

## **MINUTES OF THE BERA AGM MEETING ON MONDAY 24TH MARCH 2025 AT 7PM**

Meeting chaired by Susan Cusack

Meeting attended by Anneke de Boer, Susan Cusack, Louise Furber, Isabel Hammond, Mark Ingham, Leila Moore and Art Mountain

Minutes taken by Louise Furber

Susan welcomed everyone and said it was great to see such a wonderful turnout. She expressed her gratitude to Robert Holmes, present, for once again sponsoring the hire of the Garden Hall and to Jeroboams for supplying delicious white and red wines, as well as cheese platters and all the glasses.

She introduced the BERA committee:

Leila Moore – Hon Treasurer, Isabel Hammond - Membership Secretary and local policing, Louise Furber – Hon Secretary, Anneke De Boer - who is specifically working on the AELTC application alongside Susan and who is a Director of Save Wimbledon Park Limited, Mark Ingham - website and road rep for Arthur Road and Art Mountain who re-joined us last year after a 15 year gap. A warm welcome back.

Those who are unable to attend are: Mark Morgan – Planning, Traffic & Roads, Wimbledon Village and Maureen Vincent – who is the road rep for at St. Aubyn’s Avenue.

All nine of the committee are standing for re-election this year.

There is one space on the Committee. The BERA Constitution stipulates a maximum of 10 members, so if anyone would like to join, please approach any of the committee after the meeting - no specific experience is needed, however it is an inclusive group who work well together on a wide range of issues.

### **1. MINUTES OF THE 2024 AGM – 18TH MARCH 2024**

We had a well attended in-person meeting last year on the same Monday evening in March. The Minutes were circulated to the Committee and to the guests who spoke to ensure they were a true reflection of the meeting. They were subsequently shared with the BERA membership by email. They are also available on the members’ section of the website.

Paul Bonner proposed the sign off of the Minutes and Tina Hene seconded.

### **2. ACCOUNTS AND TREASURER’S REPORT – LEILA MOORE**

As at the end of 2024 there were 160 households, so revenue of £1,600. Leila encouraged members to ask any new neighbours to join. Interest of £800 from cash reserves held at Handelsbanken, so a total income of £2,200, resulting in profit of £1,500. The cash reserve is

£24,700. Leila thanked Francis Plowden for auditing the accounts and Robert Holmes and Jeroboams for sponsoring the AGM.

### 3. ANNUAL REVIEW – SUSAN CUSACK

Susan said she could stand for hours detailing what had gone on over the past 12 months so instead of doing that she has listed all the issues that BERA has been, and continues to be, involved with in the Agenda.

#### MEMBERSHIP UPDATE: ISABEL HAMMOND, MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

There are 450 households and 160 members, so 35% membership. It is an extremely busy residents' association and we are keen to grow our membership. Our lowest memberships are at the village end of Church Road, Belvedere Drive and Belvedere Grove and the top of Wimbledon Hill Road. After many years at £10, the cost of membership is increasing to £20 with effect from this year, so please amend your standing orders accordingly.

One of the reasons for low membership in the village end of Church Road is the high proportion of tenancies in these properties. We do welcome tenants to become members, however there is a lack of interest from tenants. An AGM notice was put through the door of every household in the BERA area, inviting them to attend and to become members.

#### 4a. RE-ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Susan Cusack (St Mary's Road) is willing to continue as Chair and Planning Secretary  
Isabel Hammond (Church Road) is willing to continue as Membership Secretary  
Leila Moore (Church Road) is willing to continue as Hon Treasurer  
Louise Furber (Lancaster Gardens) is willing to continue as Hon Secretary

Andrew Edwards proposed the election of the officers and Rosemary Chadder seconded.

#### 4b. RE-ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Standing for re-election to the Committee are Anneke de Boer (Church Road), Mark Ingham (Arthur Road), Mark Morgan (Church Road), Art Mountain (Church Road) and Maureen Vincent (St Aubyn's Avenue).

Sonya Aitken proposed the election of the committee members and Paul Bonner seconded.

### 5. PAUL KOHLER MP

Susie Hicks, Councillor for Hillside, spoke on behalf of Paul who was attending the late night sitting in the House of Commons.

Susie said that Paul sent his apologies and gave a list of things he has been doing since being elected as MP in July 2024. His office is now fully staffed and he has new offices in South Wimbledon. His previous office was not deemed to have appropriate security measures in place.

