



High Street Recovery or High Street Disaster?

Harpenden shopkeepers as well as café and restaurant managers have expressed their profound concerns about the potential threat of continuing Lower High Street and Bowers Parade pedestrianisation. Their anxieties follow Herts County Council's so-called 'High Street Recovery' consultation launched in late May.

At a meeting convened by the owners of affected businesses, the ominous implications of retaining the current parking and traffic restrictions beyond the Covid emergency period, concerns were made clear to local authority representatives. Those included town mayor Paul Cousin, town clerk Carl Cheevers, county councillor Teresa Heritage and a representative from Herts County Council Highways. Also present was former mayor and Harpenden business owner Michael Weaver.

All thirteen retailers at the meeting were vehement in their opposition to continuing restrictions. Most had expected that, once national Covid restraints were lifted, parking and traffic movement would be restored.

It was pointed out to the councillors that the survey questionnaire, generalised to apply to High Streets throughout the county, failed to take account of Harpenden's unique town centre configuration. It was further evident, said Fiona Thomas, manager of Oui ladies fashion retailer in Bowers Parade, that the questions were framed towards pedestrianisation, loss of parking spaces, a reduction in footfall and more risk of business closures..

The fact that the southern end of Lower High Street was wrongly identified in the survey as 'Bowers Way'

only reinforced the impression that it was drafted with undue haste and by an HCC official completely unfamiliar with Harpenden. Town mayor Paul Cousin agreed the survey was poorly prepared and should have been produced by a professional research firm.

However, Cllr Heritage on behalf of Herts CC defended the survey, claiming a degree of 'misunderstanding' about what was clearly a divisive but vital issue.



After the meeting Lara Wares, the owner of Threads, said: 'we really appreciated the councillors coming to listen to the concerns of retailers...after the year we have had, now is the time that we need their support to get our businesses back on track'

Harpenden's MP Bim Afolami expressed his views by email, saying 'I am very much aware of the strength of feelings among the affected retailers on this. I have

informed Herts County Council that any decision moving forward must have the support of local retailers and businesses'.

Meanwhile a petition attracting 442 local signatures has called on HCC to fully open Lower High Street and Bowers Parade once Covid social distancing restrictions are lifted and to consult with retailers on any future pedestrianisation proposals.

Additionally Town Clerk Carl Cheevers said 'The Town Council will be agreeing its view on the future of the measures once it has received and considered the findings from the consultation.'

PEDESTRIANS vs CARS –

Lower High Street rows still simmering

As earlier Harpenden Society newsletter coverage has shown, Covid restrictions brought to the surface long-standing differences of opinion on the 'status' of Lower High Street and, by extension, Bowers Parade. Should that stretch of thoroughfare, it is argued by some, be unreservedly prioritised for pedestrians, to the detriment of available car parking? Or should car-borne shoppers, necessarily including the disabled and those of limited physical mobility, be accorded special consideration?

Former retailer and town councillor Michael Weaver contends that removal of parking places contributes nothing to shopping's 'pleasant experience'. Pedestrianising the Lower High Street may well be a 'utopian goal', in reducing our carbon footprint. But, he says, it damages the viability of the shops and the 'vitality and vibrancy' of the town centre, as 'the very hub of our community' if we make it more difficult for those who need to use a car to get to the shops, leading to more of those shops being put out of business.

Mr Weaver points out that High Street is geographically in a valley, from which roads lead uphill to residential areas on both sides, which it is hardly reasonable to expect the older ones amongst us in particular to negotiate on foot or on bicycles carrying their purchases. He reinforces his argument by adding that when, two or three years ago, the Lower High Street between Station Road and Vaughan Road was closed to traffic, a Chamber of Commerce survey indicated that the consequently isolated shops (apart from the cafes) suffered an average 25% drop in turnover. Meanwhile the reaction of shoppers to that enforced pedestrianisation was apparent, says Mr Weaver, from over 1000 petition signatures opposing the measure.

Covid restriction measures resulted in all parking spaces between Vaughan Road and Sainsbury's being removed, apart from a few bays theoretically reserved for disabled blue badge holders even though the road itself has been kept open for access to the Methodist Church. Mr Weaver despairs that those lost parking places were displaced by so-called 'planters' or, in his words, 'monstrous flower pots'. He questions what it has achieved by way of mandatory 'social distancing', or general pedestrian safety, while the road remains open for through traffic. Though retailers were explicitly told that the measures would be 'temporary', Michael Weaver says there is a genuine fear among Lower High Street shopkeepers that, post-lockdown, pedestrianisation, with its accompanying damage to their livelihoods, will be there to stay.



Michael Weaver: 'despairs of lost parking'

He hastens to add however that he is not opposed to pedestrianisation per se. But Harpenden town centre was never built for it, with no rear delivery access or immediately adjacent off-street parking. A compromise measure which might be considered, he says, would be for the Station Road end of Lower High Street to be designated 'pedestrian friendly' or given 'pedestrian priority' status, with a 5 or 10 mph speed limit imposed.

