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THE NEWSLETTER

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DORRIDGE & DISTRICT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Chairman: DAVID GLANFIELD ~ 779635 • Secretary: MALCOLM SHEPHERD ~ 773374 • Editor: PETER RADNALL ~ 770633
e-mail address: dorridge residents@googlemail.com • www.dorridge.org.uk

THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR, SOMETIME.....

.....NEVER may not be an option for the arrival of a Motorway Service Area (MSA) somewhere on 'our' stretch of the M42, although we will do our best to prevent it. However, that arrival – if it ever does happen – has once again moved a little further away with the most recent postponement of the Public Inquiry. DDRA's representatives are now poised for a fourth pre-inquiry meeting on June 11, just one day before the full inquiry was scheduled to begin. And that date was also a postponement, moved from November 28 last year! The main problem is the lack of basic information being received by interested parties, and a shortage of core documentation. There is concern that no revised plan for the Junction 4 proposal has yet been published and that there is insufficient information from the Highways Agency about how it will manage the issues that will arise from the implementation of either proposal.

But things could get worse. A national newspaper reported recently that a consultation paper drawn up by the Department for Transport recommends an increase in the number of MSAs and the doubling in size of some of the existing ones, as well as the creation of continental-style picnic and rest areas. The suggestion is that as the volume of traffic grows the driving time between MSAs will exceed the recommended 30 minutes and that this will validate the argument for having more of them. DDRA has no first hand knowledge of the consultation paper, but if the newspaper report is correct we can anticipate that the pressure to build on the Solihull section will grow. As ever, we will publish any new information we receive on our website www.dorridge.org.uk.

Lastly, but very importantly, if you haven't expressed your views to the Planning Inspectorate you can still do so because the deadline for comment has also been moved on. A new deadline will be established at the June 11 meeting but in the meantime you can write to

Ian Kemp (BSc Hons)
Programme Officer
36 Campbell Street
RUGBY
CV21 2HY e-mail ikemp@ntlworld.com

You should quote APP/Q4625/A/06/1199380 for Junction 4, and APP/Q4625/A/98/1013094 for Catherine-de-Barnes. DDRA has objected to both proposals. :

COURT NEWS

Forest Court that is, not the Palace! We do get a lot of requests for information about what is going to happen down there and even what DDRA is doing about it. Of course we hear all the rumours. One week it's one of the big supermarkets, the next week it's another. Sometimes someone tells us it will be a block of flats, but then that is trumped by an office development. The truth is there is no hard news about anything and if there were to be a firm proposal, public consultation would be a prior requirement. And of course that would not be a matter for DDRA to arrange.

Nevertheless we do feel that we have a responsibility to keep the future of Forest Court a 'live' issue and to that end we have formed a small working party of three members who will look at possible options and then make appropriate contact with those people or



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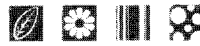
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organisations who might advise on feasibility or offer practical help in effecting improvements. We have already floated the idea at separate meetings with our Ward Councillors and with the Council's Department for Transport, Highways and the Environment and they have pledged their support. What we would like now are your ideas on how you would like to see the Forest Court site revitalised, and what measures you think would attract more shoppers and – more importantly – more shops of the kind which would encourage more shoppers. If you have any thoughts you can e-mail them to dorridgeresidents@google-mail.com

or write to David Glanfield,
17 Westfield Close, Dorridge, SOLIHULL B93 8DY.

No promises, though!.

BUT...we are very happy to welcome the newly opened Jo-Jo's card shop, the first new addition to the precinct for several years. We wish the owners every success in their venture.

FANCY BEING A CHAMPION?

The Council recently launched its 'Environment Champion' scheme whereby residents can become the eyes, ears and hands of the Council's Environmental Health officers, working alongside them to help combat graffiti, litter, fly-tipping and sundry other plagues that blight our communities. Volunteers can be trained and empowered to clean graffiti, remove unauthorised posters and deal with other minor issues, leaving the Council to tackle the bigger jobs. If this is just the chance you have been waiting for – or even if it isn't! – you can find out more from Jennie Westwood or Marj Walsh on 0121 704 6859 or by e-mail at environmentalhealth@solihull.gov.uk. Meanwhile, don't forget that you can report graffiti to the Graffiti Hotline – 0121 704 1580.

AND MORE MOVES TO IMPROVE

As mentioned above we have recently had meetings with Ward Councillors and Council officers, and this is

part of our continuing effort to maintain and improve the appearance of Dorridge centre. Our Councillors, busy as they are, agreed earlier this year to meet a small group of our Committee members in the week following our full Committee meetings. In this way we can pass on concerns raised by the Committee and seek their advice or practical support in furthering the cause. The two Council officers from Transport, Highways and the Environment came out to Dorridge last month to receive a kind of 'wish-list' of matters we believe they can help us with, followed by a walkabout in the village centre to see for themselves what it is that needs their attention. We looked at Forest Court, the generally run down appearance of the frontages on Station Approach, parking problems, and issues surrounding traffic management, especially on the approach to the pedestrian crossing by the railway bridge. We discussed (and gained their tacit approval for) a couple of benches at the edge of the spinney opposite the Dorridge Surgery. This suggestion will require further consideration but we did make it clear that DDRA would bear the cost. We also asked them to look into the removal of the green display cabinet in the square, of which more later. We believe that occasional meetings with them and regular, scheduled, meetings with the Councillors will be a great help in achieving our aims.