#### Local Issues:

- The Post Office in Raynes Park is at risk of closure, which is disappointing. Paul has spoken in Chamber about the need to maintain it and has written to the minister, Gareth Thomas and has had a response (please see attached). He met with the post office on 20<sup>th</sup> March to continue to press for it to be maintained. Please sign the petition online at <https://www.mertonlibdems.org.uk/our-campaigns/better-town-centres/save-post-office-services-in-raynes-park>
- Breast Cancer Screening. Paul has been active on this asking parliamentary questions and has raised it in debates. Screening increased in 2023 in Merton, having decreased in 2022. The results for 2024 are yet to be released, but Merton is below the national average. Paul and Susie are pushing for a breast cancer screening hub in Merton to increase the number of people being screened.
- Paul is pushing for step free access and led a Westminster debate on the need for it. The government has been asked for an update and feasibility work for step free access is now underway at Raynes Park station. All fifty feasibility studies announced last year should be completed by April 2025. Confirmation of which stations will move forward will be announced during the summer.
- VAT on private school fees. As a liberal Paul does not believe in taxing education. He raised this at a debate on the Finance Bill.
- Wimbledon Police Station is again at risk of being shut, which is disappointing considering all the work Paul did many years ago to save it. There are two police stations in the London borough of Merton which is very unusual – Mitcham and Wimbledon, however Paul is pushing for both to be kept open.
- Wandle – Paul has raised the terrible disastrous mess in the Wandle in Chambers.

#### National Issues:

- Roads: Paul currently undertakes the role of Liberal Democrat Spokesperson (Transport). He is working on the scrutiny of upcoming bus and rail reforms. He is using it as an opportunity to raise Wimbledon related issues. The unclassified roads in Merton are the second worst in the country, with 40% of local roads classified as poor (which is appalling given it is a wealthy borough). He has met with Heidi Alexander, Secretary of State for Transport to discuss.

He is doing his best to be very active on lots of issues. Please follow him on his YouTube channel. Sign up to [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) and they will send you an alert every time he does or says something! If you have an issue that you would like to raise, please attend one of his surgeries at the Wimbledon Guild or email him at [paul.kohler.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:paul.kohler.mp@parliament.uk). He would love to hear from you!

#### 6. COUNCILLORS FROM VILLAGE, HILLSIDE AND WIMBLEDON PARK WARDS

Max Austin, Councillor from the Village Ward spoke. Max is Chair of 'Visit Wimbledon Village' alongside Clive Hilton. It was an informal umbrella group that was set up 7/8 years ago to bring

together all the stakeholders in Wimbledon Village to come up with new ideas to drive footfall in the village, to benefit both residents and the local businesses. Sitting on the committee is the AETLC, The Wimbledon Society, Wimbledon Village Business Association (WVBA), Wimbledon United Residents' Associations (WURA), the Commons, Max, Clive and the Council. This group incubated the idea of the Farmers' Market, which has turned Sunday into the best trading day for the village.

They have also taken it upon themselves to organise civic events to bring the community together to mark some of the key national milestones. These included the QEII Platinum Jubilee in 2022, the Vigil for QEII three months later on the eve of her funeral and the celebrations for the Coronation of King Charles III. Upcoming events include the borough's commemoration of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025. Celebrations will take place throughout the village, including the lighting of Merton's VE Day Beacon at the Wimbledon War Memorial by the Mayor of Merton at 9:30pm. There will be free fish and chip cones at the Rose & Crown and Dog & Fox at 6pm and music by the Wandle Concert Band at 8pm at the War Memorial. So please come along and tell your friends.

This year is also the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the London Borough of Merton with events taking place across the borough throughout April, concluding on Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2025. The Village's Day is Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April and the theme is the 1990s.

There are plans to bring back the Wimbledon Fair, on a reduced basis, in 2026. It was discontinued ten years ago. It raises money for local charities and brings the community together on an annual basis.

Many people have been involved in the campaign to upgrade Fishponds Wood, which is the bluebell walk off Barham Road park onto Wimbledon Common. The land is owned by the Council and is a heritage and ancient site, which had been left to decay for a number of years. The Friends of Fishponds Wood have formed and are registered as a charity. They are well on their way to reaching their target to replace the boardwalk (they have already raised £100,000). The Council has also contributed out of their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary funds.