Another respondent to our previous coverage of the subject is Society member Allen Chamberlain, who contends that the closure of roads has little to do with the safety of residents during the pandemic and/or encouraging cycling and walking. But rather, he says, it has been an opportunity to fulfil a long-held ambition of some Harpenden residents and a few councillors.

Mr Chamberlain asks rhetorically: how many people have been protected from Covid 19 by the Lower High Street restrictions and what percentage of pedestrians

walk or do their shopping along its length? Tough luck, social distancing and therefore virus exposure wise, he says, if you choose to shop on the other side of the High Street, maybe preferring

Waitrose or M&S

to Sainsbury's. You do that, he points out, at your peril!



Allen Chamberlain: 'M&S shopping at your peril!'

Referring to the complaint expressed by a Society member in our Spring newsletter about the alleged reputation of 'drivers of large 4x4s expecting everyone to jump out of their way' in the town centre, Mr Chamberlain says just as much attention should be paid to the pedestrian-endangering reputation of cyclists riding against the Lower High Street one-way traffic ruling, as well as riding on pavements and riding at night without lights.

He is clearly no more enamoured with the parking bay displacing 'planters' than Michael Weaver which, he asserts, are about as attractive as 'wartime tank barriers' and which at one place provide 'a refuge for a couple of industrial wheelie bins'.

Mr Chamberlain says he fears the Covid-driven – but subsequently permanent – removal of parking places in the town centre would be seized upon by 'anti car zealots' to urge more people to walk and cycle. It seems not to occur to them that it would only further discourage people from shopping locally, preferring to drive (burning more fossil fuel) to 'more driver-welcoming' St Albans, Luton or Welwyn Garden City.

New Mayor heralds key changes for the town

Paul Cousin's election as Harpenden's new Town Mayor coincided propitiously with the Town Council – after a series of legalistic delays – gaining ownership of Rothamsted Park, and of two smaller leisure sites, from St Albans District Council. It has given the green light for immediate investment of over £400,000 in upgrading three children's play areas.

Although it is Paul's first mayoral term, he previously served as deputy mayor and has, since 2018, been an SADC and since 2019 an HTC councillor, representing Harpenden North wards at both authorities. He is therefore familiar with the many opportunities and aware of the challenges facing the town.

At 45 he is younger than a number of his mayoral predecessors. Hailing originally from Skipton in Yorkshire, he attended Sheffield University and later worked for AstraZeneca at its Capability Green site at Luton. He and his family moved to Harpenden from the Hampstead area of London about six years ago. Paul serves as a magistrate on the Bedfordshire Bench. He is a governor of Lea School in Moorland Road and is a qualified careers adviser, holding the post of Head of Careers at Roundwood Park secondary school.



What of the mayoral year ahead? Paul sees the Rothamsted Park acquisition by the Town Council as an opportunity for some management rationalisation of the park with that of Harpenden Common – the latter a long-time HTC responsibility. For example the park could benefit environmentally from an increase in the number of strategically-placed litter bins.

More fundamentally, in investment terms, Paul acknowledges that the way is now clearer for the long-awaited replacement, or thorough refurbishment, of the cricket pavilion at the northern end of the park, which has been closed and fenced-off (for asbestos-related safety reasons) for over three years.

In the longer term HTC faces the recently promulgated local government reorganisation under which SADC, along with other district and borough councils in Hertfordshire would be subsumed into a county-wide 'unitary authority'. Paul says that such a major upheaval could, if enacted, widen the Town Council's remit, enabling local issues to be dealt with more quickly.

Meanwhile Harpenden and the new mayor face a busy year ahead as Coronavirus constraints are hopefully lifted. A packed programme of HTC-supported local events is scheduled. We can look forward to the return in September of what were formerly three Summer (but now rescheduled) favourites: the Highland Gathering; Art on the Common; and the Classic Car Show.



Rothamsted Park's impressive new three-section children's play area, funded by Harpenden Town Council, caters for different age groups.

COMING SOON

Covid-related restrictions are alas likely to hamper Harpenden Society activities in the months ahead. But we plan to hold our (statutory) Annual General Meeting in the Autumn. We would clearly prefer it to be a 'physical' meeting at an appropriate venue, where members get the chance to meet each other face-to-face and to openly express their views – and put questions – to our zealous and hard-working committee.

Because of unpredictable Covid-related government rulings and/or advice, details of the AGM date and its physical or Zoom cyberspace venue will, when finalised, be circulated to members by email and posted on the Society website: www.harpendensociety.org. Whatever form the AGM takes we will be producing the Society's informative 'Looking Forward, Looking Back' Annual Report.

Now is also an opportunity to remind those members who haven't sent us their email address to please do so to secretary@harpendensociety.org, enabling us to keep you up to date with events and local developments (including AGM details) that inevitably occur between quarterly newsletter publication dates.



Annual Report 2018/2019

Looking back - Looking forward

Being a brief account for the Annual General Meeting of The Society's activities during the year 2018/2019 – with a glance ahead to the coming year

The Chairman looks back...and forward

Over the past year or more Harpenden's attraction for house buyers has continued, albeit with demand – in line with prices – rising more modestly, against a background of economic uncertainty. The misery inflicted on commuters resulting from Thameslink timetable chaos no doubt also had an effect.

