

EAST GRINSTEAD MEMORIAL ESTATE – August 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to our four monthly newsletter update.

A walk through the woods last week confirmed what we all know only too well, which is, we are now well into the growing season. That has its obvious benefits but does tend to provide ample cover for wildlife. Bird life is still active with buzzards, robins and blackbirds being seen and wrens and chiff-chaff heard. Surprisingly, little evidence of butterflies although where I live on the south side of town, they have been as busy as usual.

The growth at this time of year clearly presents problems for the access routes into the woods with paths narrowing - the main route along the Holtye Track was cleared back in December to a width approaching four or five metres has recently reduced to barely a metre in places. We have reported this to the team at Mid Sussex who have instructed contractors to take action. Work is also underway along the access road to the Football Club with the overhanging trees at the Shooting Club being reduced and also with some unhealthy trees alongside the stream being reduced or removed. None of us like to see the removal of trees but it does allow more to flourish in the future. One of the products of tree reduction /removal is the log piles produced which when stacked, help the ecology of the estate to develop providing homes for various species of flora and fauna - we have heard reports of such timber being removed which is clearly not helpful to the health of the woodlands.



Of course, this is the time of year when we hold our AGM and review what has happened over the last 12 months but also signal what we have in mind for the next year. The AGM was held at Chequer Mead on 11 July with 18 members in attendance and 3 who had submitted proxy votes. The annual report and financial statements were unanimously accepted but prompted a wide-ranging discussion which included concerns regarding ash die-back to the legal advice the board had received regarding the failures to fully implement the ten-year management plan. We have been advised by MSDC that a felling licence application to address the die-back problem has been submitted to the Forestry Commission and we are making our own enquiries to check the status of that approach. I know in recent times the existence of a CCTV pole (without a camera!) at the pavilion end of the estate has caused head scratching - the answer is that MSDC are intent on placing a camera on site subject to the necessary legal approvals (which we support) but this has been delayed by a cost review of all their cameras across Mid Sussex.

The AGM saw the retirement of one of our longest serving Directors, Christopher Russell. Chris has served the charity in various guises and stints spanning the last 40 years and his sage advice, often on legal questions has been pivotal to our development. Latterly he has taken a key role in organising our annual community grants programme which has benefited multiple East Grinstead based organisations and charities over the years - this year's grant giving programme recently completed supported 30 organisations with a total sum of some £30,000. Another Director retirement at the AGM was Mike Barlow who is now able to spend more of his time running the much in demand East Grinstead food bank.

One event that will have an impact on the Estate is the recent local elections which have changed the balance of the Council at Mid Sussex - we hope that impact will be favourable, particularly for the woodlands. As ever, we are seeing turnover of personnel at the Council which will add to the uncertainties in the short term, so it is as relevant as ever that we keep the council focussed on delivery; having a vibrant membership for the charity and succession in place for future trustee directors remains critical. The same I am sure applies to the Ashplats Conservation Group who I know would also welcome more volunteers. If you or someone you know wants to help further, please feel free to contact me (chair@egmel.co.uk) in the first instance to explore options.

As we move into the next 12 months, we plan on a refresh of our website and have recruited a specialist volunteer to help us with that work. Alongside that we are also mid-way through a review of our communication priorities - first started last year by two very able 6th form students from Imberhorne School - under the wing of another specialist volunteer; so our web presence will hopefully be sharpened to help us better reflect local needs and support our level of influence with our largest tenant, Mid-Sussex District Council. If you are social media savvy and willing to help in this area, we'd love to hear from you.

Finally, as we look forward to this year and beyond, it's worth reminding ourselves of our key objects as a charity (there are 12 in all!) but the two primary ones are:

- (a) To provide and maintain, as a memorial to the men, women and children of East Grinstead who lost their lives in the 1939-1945 war, a public park with playing fields, recreation grounds, or other recreational or educational facilities, for the people of East Grinstead.
- (b) To encourage and promote any form of public recreation or education or any other charitable object, including by the making of grants for the benefit of the people of East Grinstead.

As a board we will be exploring how these two objects should influence the way we do things going forward.

Best wishes for an enjoyable summer season and with thanks for your continuing support of the Charity.

Lloyd Richards | Chair