

EGMEL News

Since Our Last Newsletter

September: 2025 Unsung Hero Award

The Unsung Hero Award is sponsored by EGMEL to recognise an individual's outstanding voluntary contribution to the development of sports & recreation in our community.

This year's winner is **Lester Medcalf**, recognising his longstanding dedication to the East Grinstead & District Athletics Club.

Lester has been a member of the Athletics Club as coach, official and, formerly, athlete for over 30 years. He coaches athletes 2 or 3 times every week throughout the year, as well as officiating throughout the summer at athletics competitions. Lester also volunteers at East Grinstead Town Football Club.



The award was presented by Town Mayor John Belsey and included a cheque for £750 to the athletics club together with a personal gift of £100 to the winner. Pictured from left to right: Lloyd Richards, Phil Rogers – Chair of EG Athletics Club, Lester Medcalf and John Belsey.

October: Community Bonfire

There was an excellent turnout at East Court for the bonfire and fireworks display, following the Bonfire Society's spectacular procession through the town centre.

EGMEL supported the Society this year with funds towards the purchase of a container for equipment storage. Rest assured that no fireworks are stored for obvious safety reasons!



Photo credit: Stuart Armsby

Thank you to everyone involved in both the organisation of the event and the Sunday clear-up. Inevitably, the bonfire has left its mark on the upper playing field. We have asked the Council – MSDC – to ensure this gets very prompt attention.

November: Remembrance

EGMEL took part in Remembrance events in the High Street and at East Court, laying wreathes on behalf of the Charity and Members.



News from the Estate

The wet weather is affecting users of the Estate as the ground moves past softening towards, in some places, resembling a quagmire.

Parkrun has moved onto a newly-designated Winter Course: both for the enjoyment and safety of runners and to reduce wear and tear to the ground. We hope this will help to keep this very popular event on the calendar as much as possible this winter.

The **Football Clubs** have been impacted badly this season by long-standing pitch quality problems meaning cancelled fixtures. Glendale, MSDC's contractors, have been undertaking pitch improvements including verti-draining: to relieve soil compaction, improve drainage, and increase aeration. The problems are connected in part to the reducing effectiveness of old pitch drainage systems but also because of the basic terrain and clay content of the ground. We are assured that work will continue to improve the pitch quality year by year.



The **Little Green Truck** provides a welcome stop for visitors to enjoy coffee and cake at East Court most weekends. The team publishes their schedule on their website @thelittlegreentruckco.co.uk.



The **Ashplats Conservation Group** has a series of Winter Task Days coming up in the next few months; details are posted near the entrance to Ashplats. The Group would love more help: It's a great way to learn about our woodland. Future task days will include rhododendron removal and coppicing.

Traffic access to the lower car park is currently blocked because of a hole under the road. We have been pressing for action on this section of the road for some time. MSDC are looking at options to repair but we have not been given any timescale yet for re-opening. We will keep pressing for early resolution.

Looking Ahead

As a Board our key responsibility is to work with MSDC to protect and enrich the amazing greenspace asset we have right here in the centre of our town. One of the key ways we seek to do this is through the Management Plan that is in place between the Charity and MSDC. I've previously written about the need for a renewed 10 year plan. Whilst initial drafting by MSDC started in December 2024, we have regrettably seen little progress to date. In an effort to push forward, we have provided MSDC with a 'starter for ten' in the shape of broad priority areas: these will come as no surprise to you.

- Woodland
- Paths & Rides
- Glade & Open Areas
- Invasive Species Control
- Ponds & Streams
- Safe Access & Site Infrastructure
- Interpretation/Signage
- Reduction in 'Site Abuse'
- Surveying Protected & Flagship Species

Clearly there's a lot of detail behind these but the headings provide much-needed focus.

Just picking a couple of these, by way of an update, I can tell you that following a lot of work by the Board, a **Signage** plan has been drafted by MSDC covering the whole Estate. This is in the final stages of consideration as I write. The hope is to see a refresh of signage in place in 2026. Apart from providing helpful user information – for new visitors as well as regular users – good signage will encourage users to follow the main pathways rather than create desire routes which have an adverse impact on the protection of rare flora etc.

It's a year since the new Ghyll steps were completed. We have had very positive feedback from walkers on the big difference this investment has made.



MSDC is now exploring options for further enhancements to our **Paths & Rides**. Meaningful, lasting improvements take time and do not come cheaply. This will undoubtedly be a long term phased initiative, but the Ghyll Steps was a good start.

To give some context it's worth looking back to some of the key attributes expected of the Landscape and Walks/Paths of a Sustainable Alternative Green Space (SANG).

Landscape

- Natural greenspace with areas of open (non-wooded) countryside & areas of dense and scattered trees & scrubs.
- A range of habitats.
- Semi-natural with few buildings or artificial structure.
- Safe – no tree or scrub cover along parts of the walking routes.
- No unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment smells etc).

Walks

- Possible to complete a circular walk of 2.3 – 2.5km.
- Paths must be easily used and well maintained.
- Most paths should remain unsurfaced to avoid the site becoming too urban in feel.



Your thoughts and ideas on which Paths should be prioritised would be most welcome. The key questions to consider are:

- Where (in priority order) would pathway improvement help.
- What type of pathway material should be used: aesthetics and eco-considerations are as important as the practicalities.

You can e-mail me at: chair@egmel.co.uk. I would love to hear from you.

EGMEL Strategy

The Board has also embarked upon an internal review. I thought you might appreciate an early view of our thinking which can be summarised in the following priorities:

- Invest in and enhance the Estate.
- Deepen community engagement and participation.
- Ensure maintenance of the Estate by MSDC.
- Raise the profile and influence of the Charity.
- Continue to develop the Board.

In future newsletters I will include updates on what we are doing under each header.

All that remains for me to do is to wish you well for Christmas and to wish you a happy, healthy and fulfilling 2026.

Lloyd Richards
Chair, East Grinstead Memorial Estate Ltd