While the major housing developments threatened in St Albans District Council's (updated) Local Plan have yet to materialise, there has been enough 'tidy' building to increase pressure on schools, health and community facilities and, of course, car parking. The town looks ever more congested with traffic delays an everyday occurrence.

Growth is inevitable and we have to prepare for further pressures. However, government computer models for projected future growth are based on calculations which are now being challenged. We are seeing population and recent studies indicate a slowing in UK population growth and reduced fertility rates (1.7 children per family which is low in international terms).

It throws doubt on the extent of the housing demand being imposed on local authorities in the south-east where, for good or ill, there has also been a slow down in economic growth which may or may not be attributable to the Brexit factor. There is also evidence that some economic activity is moving away from London in a welcome rebalancing. And while Harpenden will still be under pressure to allow more housing, the numbers ought logically to be reviewed.

Neighbourhood Plan approved

This is why the town's Neighbourhood Plan was important, after years when developers could submit large planning applications to SADC without reference to any formal Harpenden-centred planning document. Meanwhile the district Local Plan is still working through its tortuous processes and it remains unclear, at the time of writing, if and when it will be approved.

Two new estates to the north-east and north-west of the town are currently envisaged. The Harpenden Society campaigned in favour of the town's Neighbourhood Plan and the referendum in February gave it clear approval. It offers the

prospect of developers – as a condition of gaining planning approval – being compelled to contribute more to the funding of community facilities, at a time of ever more extravagant local authority budgets.

Luton Airport expansion threat

At the Society's May 2018 Public Meeting we heard from Hazel Simmons, the leader of Luton Borough Council on its ambitions for a massive expansion of Luton Airport. Many in the audience were not convinced by her assurances on the noise and traffic congestion implications. It is hoped that the increase from 18 to 23 million pax (passengers per annum) proposed will not get the green light as readily as previous expansion plans – when Luton BCC, as the airport owner, effectively acted as 'judge and jury'. The BPP-plus projected expansion will require central government approval.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling's reputation as a hangdog decision-maker does not bode well for those of us wanting the brakes applied to the airport's egregious expansion plans.



Looking back - Looking forward

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VIEWPOINT: from Harpenden's Younger Generation

In our Spring newsletter, we included two articles written by senior pupils from St George's and Roundwood Park secondary school. In this issue we have pleasure in featuring further thought-provoking pieces from senior representatives from two other Harpenden schools.

Bringing education to more deprived children of the world

My name is **Ella Montgomery**. I'm in year 10 at Sir John Lawes School and a Youth ambassador for Send My Friend to School, a UK-based campaign involving international development NGOs, teachers' unions and charities. It aims to bring together young people, politicians, teachers, civil society and the media demanding quality education for all children across the globe including most notably Third World countries.

Here at Sir John Lawes we have a profound interest in our global society, and provide an education for a changing world, representing the Care in our SJL 'ACE' mission statement (Achievement, Care, Excellence). This year, the Send my Friend to School campaign has been about the impacts of COVID 19 and climate change on education, specifically in low-income countries. We have been working alongside the campaign to help do our part to change the world.

This term, myself along with others, met the Prime Minister's Envoy for Girls Education, MP Helen Grant, as well as the Global Partnership for Education athlete ambassadors, to talk about the campaign and express our opinions on education. Helen was highly impressed with the youth ambassadors and said 'It was fantastic to visit Sir John Lawes School and meet girls, boys and teachers who are all so passionate about ensuring every girl, across the world, has access to a quality education. Their drive and determination is so clear. We know that investing in girls' education is a game changer, and one of the best ways of tackling inequality, poverty and gender-based violence'.

Throughout the day we had round-table discussions where we talked with Helen about policies, funding and ideas about how to improve education for children across the world. For example, we put forward our idea about schools in the UK partnering with schools in low-income countries to provide aid and learning opportunities to students there, as SJL has done with **Ndeke High School** in Zambia. It was great talking with Helen as she was so passionate about the cause and had inspiring, eye-opening ideas about improving education. We then had a sporting activity with the

athlete ambassadors, followed by small individual interviews about our views on education and why it was important. Many of us said that education was important to provide people in lesser developed countries the same opportunities that we are offered here at SJL and in the wider community.



Ella Montgomery: 'we want quality education for all'

Our leadership programme encourages students to enrol in different opportunities across the school and in our local Harpenden community. It provides chances to inspire younger students. Towards the end of this term, myself and others involved in the campaign have been leading year 7 life skills lessons, teaching students about the school's role in the campaign and the chances they will be offered in the future to get involved.

In September, myself and another year 10 student will be representing Sir John Lawes School at the Labour Party conference in Brighton, and then at the COP26 United Nations Climate Change conference in Glasgow. These will both be wonderful opportunities to share with politicians the amazing things the school has been doing as part of the campaign.

It was an honour to represent SJL at the meeting with Helen Grant, but also as a member of the Send My Friend to School campaign, which is on track to change lives for children in education across the world.