One aim that has been achieved is the production of large green planters to be set up on Dorridge station. We have to thank Kerry Mountjoy, our Neighbourhood Coordinator, for taking our idea and the design drawings to the Council and securing the cash to pay for the planters as well as the soil and plants to put into them. These should be a very attractive addition to the station scene. They are in 'Dorridge Green' with the DDRA initials embossed on the side, and they will be planted and maintained by Committee members and our community volunteers. On the same subject, we shall shortly be seeing Central Trains' official acknowledgement of DDRA's adoption of the station in the form of a plaque placed prominently in the entrance hall.

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MORE RAILWAY NEWS

The big thing at the moment is the expiry of Central Trains' franchise later this year. We understand that Chiltern Trains are favourite to take over the Snow Hill lines, covering Leamington, Stratford-upon-Avon, Kidderminster and Worcester in addition to the Birmingham/London services. Longer trains are due to be ordered to increase passenger capacity, and it is hoped that the additional lines into Moor Street will come into operation during 2008, helping to ease the chronic congestion on the existing two platforms. It is also pleasing to note that signalling improvement from Leamington to Snow Hill and the track remodelling outside Tyseley station are on plan and should be completed by the end of this year.

And finally, everyone must agree that the changes at Dorridge station are a great improvement. The general look of the place and the enhanced train information systems are most welcome.

THREE YEARS RUNNING

That's the Dorridge Fun Run, which celebrates its third anniversary this year. The 2006 event attracted nearly 500 entrants and this year the organisers hope for an even greater number. It's at St Philips Church on Saturday 9 June, starting at 10.15 by the comedian Malcolm Stent. You can run, walk, cycle, push the baby or use any kind of non-motorised transport to get round your choice of route, 3 or 8 miles.

But there's more! The Summer Fair will also be held in the grounds of St Philips Church Centre, with live jazz, street theatre, refreshments, stalls, children's games.....AND the opportunity to view and discuss the proposal for the development of the church site. More details and entry forms for the run from St Philips Parish Office (77 5652) or www.stphilipsandstjames.org.

WE THINK IT HAS TO GO

A few of you, but sadly too few, have made use of the green three-sided display board in the square, and it

now has blank faces staring out at us. More seriously, following the attention of some of our less acceptable young residents, at least one of the doors has been damaged to the extent that it is difficult to keep it closed, so that it now swings out and presents a hazard to passers-by. We cannot allow this to continue so we have asked for the unit to be removed.

NEED TO TALK TO US?

The next item is the result of calls or e-mails to us from residents. If there is something you wish to bring to our notice just pick up the phone or log on to your e-mail and let us know. Details at the top of this newsletter.

LET'S TALK RUBBISH....

.....or, more precisely, recycling. We have had a number of requests for news of the Council's policies on recycling, so we have passed the buck collectively to the Councillors, to Kerry Mountjoy, and to Jim Harte at Transport, Highways etc. We are already receiving bits of information from them but rather than deal with the matter piecemeal we will collect all the bits together and report in full in the next issue of The Newsletter, due in August. Councillor Ian Courts and Kerry have already responded, with more to follow, and Jim Harte has booked a slot at our Committee meeting on July 9 to give a PowerPoint presentation on the current state plus the Council's plans for the future. By that time we shall have all the stuff from Kerry and Ian, and the timing fits nicely with our August edition.

In the meantime, be aware that you can deposit plastic bottles and Tetra packs (ie milk cartons, juice cartons and the like) at Tesco/Notcutts at Monkspath, Tudor Grange Park car park or the Bickenhill waste disposal site. Give them a rinse – for obvious reasons – then crush them and cap them to save space in the containers.

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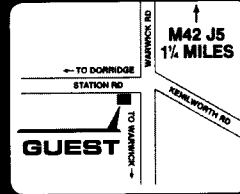
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THANK YOU FOR COMING...

.....those who attended the AGM back in March, that is. At 90-plus we think it was the best turnout since any of us can remember and we were very excited when we had to get out extra chairs! We are sorry that the Air Ambulance did not attend as planned, but the talk by Trading Standards was a very useful substitute.

AND GOODBYE

The AGM was the last official function for our long serving and ultra-reliable colleague Lilian Gates, who retired from the Committee after many years of loyal service to the DDRA and to the community. To us she was 'The Voice of Bentley Heath', keeping us up to date with the wishes and concerns of that corner of our patch. With Lilian gone we have no-one living in the Slater Road/Mill Lane/Widney Road triangle to represent the views of residents in that area. So, Lilian's replacement, if you are reading this.....!!

AND LASTLY - YOU KNOW WHAT'S COMING

Have you paid us anything this year? Your humble £1 commits you to nothing, but pays for a whole calendar year of service from the DDRA. Well, actually you get the service whether you pay or not - we don't check on you if you ask for our help because a

developer wants to knock down the house next door and build a block of flats, and of course you receive four editions of this Newsletter by simply living in our distribution area. But if you pay your £1 you will also receive our most attractive membership card with useful telephone numbers and space for any personal details you care to add. It is a much prized item and we are surprised that so few of you seem to want one!

Seriously, the money helps. We use it to pay for maintenance of the garden areas, to purchase the inevitable consumables like copy paper, ink cartridges etc, and to pay for tangible improvements to the area which do not fall within the remit of the Council or which it is reluctant to fund given its current financial state. On 13 April 'The Birmingham Post' printed several pages extolling the virtues of Dorridge - with photos - and saying what a lovely place it is to live. We hope that our efforts contribute to that, and our aim is to maintain and improve the environment which surrounds us. But that doesn't come for free. You can make your contribution by filling in the slip below and dropping it into any of the addresses listed.

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