



facebook page: **Sopwell residents association**

SOPWELL

RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

making Sopwell a better place



Cottonmill And Sopwell Community Hub (CASH)

Editorial

There are two major issues going on in Sopwell at the moment, so please help support your community if you can. Keep up to date by looking at our FacebookPage: **sopwell residents association** and email us at **info@sopwell.org.uk** with any of your concerns. We would love to hear from you.

Important Contacts

District Councillor Eileen Harris 831611
Eileenharris555@btinternet.com

District Councillor Shakir Rahman 07502228623
Shakir7766@hotmail.co.uk

District Councillor Janet Smith 763907
Cllr.j.smith@stalbans.gov.uk

County Councillor Sandy Walkington 07802 177317
sandy@sandy4stalbans.org

Litter, fly tipping, graffiti 819598
a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk

Faulty road or pavement surface 01438 737320
www.hertsdirect.org/highwayfaults

Sopwell Residents Association
 Email: info@sopwell.org.uk
 Website: www.sopwell.org.uk

Back in the very first months of 2018, a small group of Sopwell residents began discussing the lack of community facilities in our area. St. Albans City & District Council identified that Sopwell needed a dedicated community space many years ago. Redevelopment of the Marlborough Pavilion to turn it into a proper community centre was promised but never realised. More recently SADC invited groups to bid to use the King Offa building for community use, but then all suggestions were rejected, and the building then demolished. So, we decided it was time we did something about this problem and the Cottonmill And Sopwell Hub campaign was born.

It was quickly suggested to us that a petition to the council would be the best way to start and at the end of March our petition, asking the council to work in partnership with us on this project, went live. We needed to achieve over 500 signatures to enable us to present our case to the council and so we spent the next four months collecting signatures and raising awareness of our campaign. We were hoping to advise all Sopwell residents of our community hub campaign and petition via the spring SRA newsletter but, due to publicity restrictions during the pre-local election period, our article was removed by the council. But that didn't stop us achieving double our signature target and on 11th July we were invited to present our petition and make a speech to all the members of the council. Our presentation went really well, and we received some fantastic support from many of the councillors attending. The council agreed to work with us and have assigned a portfolio holder and a senior council member to help us achieve the goal of finally getting a new, dedicated community hub for our residents.

Now the hard work really begins! We already have a small but dedicated committee in place and we have the 'CASH Team,' who are residents who want to be involved with our project. We've already been doing lots and lots of research. We're reaching out to other groups within our community to investigate forming partnerships, been looking at funding options, visiting established community centres and talking and listening to our residents' opinions and suggestions. We have a long road ahead but if you would like to be involved, would like further information or would just like to keep up to date with our progress then join us on Facebook and Twitter - Cottonmill And Sopwell Hub or contact us via email at cashsta18@gmail.com

CROSSING UPDATE

SAVE OUR COTTONMILL CROSSING

The latest campaign to save our crossing was instigated after Sandy Walkington shared with us Network Rail's renewed intention to close our crossing which they also tried to do back in 2015. They were unsuccessful then thanks to local pressure and a firm response from the Rights of Way team at Hertfordshire County Council.

The new campaign is led by a core team that includes myself, Chantal Burns and Sandy Walkington (County Councillor). Our aim is to raise awareness of this potential closure, build local support through an online petition and bring the community together so that we can work with the County Council to ensure this much-used crossing (and for many a lifeline) stays safe and open. This includes a very active and engaged Facebook action group which now has 468 members and is increasing every day.

With 1425 online signatures already and over 300 on paper, we have been invited to present our case to the meeting of the full county council in November.

With very little notice, we discovered that Network Rail were hosting a 'public information' session to share their 'plans for closure'. Only a third of the Sopwell Ward received letters informing them of this important meeting, so the campaign team undertook the task of printing our own flyers with key information to help people get prepared for the meeting. Along with many other residents, we spent many hours at the crossing and delivered door to door, to ensure as many crossing users and other residents would be aware of the meeting.

We were delighted when approximately 500 local residents (and some from outside Sopwell) attended. 200 people arrived within the first hour. Network Rail were certainly not expecting this level of engagement as they ran out of feedback forms after 200 were completed.

Emotions did run high as residents are deeply passionate about the importance of this crossing as a key access point and also a

public right of way used by parents, school children, cyclists, commuters, shoppers and more. There were many complaints by residents about the format and organisation of this meeting. Many found it hard to get their questions answered. Some residents were not able to get into the meeting at all due to the high numbers of attendees. Knowledge was lacking, and it seemed as if the Network Rail representatives were toeing the party line of a pre-determined decision to close our crossing. Clustered around small tables, they showed 6 different 'options' of alternatives to the current crossing with a 'diversionary route' being their preferred option. In our view and from what we can gather, most of the attendees deemed this diversion unacceptable as an alternative, due to the fact that it only takes residents down a path to the Abbey Station without direct access to the Griffiths Way retail park. It doesn't serve the hundreds using it for access to the various schools and the many other destinations it is used for. Our understanding is that the Herts County Council Rights of Way team feels the same i.e. that these options are not suitable and cannot be considered as an alternative to the current crossing.

Our next steps are to gather more data, liaise with County Council and continue to dialogue with Network Rail. Our objective is that Network Rail installs appropriate new measures on the current crossing to mitigate any risk.

We are also challenging the criteria they use for 'dangerous behaviour' as we believe this is flawed.

