

CENTRE PIECE FOR OCTOBER 2023 KEYS MAGAZINE

Following the recent hot spell, we're now marching rapidly into autumn with the nights drawing in fast and temperatures starting to come back down. This is the time of year when the council reconvenes following the summer recess, although members of the Planning Committee continued to meet bi-weekly all throughout the summer to consider local planning applications. The recess meant there was a temporary lull in all things parish council-related, but there are still a number of developments to report and updates on current projects that I hope you will find of interest.

Highways matters

I am pleased to report that the guards on the belisha beacons on the pedestrian crossing outside One Stop are now in situ, thus protecting local residents from their glare, and the wigwags are on schedule to be installed in Riding Lane to remind motorists of the speed limit. Installation of bollards outside The Flying Dutchman to prevent vehicles mounting the pavement has been approved and the council hopes they will be installed before too long. Kent County Council's programme of hedge cutting has resumed following their summer nesting-season break. If you have concerns about overgrown hedges or problems with trees on the highways please report them to KCC using the "Report a Problem" portal that can be found on the Kent County Council website (www.kent.gov.uk). Once the fault is reported, a case number is allocated to the fault so that progress can be tracked.

The parish council has approved the installation of dropped kerbs in the Brookmead area of Hildenborough subject to clarification of the final cost of the project and financial support from KCC. I hope to be able to report further progress soon.

West Wood

As promised in my last Centre Piece article, the pump cycle track in West Wood was renovated in July in time for youngsters to enjoy it throughout the summer holidays. It was great to see the track in use and I was very impressed to see the daring cycling skills on display when I visited the track after it was re-opened. I am sure many of you will be aware that the copious amount of brash left behind following the felling of a number of diseased ash trees earlier this year has now all been taken away. There are already signs of new hazel trees sprouting up in spaces previously occupied by the ash trees and the Dick Sharp of the Hildenborough Conservation Group is very kindly arranging for the Group to replant a number of new hazel and field maple trees in the remaining gaps. The members of Hildenborough Parish Council greatly appreciate their assistance with looking after West Wood for all to enjoy.

Another piece of good news relating to West Wood is that renovation work to the stagnant pond in the wood is due to take place over the course of the coming weeks. Medway Valley Countryside Partnership have offered to fund the restoration of the pond to provide habitat for great crested newts. I will update readers on progress over the coming months but please contact me if you would like more information about the project and I will e-mail you a leaflet produced by Natural England.

Recreation Ground

The faulty swings in the playground in the Recreation Ground that I mentioned last month were soon repaired and back in use for children to enjoy during the summer. Further repairs to the tarmac in the playground will take place soon and it is anticipated that the work to repaint the perimeter fence by the Community Payback Team will be completed this autumn. The park benches and picnic table were spruced up by our maintenance contractor and Landscape Services have been keeping the field in tip-top condition for everyone to enjoy, including our local cricket club and stool ball club. Sadly,

the pond adjacent to the Recreation Ground did not meet the criteria for restoration by Medway Valley Countryside Partnership but their officer advised the parish council on the work that can be carried out to improve the condition of the pond for the wildlife that lives there.

Village Green

The three young willow trees on the Village Green last year have made it through the summer thanks to the kind efforts with helping to water the trees by a local resident. The Hildenborough Gardening Society will be re-planting the planters with spring bulbs this autumn to ensure a colourful display next spring.

Could you be a Parish Councillor?

The parish council were delighted to co-opt a new member, Cllr Matt Gorman, at the September Parish Council meeting. Matt is planning to visit the Farmers' Market during October where he will have the opportunity to introduce himself to local residents and make a note of any concerns they may have about Hildenborough that the parish council may be able to assist with. The parish council still needs two new members following the recent resignation of Cllr. Sandy Thomas, so please let me know if you are interested. For this and for any other issues you wish to report to the council please e-mail me at clerk@hildenboroughpc.org.uk or call me on 07818 329029.

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