Tony Rees, Councillor for Wimbledon Park spoke about lighting and safety on our streets. The lift at Wimbledon Park station was closed more than the lifts at any other station in London, however after nine months of working with TfL they have now changed their rota and it is now open. Southfields station is also now on the same rota.

Traffic on Arthur and Leopold Roads is a major problem. The bollard outside Wimbledon Park tube station is broken, so there has been lots more trucks and skip lorries using this route recently. The Council is aware of the problem however it is not a quick fix – a part has to be made which is inserted into the ground; hence the delay! School traffic is a major problem on Leopold Road; with parking on pavements and blocking drives. Tony is getting enforcement officers to turn up to ensure parking at school drop off and pick up improves.

After lots of complaints about street lighting being too dark and women saying they did not feel safe walking at night, Tony did a survey and 96% of respondents said the bulbs are not bright enough. The Council has finally admitted that Dora and Vineyard Roads had bulbs emitting the wrong level of light. Tony has asked the Council to carry out an audit of all the streetlamps, but it has not yet been done. He urged people to complain to the Council if they don't feel safe at night.

Gill Hall, Councillor for Wimbledon Park raised the point that there are 3,000 empty tree pits in Merton. At present they plant 500 street trees per year, however their tree strategy states they should be planting 800 trees per year. The Councillors are suggesting they plant 1,000 per year. The boroughs of Kingston and Sutton plant 2,000 trees each year. There is also a lack of transparency and a lack of pollarding/trimming of the trees. Susan encouraged residents to water the trees near their own houses.

#### 7. LEONIE COOPER, LONDON ASSEMBLY MEMBER FOR MERTON AND WANDSWORTH: DEPUTY CHAIR, LONDON'S ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Susan introduced and welcomed Leonie Cooper. Leonie is the London assembly member for both Merton and Wandsworth boroughs and the borough boundary runs through Wimbledon Park. She expressed her disappointment that the AELTC failed to consult local residents prior to submitting their proposed planning development. She thinks the plans for the AELTC are the wrong proposals in the wrong place.

At City Hall, the Mayor of London sets his budget at this time of year. The Greater London Authority consists of the Mayor of London's office, the Mayor's office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), the Metropolitan Police, the Fire Brigade, Transport for London, a couple of development corporations, OPDC and the London Assembly. The role of the Assembly is to be the voice of Londoners in City Hall and hold the mayor to account. Over 21,500 people have signed the petition against the AELTC plans which were given approval by the Deputy Mayor, Jules Pipe last September and they want to hold the mayor to account. The budget is £21 billion, an element of which is charged to our council tax bills – our money goes towards paying the police and the fire brigade. There are 32,000 police officers and admin staff and 8,000 fire officers. In recent times the police have gone through difficult times in terms of the culture and activities of some of the police officers.

Louise Casey's report into the police came out two years ago. They've been working really hard to get themselves out of these Special Measures, which they call Engage, which are very difficult circumstances. The Fire Brigade also went into Engage and both services have now come out. The London Fire Commissioner did his own review of culture within the Fire Brigade. It is a difficult service to unpick – people work in very tight teams and 'watches' and if there is an ethos that gets built into the way they operate in small teams, it's quite hard to change it as so often the culture is embedded. The Fire Brigade has done a lot to try and change some of the behaviours which Leonie has witnessed. They have also been having to reflect on the Grenfell enquiry and the recommendations that have come out. There is lots of new equipment that has

been purchased to help them tackle fires in these tall blocks, to try and avert a disaster of this scale ever happening again. There are still issues with the construction of a number of the blocks across London and improvements are much needed to these buildings.

The Assembly produced a report in 2009 (well before the Grenfell fire) into a fire that happened at Lakanal House, a tower block in Southwark in July 2009 – it had been identified as being at risk of enabling a fire to spread should one occur in one of the flats due to a lack of compartmentalisation. The Assembly made some very strong recommendations which sadly were ignored. Had some of these been implemented, the fire at Grenfell may not have been so deadly or widespread. So, there is lots still to be done in terms of improvements and lots of blocks across London need attention.

The GLA gets some money for the police from the Home Office – they carry out an assessment, however London is unique in many ways. There are the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace and number of other royal residences. There is a grant called the national and international capital city grant and the Home Office works out how much the GLA should get and over the last 10 years they have given them £250m less than they worked out that they should get! This year they have given them slightly more towards the amount they say that they should need, but in effect Londoners are paying more towards looking after those institutions than anyone else.

