

EAST GRINSTEAD MEMORIAL ESTATE – April 2024 Newsletter

Welcome to our April newsletter.

Spring has sprung and despite the record amounts of rain over recent months, we can take comfort from the bulbs appearing as is their custom providing us all with encouragement to venture into our gardens and further afield.

In this newsletter I'm going to provide updates on developments with Mid Sussex District Council regarding the playing fields, paths and ash die-back, but first I want to mention the increased evidence of poor behaviour seen in recent months.

You may recall in the last newsletter I enclosed photos of abandoned bicycles on the edge of the playing fields, since which time we have seen tyre marks on the fields and ad hoc bonfires. The Police have been informed and hopefully, the long awaited but newly installed CCTV camera at the pavilion will help them identify the offenders. It is obviously frustrating to see for so many people who enjoy the amenity of the estate and the volunteers who help maintain this wonderful East Grinstead asset.



Staying on the subject of the playing fields, it will be known to many members that the sight of football being played has become a memory over the last couple of years. In conjunction with the Town's Football Club and Sports Council, we have been lobbying MSDC to focus on the condition of the surfaces to return them to playable standards as soon as is practical. The condition of the fields is a reflection of the poor drainage, no doubt not helped by the almost biblical levels of rain in recent months, but we are assured that the Council is investigating how best to remedy the problem with a view to returning them to a playable condition in the near future.

A huge challenge for MSDC here at Ashplats and elsewhere in their District, is how best to deal with the problem of Ash die-back. Many of you will have noted how many blighted trees we have on the Estate, and we have recently met with the Council and the in-house expert from Glendale, the Council's new main contractor. The outcome of that meeting was to develop a risk-based approach to tree removal in preference to blanket annihilation of all Ash in the woods, as has been adopted elsewhere to much alarm.

The key to the risk assessment will be the condition and location of the affected trees; should an affected tree be adjacent to a recognised pathway and be in poor condition, it will rank highest in the order for attention and conversely should such a tree be in the middle of woodland, its risk assessment will be much lower and nature will be left to take its course. Given that it is not the existence of dying trees that spreads the infection but the falling leaves, this feels like a pragmatic approach.

As many of you will have discovered when walking through the woods of late, some of the paths are so wet that wading is a more appropriate description. The paths that have held up best are not surprisingly those that have an aggregate component with drainage ditches alongside, but others have widened to as much as 10 metres as walkers have sought to avoid the mud and roots by seeking out firmer footing.

One such area that has been problematical for years has been the Ghyll Steps (the sign has been found and is currently being returned to serviceable condition courtesy of the Conservation Group). A plan has been drawn up in conjunction with MSDC to install a boardwalk to replace the existing steps which will be installed with due care to avoid root damage. A quote and detailed proposal have been received and will shortly be subject to approval by the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) Steering Committee, of which we are members. The solution is quite innovative as it relies on recycled plastic material which has an anticipated life expectancy of approaching a century! Just in case you are concerned that the appearance of the product will show its origins from fairy liquid bottles, I've attached a couple of photos of installation of the product elsewhere to put your mind at rest, so let's hope we can make this happen before too long.



Of course, this time of year is when we seek and consider applications for grants for local organisations and individuals. Our pot available in 2024 has returned to more historic levels as our investment income has reduced during the last couple of years, and we will of course publish the list of beneficiaries on our website during the summer.

I've attached here a link to some lovely footage recorded by the Ashplats Conservation Group which shows the habits of some other users of the Estate!
<https://www.facebook.com/AshplatsConservationGroup/videos/1127091021805023>

Finally, we are currently progressing applications from a couple of strong candidates to strengthen your Board, replacing retiring directors, but we are always on the lookout for candidates with appropriate professional skills/interest that can be brought to bear to help the charity. Similarly, we are currently searching for volunteers to:

1. Support our social media presence; and
2. A minute secretary.

So if you or someone you know could help in either of these areas, we would be thrilled to hear from you at chair@egmel.co.uk

Lloyd Richards

Chair | East Grinstead Memorial Estate

www.egmel.co.uk