed Council member visits or telephones the neighbours to ensure that their views are taken in to consideration.



This plan affects all residents. To obtain your copy visit the website or pick one up from the parish office

www.gerrardscross.gov.uk