Leonie, currently Deputy Chair of the Environment Committee resumes the position of Chair from 1<sup>st</sup> May this year and has served on the committee since 2016. They look at open spaces and metropolitan open land, making sure they are not being built on. They are also looking at a wide range of things including swimming in the river Thames – they are moving towards clean and healthy rivers. The Assembly looks at the big picture, as well as at the local level.

A concern was raised that there are other big sports clubs such as Tottenham looking to expand onto Metropolitan Open Land. Leonie said the Planning and Infrastructure Bill is going through Parliament and she has concerns about it – it's very important that we don't prioritise infrastructure (building railways and stadiums) over nature. We only have one planet and we are very nature depleted in the UK – worse than many other countries compared to the rest of the world. We need to mitigate and adapt to the changing environment, such as which trees we plant and what will be right for the future. There will be no earth and no food if we don't have pollinators. Open green spaces are the lungs of London. They want to see more green spaces and not less.

Save Wimbledon Park is in touch with the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) so they are aware of all of the other sites that people are trying to develop. They hope that sense will prevail. In a climate emergency, we need to protect our environment. In 1871 the people of Wimbledon rose up and campaigned to protect the land that is now Wimbledon Common from development and we are indebted to those residents and need to remember this now more than ever.

## 8. WIMBLEDON & PUTNEY COMMONS – ANGELA EVANS-HILL (DEPUTY CEO, WPCC)

Susan handed over to Angela Evans-Hill, Deputy Chief Executive of Wimbledon and Putney Common Conservators. Those living in the BERA area pay the annual Commons levy. Angela thanked Susan and the committee for inviting her to speak on behalf of Wimbledon and Putney Commons. They welcome the chance to engage with their levy payers and to be able to give and update on what is happening on the Commons.

The Conservators will continue to increase the Levy by the maximum that they are permitted, which for the financial year 2025/26 will be 2.7%. This is based on the RPI as at the previous September. For a Band D property, this means an increase of 95p per year and it will generate an additional £43,839 of income. Unfortunately, about 2/3rds of this increase will be swallowed up by the rise in National Insurance. You will recall that they carried out a consultation a couple of years ago regarding a proposal to rebase the Levy. With overwhelming support from levy payers, the Conservators have ploughed ahead with this proposal and it currently sits with Defra awaiting ministerial decision. If approved, this will raise an additional £375,000 annually to address their rising costs. They are currently running a budget deficit and this is not sustainable long term. Wimbledon & Putney Commons cover 1,140 acres and have a budget of £2.3m, compared to Hampstead Heath which cover 980 acres and have a budget of £13m.

Whilst on governance matters, they are currently recruiting to fill a vacancy on the Board of Conservators. Three of the Conservator positions are filled by government appointment and the Home Office appointment has been vacant since March 2024. The role of Conservator, or Trustee, of the charity is both rewarding and challenging, but it is an opportunity to be instrumental in shaping the future for Wimbledon and Putney Commons. If anyone is interested, please find the details for this volunteer role on their website at <https://www.wpcc.org.uk/>

On more operational matters, WPCC is gradually replacing older benches across the Commons. Starting at Rushmere, the fundraising team are contacting the original donors to see if they wish to renew their sponsorship with a new bench; and if not, or they cannot make contact, the bench will be replaced with a newly sponsored bench. There is a huge demand for commemorative benches with a waiting list of more than 60 people keen to adopt the new-style English oak bench. The cost of sponsorship covers the purchase of the bench, installation, 10 years of maintenance and includes a substantial donation towards the upkeep of the Commons.

They have embarked on a fairly major habitat restoration project to transform Queensmere. It was built as a bathing pond in Victorian times and with concrete banks and a lot of overshading, it has had little value for biodiversity. They want it to become a thriving place for nature and home to a wide variety of invertebrates, bats, amphibians and an abundance of pond side plants. Funding for the project has come from the Mayor of London's Rewild fund, generous donations from the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons and local residents. Work began in November last year with the thinning of the surrounding woodland to reduce leaf litter in the pond and reduce shade canopy to increase light and airflow to the pond, thereby improving its chances of supporting biodiversity. The pond has been drained and the silt reutilised to create a reed bed to widen the banks and create an island for nesting birds. A fenced dog bench area has

also been created giving dogs limited access to the water. Work left to be completed includes the planting of the banks and the reed bed and the creation of a viewing deck. There are opportunities to sponsor commemorative benches around the pond as well as a less expensive option to place a plaque on the viewing deck - details of which can be found on their website.