*This article has been written by **Emily Williams**, a former pupil of The King's School, the independent Christian school at Elmfield in Ambrose Lane. After leaving school at Year 11 in 2018, she returned to Elmfield this year as a staff helper.*

A gap year with a difference

During what would normally be categorised as a gap year, I haven't been swimming with dolphins or travelling to the ends of the earth. Instead I have spent my time helping to teach art at the school I attended. Don't most people long to leave their school behind them? Why would I choose to come back?

The first reason is the people. King's is a small school with students aged 4-16 in classes of around 20 pupils. We all know each other and so there is no space for anyone to be lost in the crowd. What are the people here like? They are Year 11s mentoring the Year 7s, the principal visiting the foundation class to read to them, the slowest person at Sports Day not being embarrassed to run the final lap because their friends have gone back to run beside them. The school itself is beautiful, set behind a large green field, adorned with bay windows and wide verandas. And that beauty extends to the people inside the building.



Emily Williams: teaching art to former fellow pupils

Secondly, faith. The King's School has Christianity at the centre of all we do. From my experience as a pupil this meant learning more of the Bible and how it applied to my life from assemblies, being able to ask for prayer, and seeing the Bible lived out by teachers. The ethos here cultivates kindness and love for others in a way that makes sure everyone knows they are valued and has people looking out for them not only in their academic endeavours but also in the rest of their daily lives.

So yes, I have not saved the turtles or seen the so-called Seven Wonders of the World, but I have been at King's and for me that is a year well spent.

Search is on for young writing talent

The 'Tell Me a Story' writing competition initiated last year by the Harpenden Society, for students at the town's secondary schools, regrettably fell victim to Covid restrictions, although entries were received from twelve pupils, each of them rewarded with a Book Voucher.

When we approached the head teachers of St George's, Sir John Lawes, Roundwood Park and Katherine Warrington schools earlier this year – and more recently The King's School in Ambrose Lane – to see whether the competition could be relaunched this Autumn, they were unanimous in welcoming the Society's renewed initiative.

Though the essence of the competition remains unchanged from its original concept, we decided the narrative need not be a complete self-contained story. It can take the form of a 'reader enticing' opening to a longer piece, or even a hopefully 'unputdownable' middle section; and the story can

be shorter in length than the suggested 1500 words.

The challenge is to compose an original piece of written work of up to 1500 words on one of four topics:

- *What local initiatives are needed to reduce the impact of climate change?***
- *How would you survive being washed up on a desert island?***
- *How would you like to see Harpenden ten years from now?***
- *A fictitious story on a subject of your own choosing.***

There are three age categories with prizes for each of the winning students and their schools. Entries have to be submitted by mid-February 2022, for judging to take place and the winners announced in mid March. Competition updates to be included in our Winter newsletter and on the Society website at www.harpendensociety.org



How local action can protect the planet

If everyone in Harpenden resolved to cut their reliance on fossil fuels, the contribution to global greenhouse gas reduction would be infinitesimal. But, of course, our planet has to sustain millions of 'Harpendens' – communities which acting together can play a vital role in safeguarding the future of the world against the ravages of climate change.

The **Harpenden Society**, in collaboration with the town's online news platform **Harpendia.com**, has taken up the challenge of the United Nations 'ActNow' campaign, which aims to inspire us all, as 'Citizens of the World', to confront the global warming crisis.

As an added incentive, it has to be remembered that a reduction in the generation of greenhouse gases – principally carbon dioxide (CO₂) – is nearly always accompanied by a welcome decrease in health-threatening pollutant emissions, notably nitrogen oxides and particulate matter (often referred to as microscopic PM_{2.5} particles, which can penetrate the lungs).

So, if you can walk or cycle into Harpenden town centre, rather than driving your petrol or diesel car, you'll be helping maintain air quality as well as playing a part in saving the planet – to say nothing of protecting your bank balance!

Where to start? The Harpenden Society and Harpendia have compiled a '**Beginner's Guide**', subtitled '**How to live well in Harpenden and save the planet**'. Available on both organisations' websites, it sets out an easy-to-follow series of suggestions, or recommendations, and short relevant stories about the planet-protecting actions of others including, perhaps inevitably, Greta Thunberg.

As the Guide indicates, energy conservation in the home is a key issue, centred around 'Be Energy Smart' as a guiding slogan. The increasing number of homes in Harpenden now sporting roof-mounted solar panels is an encouraging sign. As progressively more of our National Grid electricity becomes wind, solar or nuclear sourced, the environmental benefits of opting for electric rather than gas for our main household heating and cooking will increase. Less fundamental measures around the home are necessarily at the heart of the Guide's recommendations, for example: insulating walls

and lofts; reducing appliance power consumption; and perhaps taking a shower rather than a bath.

In the kitchen, food (and consequent energy) waste can be a contributor to climate change. So too can all kinds of food (and fertiliser) production as well as every transport mode in getting the produce from farm to domestic larder. That impact is too often compounded by subsequent packaging, much of which is regrettably not recycled or recyclable and finishes up being landfilled, or worse, as non-biodegradable litter – disgustingly fly-tipped in country lanes around Harpenden.