If you want more information on this campaign or simply want to help, please join the Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/186667322006237> or email us at saveourcrossing@gmail.com

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Join the Facebook group via the link above to stay in touch with all the news and actions being taken. Tell your neighbours, friends and families about this campaign. Help us to promote safe behaviour at the crossing by talking to your children and nudging your neighbours if you see they are distracted while crossing.

Continued over page

Sign the online petition here:

[https://democracy.hertfordshire.gov.uk/mgE PetitionDisplay.aspx?id=17&TPID=200900&\\$LO\\$=1](https://democracy.hertfordshire.gov.uk/mgE PetitionDisplay.aspx?id=17&TPID=200900&LO=1)

Janet Charles (Committee Chair)

Sopwell Memories update

The Sopwell Memories website www.sopwellmemories.org.uk continues to be of value to residents far and wide. I am still finding interesting items to post. Whenever I find a photograph relevant to Sopwell on Facebook I post on the website – after seeking permission of course as the photograph will still be in copyright. I have had some interesting black and white pictures of the prefabs which were in Tavistock Avenue and Watling View. People still remember living in them and who their next door neighbours were.

Just lately I have had some interesting genealogical queries. One man wrote to me from France. He had an ancestor who used to live in Sopwell Mill Farm and wanted to know if we had any more information. We did! I was able to point him in the direction of our book: **Sopwell a history and collection of memories for the answer**. There is plenty in the book about the mill including a reference to his ancestor.

There was another query which I was not able to answer so if anyone can help, I would be grateful if you could contact me. It is about the Elloway/Pinner family who lodged with the Robertsons at 40 Longmire Road in 1927. Emily Elloway married Herbert Pinner. Longmire is now Riverside Road of course. What house number in Riverside was number 40 Longmire then? And has anyone any information about any of those families around that time?

Like other areas, Sopwell is continually changing and unless we record these changes they may be lost. I am thinking of the demolition of Betty Entwhistle House and of course, the King Offa. Both have now gone for ever. Fortunately, I have been given several photos of the demolition progress which I will put on the website in due course. Also, the old derelict garages near Sopwell Mill have now been demolished. We will have to wait and see what is taking their place

and make sure these are recorded. If anyone has any interesting anecdotes to tell about these buildings, please let me know.

The Sopwell book is still available. We are giving them away to Sopwell Residents now so if you would like a copy please let me know. We have stopped supplying Waterstones but hopefully priced copies will be available at the new museum. Those living outside the area can obtain them through the Sopwell Memories website. Just go to 'Our publications' and place an order. The cost is £10 including postage and packing.

Sandy Norman

sandyanorman@gmail.com



Where there's muck there's brass

Within a hangar-like building, twenty adults in tough trainers and hi-vis vests are gazing over a low wall into a pit of slimy, slithering, mouldy, rotting, discarded and unwanted food waste. We are at Agrivert's North London Anaerobic Digestion Facility, sited within St Albans District near Colney Heath. And it's not as smelly as we expected.

The revolting mess, which has come from our kerbside caddies as well as from commercial food processing, is on a "walking floor" and is gradually collected by a huge screw conveyor and fed into a robust hammermill. This both grinds up the waste and separates out the plastic bags.

The soup of food waste is piped into the anaerobic digesters, which from the outside look like huge dark green yurts. The digesters contain dense cultures of bacteria that thrive in the absence of oxygen and, over the course of about 80 days, convert the food waste into biogas. The cleaned biomethane is piped into the gas engine (similar to an internal combustion engine), which burns the gas to produce heat (which keeps the digesters warm) and electricity.

Now the soup has very little calorific value but is full of plant nutrients (NPK). This black gloopy liquid is pasteurised to kill off germs such as E. coli and Salmonella, and is now a useful product, not a waste. It's tankered to local farmland and spread on arable land, thus reducing the amount of petrochemical derived fertilisers needed.

Balance Sheet:

In at the gate: lorries and tankers full of food waste; each weighed on arrival and again on departure.

Out to the National Grid: electricity for 5000 homes.

Out to farmland: a biofertiliser for arable crops.

Out to energy recovery at a different site: shredded and compressed plastic bags.

What does **not** come out of the site? Smell. Automated roller shutter doors minimise the escape of air with lorry movements. Air is extracted continuously from above the waste pit and this air is cleaned by wet scrubbing and by passing through a bed of wood chips, before release.

Because so much electricity is generated, Agrivert can minimise their charges for dealing with our domestic food waste.

This visit, part of Sustainable St Albans Week, was *much* more interesting than a visit to a stately home. You can see videos of Agrivert's operations on their website, agrivert.co.uk

Fran Burrows

St Julian's Community Café

Don't forget the community Café on Thursdays and Bingo on Tuesdays, all held in St Julians' Church

Theatre Trips

Calling all SRA theatre goers. If interested in going to see London shows (with a coach included) please email Janet on jactheatretrips@gmail.com or on facebook janets theatre trips.

Looking for greetings cards. Would you like to fund raise for your favourite charity? Please email cardsfromjanet@gmail.com or, have a browse on www.cardsfromjanet.uk



Sopwell Litter Pickers

This is a dedicated group that have held many litter picking days during the year, clearing up our streets. Unfortunately, our litter pick organiser, Holly Morris, is leaving the area in October and so if anyone would like to volunteer help organise a very willing bunch of helpers, please contact us by email: info@sopwell.org.uk. The committee would like to thank Holly for all her hard work and dedication

St Albans Trefoil Guild



The Guild meet every second Thursday of the month from 2.30pm to 4.30pm at St Julians' Church. They would welcome new members. Make new friends and maybe rekindle Girlguiding memories. Contact Janet Edwards 862329 or Roni Wilson 865529 for further details.