Phase 2 of the project - landscaping around the area and creating leaky dams will begin as soon as they have grant funding in place. They have again been accepted to take part in the Big Give Green Challenge where they are looking to raise funds to undertake a hydrology study. This will help them to better understand the movement of water across the Commons, so that it can be managed to help prevent flooding where they don't want it. Their fundraising manager will be in touch in due course.

To finish, they have had two new very important members of the Commons' team join them recently - two new patrol horses – please take a moment to say hello to Mary and OC if you see them out on the Common.

A question was raised as to whether the old benches could be rubbed down, power washed and the plagues changed, as opposed to them being replaced, however Angela said the sponsorship package includes purchasing the new bench and a donation towards the upkeep of the Commons. Renovating the existing benches would cost money which the Commons don't have and the newer style bench also looks better.

#### 9. WIMBLEDON VILLAGE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION – ADRIAN MILLS (CHAIR)

BERA's border extends to Haygarth Place and Lancaster Road so all of the residential properties from there, right back to the junction with Wimbledon Hill Road are included in BERA which is why the High Street is so important, as well as those businesses on Church Road.

Adrian thanked Susan for the opportunity to speak. He addressed an earlier question about the Christmas lights in Wimbledon Village. There had been a comparison made with the lights in the village of Perpignan in France at Christmas which are quite a spectacle, however sadly the budget is quite different. There is a population of 120,000 in Perpignan and a budget of £250,000 for their Christmas lights, paid for by the government, council, businesses and residents. Wimbledon Village has a population of 8,500 and the lights are paid for by the businesses at a cost of £120 per business per year, plus sponsorship. The photos of the Christmas lights in Perpignan are truly amazing, however it is on a completely difference scale! Radio London, Capital Radio and The Sunday Times called the Wimbledon Village Christmas event the best family favourite event in southwest London! The total cost to the Wimbledon Village Business Association of running the event is £35,000 every year. Last year, 2,000 people visited the Christmas event and there were over 350 people listening to the choirs singing, in the pouring rain, which was remarkable.

There is a crisis in the village as business rates have increased by 150%. Rates are based on the rents. Since Covid the rates have been subsidised but now the rates are going back to where they would have been had they been tracked over the last 5 years. The only businesses getting any form of discount in the village are those in the hospitality sector and they are paying 75% of what

they should be paying. Adrian has directed some businesses to rates negotiators. There is always 'churn' in the village – fifty businesses have come and gone since Adrian took over as the Chair five years ago. Wages and National Insurance are going up with effect from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2025 and businesses are laying off staff. Deliveroo have put their prices up to 35% of the bill (plus 20% VAT), which is tough on the restaurants as the margins are minimal. There are fake £50 pound notes circulating too, so please be careful.

The Farmers' Market is the best thing that has happened in the village in the last 5-10 years. Many of the other shops have reported a 30% increase in takings too. Lots of people then return after the market. There is one vexatious litigant who spends her life trying to close it down. She has reaffirmed her efforts in the last week, so please continue to support it.

Sixty five shrub trees are being planted in the village at the end of March with an 18-month maintenance contract. They got rid of the bay trees as the pots were cracking and falling apart.

WVBA will be flying 100 Union Jack flags in the village for about 3-4 weeks for the VE Day commemorations and then they will be replaced with the tennis flags. Women are playing at Queens this year for the first time – no tournament at Eastbourne this year – so they feel a lot of people will be supporting the tennis this year and for a longer period.

There are a few empty retail lots – Johnson's Dry Cleaners which has been empty for years and Wimbledon Fair. Matches Fashion is being taken over by Everton who runs Chambers Tailors. The NatWest building is going to be a Sainsbury's with a long alcohol licence. Hobbs is becoming a veterinary surgeon; The Lighthouse is becoming a yoga and pilates studio and a restaurant called Josefina's has been granted a licence in the building where Carat the jewellers used to be – however planning is yet to be granted.