The Guide also serves as a reminder, especially to non-vegetarians, that meat and even dairy produce that is animal derived incurs a global warming 'penalty', while fruit and vegetables, as well as contributing to a healthy human diet, have a much lower climate-change-relevant impact.

As a country town Harpenden is richly endowed with green spaces, both public and, in the shape of domestic gardens and allotments (see the 'Plot 31' feature in our Spring issue), enabling householders to grow their own food crops, cutting shopping bills and reducing the CO₂ emitted in getting bought provisions to supermarket shelves.

On our doorstep Rothamsted Research is addressing the challenges of global warming more 'professionally', through its collaborative SHAKE programme supporting entrepreneurs and start-ups dedicated to combatting climate change.

Tomorrow's environmental specialists are sure to emerge from today's generation of school-age young people, many of whom back in March,

emulating Greta Thunberg, expressed their passionately-held views at a TEDx Youth webinar with 250 participants on 'Sustainability and the Future of Work'.

Sustainability has implications in not always obvious directions, for example environmentally-aware clothes buyers are now rightly questioning the origins of garments, notably their basic materials, their countries of manufacture, factors which contribute to the total energy input required to put each item on the retailer's shelf – or the delivery van of online clothing suppliers like ASOS.

Beginners Guide

How to live well in Harpenden and save the planet



1. 5 MINUTE SHOWERS
2. DRIVE LESS
3. MEAT-FREE MEALS
4. LOCAL PRODUCE
5. RECYCLE
6. LIGHTS OFF
7. UNPLUG
8. REFILL & REUSE
9. ZERO WASTE FASHION
10. BRING YOUR OWN BAG

The United Nations ActNow campaign aims to inspire global citizens to take actions to confront the climate crisis.
Act now for people and planet.
www.un.org/actnow

*Don't just take our word for it...
listen to Greta. See page 9*



We can't just give up
without trying -

A JOINT PRODUCTION BETWEEN THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY and HARPENDIA.COM



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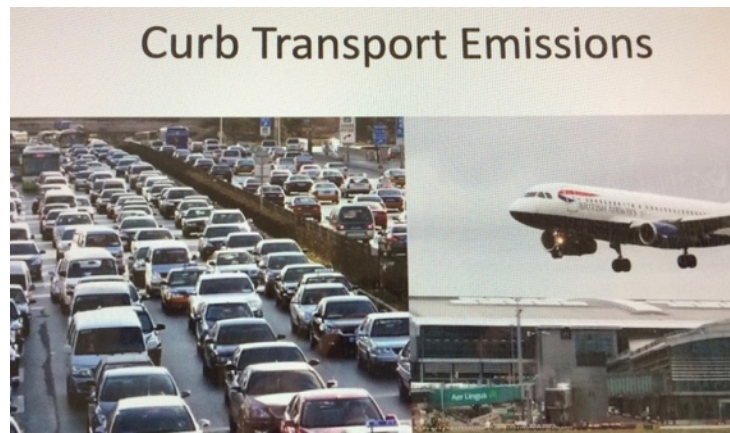
Our own choice of personal transport has become a headline environmental issue, with road travel by any 'fossil fuel guzzling' petrol- or diesel-engined road vehicle among the prime candidates for condemnation, while flying has rightly become even more frowned upon by those dedicated to climate change reduction. A key objection from people in Harpenden – backed by all three of our local authorities – to Luton Airport's expansion plans (see page 12) has been to the projected resulting growth in CO2 emissions, not only from aircraft but also from the associated growth in road traffic.

The **Harpenden Society** meanwhile is monitoring the airport development issue closely, maintaining its opposition to the planning application, its objection now reinforced by the government's recently announced proposals for reducing climate-change-inducing carbon emissions. Such emissions, as well as those comprising nitrogen oxide and particulate air pollutants should, says the Society, be taken into account by the airport operator in its application.



Here in Harpenden we should of course not ignore what might be termed the 'bigger picture', with an acknowledgement by the **United Nations** no less, and by the likes of **Greenpeace**, that our current lifestyles are, by a range of measures, unsustainable. Demand for the natural resources – especially water – which sustain our supply of food, clothing and other aspects of life is at an all-time high and continues to grow.

Again at a local level, St Albans District Council has set a target of making the district 'carbon neutral' by the end of the decade, through a sustainability strategy spelled out last year. From October, the electricity and gas consumed in council offices and homes will have to come from a provider that guarantees renewable sourcing. SADC's Liberal Democrat administration's action plan for combatting climate change significantly includes creating more public charging points for electric vehicles.



At the same time, as pressure groups such as LADACAN and HarpendenSky continue to highlight, the expansion application still proposes to increase aircraft noise levels contrary to current government policy that seeks to minimise and where possible reduce the number of people afflicted by aircraft noise.

A noticeable increase in the number of Tesla and other electric – and hybrid – cars on the streets of Harpenden points to the local awareness of emissions issues. Such appreciation of the climate change – and accompanying air quality – challenge is commendable. However, it needs to be acknowledged that an electric vehicle's real-life reduction in CO2 is dependent on sustainable battery charging energy, coming to the National Grid from a wind, solar or nuclear power source.