A few years ago, Barnes Village ran a campaign asking residents to spend £35 to see their village thrive. It was a highly successful campaign which Wimbledon Village also introduced - it is likely to be £50 now to ensure the village thrives. He urged everyone to please support the local businesses. Please visit their website [www.wimbledonvillage.com](http://www.wimbledonvillage.com)

## 10. PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LICENSING

Planning – Susan was hoping that Jon Berry was going to give a short update but he cancelled earlier in the day due to a work commitment and there was no-one else to deputise. However, he has let us know that Merton Planning Department has now received the final version of the Planning Advisory Service peer challenge report and this will be published alongside an action plan on the Council's website shortly. BERA took part in this peer review along with PRA, WERA and the Councillors, so we hope that we see our recommendations in the action plan.

Susie Hicks also contacted Jon Berry and he did not have an update but said there were still discussions taking place. Susie would like to see more engagement and more transparency in the pre-application stages and more involvement of the community. And more involvement in the

phase between permission being granted and actually built, but not always in accordance with the plans. Susie would like the planning department to be more involved with enforcement.

Generally planning continues to be the busiest issue that BERA gets involved with. Susan highlighted a few applications.

Susan reiterated that BERA always suggests that when extending a property or replacing an existing house with a far larger proposal, it is advantageous to discuss this fully with neighbours, even before any pre-app advice is sought. This can save a lot of stress for the surrounding property owners. We asked Merton if this could become part of the pre-app process last year and they informed us that they are now considering it as a mandatory requirement. Susan wasn't sure whether it has been adopted yet.

14 Highbury Road was granted planning permission at the second appeal which is very disappointing. The 200 square metered rear garden is being excavated to a depth of 20 feet, which will include a 25m swimming pool and a sports complex with subterranean access, all in a conservation area. It started a year ago and will continue for another year and is extremely noisy. On this occasion the planning decision was overturned by the Department of the Environment in Bristol - Merton Council had rejected the plans.

There is a concern about the new parking bays for electric bikes. There are no exact spots for the bikes, so the danger is they are just piled up with no limit on numbers. There is an e-cycle hire scheme consultation taking place. Some of the spaces are on the pavement and some on the road. Tony Rees said most boroughs are keen to encourage the use of e-bikes and want people to use cars less and get fitter, but there is a problem knowing where to park them. Tony is in conversation with Forest bikes. Users do have to photograph where they park their bikes to cut off the payment, so patterns can be seen and fines are issued as well as bans. If you see bikes parked illegally, take photos and send them to the companies. The new parking bays for e-bikes are a trial. Sadly, the Council has no enforcement capacity with either Lime or Forest Bikes. Lime Bikes business model was that users can park them anywhere, so let's see how the new trial works out.

Licensing – the most recent licensing application (the hearing was in March) was for a tapas restaurant called Josefina's. The application fulfilled the four licensing objectives and was duly passed. However, it highlighted the issues for residents living at Lancaster Place in terms of hours of deliveries, excess rubbish which foxes tear open and the detritus then attracts rats. BERA is in touch with the Lancaster Place residents, of whom some were in attendance and BERA is following up on all these issues with the Council - many of which are planning issues and also trespass onto a private road.

BERA and PRA together assess and respond to all the Village licence applications.

## 11. EAST HILLSIDE & VILLAGE TRAFFIC SURVEYS UPDATE – JAYNE RUSBATCH, HEAD OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS AND CLIMATE, LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

Back in 2020 there was a proposal by a group called East Hillside Low Traffic Neighbourhood to restrict traffic on some of the local roads and BERA has kept everyone abreast of developments at all the AGMs since then. Sensors were placed in five different areas around the village and Hillside and the Council has been gathering data since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 and will finish at the end of March 2025. BERA, PRA, Wimbledon East Hillside RA, East Hillside LTN and New BERA have all been liaising with the Council on this matter to try and find a solution that works for everyone.