Switching to electric cars, bikes and scooters nevertheless remains environmentally controversial from another angle, namely the substantial amount of energy required in the manufacturing of a new electric car, especially into its lithium-ion batteries – which on average need replacing after just eight years. If your present car has plenty of efficient life in it – remembering by the way that a diesel is about 25% more fuel (and CO2) efficient than a petrol engine – then hanging on to it could be of net benefit to the planet over its lifetime. A small further fuel, CO2 and pollution saving benefit available to us all is reducing idle time: don't leave your engine running while you're stationary.

Harpenden MP Bim Afolami says 'we can all be active participants in securing the future of our environment'. He has pledged to play his part in helping to offset the generation of carbon emissions by encouraging the planting of thousands of trees, smoothing the transition to electric vehicles and – perhaps most notably in a local context – protecting our Green Belt. Tree-planting programmes have also been endorsed by the Prince of Wales under the Queen's 'Green Canopy strategy timed to coincide with next year's Platinum Jubilee.

Any further ideas on how the **Harpenden Society** and its members could usefully contribute to meeting the multi-faceted environmental challenges confronting everyone, both locally and globally, are welcome. Email them to editor@harpendensociety.org.



KWS – twelve (action packed) months on

A year ago in our Summer 2020 newsletter we heralded the full opening of Harpenden's all-new Katherine Warrington School, declaring it, rightly, to be truly 'up and running'. The intervening twelve months have seen KWS become firmly established as part of the town's 'educational landscape'.

However, thanks to the repercussions of Covid-19, school life has been far from the traditional normal. As head teacher Tony Smith (right) explained to a visiting group from the Harpenden Society, the Covid lockdown meant most pupils having to be taught their academic subjects 'remotely'.

KWS lost no time in embracing the new technology. Some 150 students were issued with 'chrome book' hand-held computers allowing them to pursue their studies at home. There were others, notably children of key workers, who would otherwise have been at 'home alone', who physically came to school normally, albeit under Covid protective measures.

'Remote' lessons were taken by a 12-strong teaching staff, most of them based in the school, ie not in their homes. They were backed by eight support workers charged with checking that pupils were satisfactorily logged-in for their lessons and generally monitoring progress, especially ensuring their positive and healthy mental involvement.

In September 2020 a new intake of 11/12-year-olds necessarily increased activity at KWS, bringing additional challenges, particularly under the restrictive remote teaching regime. But Tony Smith says the new arrivals, as well as new teachers starting at the same time, adapted well and enthusiastically, invariably supported by understanding parents.

When lockdown restrictions were partially eased earlier this year, allowing most pupils to resume physical attendance at the school, there were no problems in meeting Covid social distancing rules because the building is relatively sparsely occupied and desk places can be widely spaced. The designed capacity of KWS is 1150 students and that number is not expected to be reached until the 2025/26 academic year.

Government-decreed Covid limitations when applied to schools initially created restricting 'bubbles' which effectively put a stop to competitive sports at KWS. But with legislation easing, those bubbles effectively 'burst' which has allowed the opening up of lunchtime clubs and similar extra-curricular social activities for students.

What many would see as a praiseworthy innovative development has been introduced by Tony Smith and his team whereby, on four days a week, the last half-hour of the school day is given over to extramural activities. Under the generic heading of 'Mind, Body, Soul', pupils can choose between a range of potentially character-building options, including such diverse pursuits as football, yoga, small animal studies and even drone-flying.



Yet another subject over and above the school's regular educational programmes is what might be termed animal husbandry. An area at the highest part of KWS's 47-acre site close to Mackerye End has been effectively retained as farmland, now occupied by a flock of twenty sheep. They have been acquired as a focus for lessons in animal care being supervised by a science teacher whose credentials include membership of the St Albans-based Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

A number of the teachers who joined the school last year were newly qualified but all were keen to ensure that KWS's early growing pains were minimised. Most were recruited from other parts of Hertfordshire, though two specialists, notably in foreign languages, had to be sought from further afield, coming from London and the North of England.

At an early stage, largely in response to parental surveys and expectations in world affairs over the coming decades, the decision was made at KWS to attach particular innovative importance to foreign language teaching. Most notably students will be offered tuition in Mandarin, the principal language in China – a recognition that, regardless of any political nuances, commercial and social contacts with China are certain to increase globally. Two teachers fluent in Mandarin, one of Chinese ethnicity, have joined the staff.

For similar reasons, reflecting Latin America's growing influence across the world, Spanish will also be prominent in the KWS curriculum. In order to maximise the recruited teaching expertise in Spanish it is planned to begin an out-of-school-hours course in the language aimed at parents and other adults in the local area. Mandarin and Spanish are, points out Tony Smith, increasingly popular A-level exam subjects.

By way of an additional stimulus to KWS students' English Literature studies, the school has included in its 2021 programme of events a mid-July Shakespearian Summer Festival.

It is clear that Katherine Warrington School, in the coming few years, will be setting enviable standards in all its endeavours, preparing to send out into the world a worthy Harpenden-educated generation of high-achievers.

Did You Know? From Harpenden's history **JARVIS – A BUSINESS BUILT OVER 116 YEARS**

When it comes to the business of building and construction in and around Harpenden, Jarvis remains, in 2021, a venerable name to conjure with, its local origins going back to the very early 20th Century.

Ernest Jarvis (known in the company as 'EC'), born in 1881, came from a family of builders in London's East End. His grandfather founded J Jarvis and Sons who, in 1905, were successful in bidding to build a new Post Office in Harpenden High Street. Living in Enfield at the time, EC foresaw the prospects of building houses in the village. He borrowed some money and bought a small parcel of land in Moreton Avenue and began to build there in May 1905.

The spacious detached and semi-detached houses which can be seen there today (above right) remain impressive in their architectural design and quality of construction. Mr Jarvis himself moved first into no 7 Moreton Avenue in 1906 and later moved to no 13 where his four children were born. In those days occupiers usually rented houses, so the developer had to raise a mortgage and earn a living from the margin between incoming rent and mortgage repayments.

In the period up to 1914 Jarvis built 14 substantial houses in Moreton Avenue, eight in Hollybush Lane, eight on Carlton Bank (close to Harpenden Station) and 18 slightly smaller ones on land at the corner of Crabtree Lane and Southdown Road, all still standing in 2021.

During this period, the firm won contracts for: houses on East Common and in Park Avenue; three shops in Station Road; alterations to St Nicholas Primary School; a teacher's house at Kinsbourne Green; and various extensions to St George's School. In 1909 the firm acquired a builder's yard at 13 Vaughan Road, establishing an office and a small joinery shop.

The Great War was a watershed for housing development in Harpenden, and in 1920 EC offered a partnership in the firm to his brother Frank and the firm, under the name EC and FH Jarvis, began to flourish, undertaking building work at The Hyde



(between Batford and Luton), Luton Hoo, Brocket Hall, Childwickbury. Those early contracts included an extension of the Railway Hotel (now the Harpenden Arms) and the first of what were to be numerous Lawes Trust assignments at Rothamsted Experimental Station.

From 1923 onwards the brothers expanded their business with the development of housing estates in different parts of Harpenden. First they acquired the land comprising the Elliswick estate and laid out the crescent of Connaught Road, Elliswick Road and Browning Road. As a keen tennis player, EC founded Elliswick Tennis Club on adjacent land. But the biggest development in the 1920s was the purchase of sixty acres of farmland on the other side of Station Road – the Carisbrooke Estate – where the large number of Jarvis-built properties included government-subsidised homes in Langdale Avenue each costing less than £600.

Taking advantage of the 1930s depression-created slump in land prices, Jarvis began the development of 'top of the market' properties on half-acre plots in the area around West Common Way. No effort was spared to ensure the highest standard of building work, many of the houses built in the then fashionable mock Tudor style.

EC's eldest son Geoffrey and Frank's son Tony became partners in the company in 1936. The story of the Jarvis Group since the second world war is continued in a book on the Jarvis family history by the late Douglas Peters, former group managing director. In the 21st Century the company continues to make conspicuous contributions to the development of Harpenden, apparent in The Foresters apartments behind Bowers Parade in the town centre and, most recently, Hollybush Mews close to Hollybush Lane railway bridge.

Acknowledgement: Harpenden Local History Society

Jubilee seat refurbished

The Harpenden Society has funded the refurbishment of the octagonal bench seat around the small oak tree near the 'Baa Lamb Trees' on the Common. The seat was originally constructed in 2002 around the newly-planted oak sapling to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee, and paid for by a member of the Catton family, best known as local house builders and farmers. Over the last two decades the seat's main planking had suffered from the combined deterioration of wear and tear and Harpenden weather but is now ready to provide, for perhaps a further 20 years, a resting place for those wanting to enjoy 360 degrees of views across our treasured Common.



Fairview Homes receives 2019 top Society Award

Though regrettably delayed by Covid restrictions, presentation of the Harpenden Society's top Plaque Award for 2019, to Fairview Homes for its housing development on the former Harpenden House Hotel site, went ahead in early July. The unique development includes extensive new-build housing as well as sympathetic conversion of the adjacent 18th Century Grade II* listed Welcombe House into luxury apartments. In front of Welcombe House's imposing historic entrance Society chairman Phil Waters (in yellow tie) is seen presenting the prestigious Award Plaque to Fairview buildings director Chris Pollard. Also at the ceremony were Fairview planning officer Faye Wilders (left) and Awards Committee chairman Penny Ayres. Harpenden's new Salvation Army centre and Skye Optometrists received Letters of Commendation.



Reinstated chains to keep our Greens looking green!

Everyone who takes justifiable pride in Harpenden town centre's green open spaces will welcome the recent reinstatement of the barrier chains around their boundaries. As well as being an attractive townscape feature they also deter those tempting to take short cuts across the greens, wearing out the grass and causing the unsightly muddy tracks which soon became apparent when the chains were controversially removed by the Town Council last year, supposedly in an attempt to promote social distancing. Their reappearance has been further visually enhanced by the concrete posts supporting the chains receiving a fresh coat of white paint.