Susan invited Jayne Rusbatch to provide an update on East Hillside and traffic. In July 2024 sensors were installed in eight locations (across five areas) to monitor traffic flow and speed and from 1<sup>st</sup> October they started recording origin and destination. The sensors are discreet little white boxes mounted on lamp posts in eight locations. They have seen the same patterns across the five and a half months of data. There is very clear pattern of 1). traffic coming onto Belvedere Avenue from Church Road, Alan Road or Highbury Road and does the dog leg turn into Belvedere Grove and back out 2). traffic from Belvedere Drive turning onto St Mary's Road and 3). another movement of traffic that ends up on Woodside. Jayne and Jefferson Nwokeoma, Director of Public Realm at Merton Council have been working with the various residents' associations to try and find a solution that is potentially not as restrictive as it could be, but can still get us some way towards resolving the traffic that shouldn't be in the area. Traffic that is in the area for less than 10 minutes is deemed as through traffic, whereas a vehicle in the area over 10 minutes is deemed to have a destination in the area. She will share the draft proposals once they are finalised; however, it is worth noting that the problem has been ongoing for twenty years since the banning of right hand turns into Woodside from Wimbledon Hill Road was introduced. It pushed all the traffic further up the hill onto Belvedere Drive and Grove. A question was asked about how BERA will deal with the differing opinions and Susan responded saying BERA will go with the majority.

There was an accusatory comment from a resident of Belvedere Drive, who is a member of new BERA, who said BERA has completely refused to engage with residents living on Belvedere Drive or Belvedere Grove. In fact the resident hasn't been in touch with any of the current BERA committee who have been in place for many years – the resident noted that the issue dates back twenty years. Susan has been the Chair of BERA for about ten years and no-one from new BERA has ever contacted her during this period. Susan agreed to discuss the matter with her after the meeting, as without communication it is very hard to move forward on matters.

## 12. AELTC APPLICATION – ANNEKE DE BOER

Anneke is a Director of Save Wimbledon Park (SWP) Limited.

A lot has happened in the past year about the AELTC's proposed development and no doubt everyone will have heard much about it. Anneke urged people to come along to one of their public meetings – on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March at the Sacred Heart church on Edge Hill and Monday,

31<sup>st</sup> March at St Barnabas church in Southfields. For all the details, you can go to the website at [savewimbledonpark.org](http://savewimbledonpark.org)

In September 2024 the GLA granted the AELTC's planning permission for the proposed development. In the autumn, Save Wimbledon Park incorporated itself as a limited company and in December 2024 they applied to the court for a judicial review of the GLA's decision on the three most egregious grounds – judicial review is a way of challenging the legality of the decision that was made. The High Court agreed that there were valid grounds for the judicial review and the case will be heard on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2025. It is for this judicial review that Save Wimbledon Park is currently crowdfunding. They have raised over £50,000 in one week which is fantastic. The legal expenses will be £200,000. If you would like to donate, you can find the details on the [www.savewimbledonpark.org](http://www.savewimbledonpark.org) website.

There is also now a second legal case. Save Wimbledon Park has been saying for almost two years that the land is held in a statutory trust and there are KC opinions on both sides. The AELTC has now decided to ask the court to decide the status of the land. This is entirely separate from the judicial review. SWP continues to be disappointed that the AELTC will not talk to them and that they have ended up in legal action. Save Wimbledon Park has linked up with the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) who are working hard to protect green belt/Metropolitan Open Land across London. There are 50 Metropolitan Open Land sites in London under threat. The change.org petition is now at almost 21,500 signatures and it continues to rise. There is a lot of information on the Save Wimbledon Park website which is regularly updated.

### 13. STATEMENT FROM THE LOCAL POLICE

This was not read out at the meeting, however, please see below.

From PCSO Jay Coelho:

Please accept our apologies for not being in attendance tonight. Unfortunately, previously arranged engagements meant we were unable to change our shifts to accommodate your invite. Overall, for the last 3 months crime in general has decreased, however we have changed one of our ward priorities to tackle retail crime given the two high value robberies at Phoenix Style and David Clulow along with the incidents involving a male using fraudulent currency to purchase goods. As previously advised, please ensure that all crimes are reported to us via 999 or 101 if not requiring immediate attendance and whenever leaving your home/vehicle please remove any bags or valuables from sight and double check that your vehicles/homes are locked and secured. For motorbikes/bicycles, please keep these in garages and/or secured by ground anchors and out of sight. For further security advice we would suggest looking on the [securedbydesign.com](http://securedbydesign.com) website, as they cover a wide range of methods to assist you in securing your property. Should you have any queries or questions relating to what's happening in the village, please do not hesitate to contact us via email on [Village@met.police.uk](mailto:Village@met.police.uk)

### 14. AOB

Susan thanked everyone for attending and in particular Robert Holmes and Jeroboams for their sponsorship. She invited everyone to have some wine and cheese. The meeting ended at 9pm.