EDITOR'S VIEW

Alan Bunting

Avoiding a white elephant in the park



Everyone must welcome the imminent, albeit 'soft' – ie no razzamatazz – opening of the **Eric Morecambe Centre**, long delayed for Covid-related reasons and now, after a further late-July setback, scheduled for 'early September'. The name of the new arts complex in Rothamsted Park has proved somewhat controversial, not because the late comedian, as one of Harpenden's most famous residents, does not merit worthy recognition, but rather its arguably vague indication of the building's intended role. No one would have disputed his revered name being applied to the splendid new purpose-designed theatre within the complex, aptly carrying over the title of the larger of the superseded Harpenden Public Halls.

But the centre is destined to be much more than a theatrical venue. In its planning stages it was spoken of as a 'cultural hub' which, while accurate, smacked of dubious 21st Century political correctness. So we shall have to live with the name now boldly emblazoned on the front of the building, even though it gives no clues to the fact that it will incorporate most notably a newly-created **Harpenden Museum**, whose presence should surely have been included in the signwriter's brief.

It is to be hoped that the new **EMC**, the museum and indeed the already up-and-running sports centre (with its **Harpenden Leisure Centre** signage) will, in due course, be duly signposted for those entering the town across the Common, matching the inherent visual prominence traditionally enjoyed by the Public Halls.

The **1Life** team, under newly-appointed manager Jo Ditch, needs to maintain a level of visual publicity for the EMC's theatrical and other events matching the large highly-visible banners hitherto displayed across the front of the Public Halls building.

Will the EMC earn its keep? In other words will its unquestionably splendid facilities be fully utilised, with an abundant programme of events guaranteed to pull in the paying patrons? There is bound to be a settling-in period, but there are worries in some quarters that not enough has been done by 1Life and its St Albans District Council paymasters by way of consultation with potential users. Members of the nascent 'user group', set up before the Covid lockdown, have not really had the opportunity to fully air their needs and concerns, among which the question of hiring costs inevitably looms large. As an indication, a decision has already been made by **Harpenden Arts Club**, an erstwhile important user of the Public Halls, to eschew the EMC as a venue for its future exhibitions because of the cost implications.



We all want the new EMC to thrive as a showpiece for Harpenden. But it is clear that, once all its facilities are open, everything must be done to prevent it languishing or, heaven forbid, invoking a 'white elephant' slur.

Nickey Line due for a 'scrape'

Good news about the Harpenden end of the Nickey Line: scheduled for starting in early August, the Roundwood Halt to Five Ways (Townsend Lane extension) junction will be having its surface 'scraped' to remove what the Friends of the Nickey Line describe as the 'mud-prone layer', all too graphically pictured on page 4 of our Spring newsletter. While the work progresses the line will remain open to walkers and bikers but, says FotNL spokesman Geoff Bunce, 'you may be asked to avoid the work in progress safely'.

The work is being funded principally by St Albans DC and organised by Herts Countryside Management Services, working closely with FotNL as the drivers of the much-needed improvement of that section of what is a much valued local amenity. Regrettably, sufficient funds are not yet available, say FotNL to properly resurface that section to the standard achieved east of Roundwood Halt, but it is hoped that the planned 'scraping' operation should improve conditions to the point of avoiding the unfortunate muddy scenes seen during last winter.

Airport's climate change plans slammed by own consultants

Luton Borough Council's own climate change advisors Ricardo (a respected Shoreham, Sussex-based consultancy best known for its specialist research for the road transport rather than the aviation industry) have criticised its airport 'Carbon Reduction Plan' which was released at the end of June.

Against the background of Luton Airport's application to expand its capacity, on Harpenden's doorstep, from 18 million to 19 million ppa (passengers per annum) – and its clearly stated longer-term aspiration of 32 million ppa – Ricardo has highlighted, most significantly, that 99% of airport-dependent CO2 global-warming emissions are beyond the control of the airport-owning company London Luton Airport Operations Ltd.

Campaigning group LADACAN has calculated that LLAOL can control only about 1% of the emissions attributable to airport operations. It says the airport's so-called 'outline plan' relies on some kind of essentially unachievable co-operation between Luton Borough Council, its airport-owning subsidiary and the employees of both, as well as the airlines and their passenger-customers.

Proposals, which LADACAN maintains are not even half-way towards being definite, include sourcing electricity (on the airport site) from renewables and investigating (non specific) options for on-site and off-site renewable energy generation. Without indicating how, the airport says it intends 'to promote the sustainable travel for passengers and staff'.

Nevertheless LLAOL aims – many would say blithely – to achieve 'carbon neutrality' by 2026, but says it won't produce a plan with viable targets until the end of 2022. In any case its airport concession ends in 2031 and there can be no certainty that it (or any successor) will deliver on that plan, which has to run until 2050.

Not surprisingly, in view of its primary noise-reduction remit, LADACAN has also focussed attention on an updated Environmental Impact Assessment which directly contradicts an earlier assertion by the airport's cheerleaders that the latest Airbus A321neo aircraft going into service with easyJet and Wizz Air at Luton were quieter than the older types.



EasyJet and now Moldovan Airline FlyOne are both based at Luton



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