



Friends of the Nickey Line Newsletter 19 – December 2015

WHAT'S IN THIS NEWSLETTER?

- What's Happening on the Nickey Line
- Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for the Nickey Line
- Redbourn Crossings – Survey Findings and Progress
- Events and Work Parties Update
- New Ambrose Lane Ramp To Have More Saplings Planted
- AGM 12 May 2016 - GAP Management Plan Presentation & 10TH Birthday Celebration
- Book Holidays with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays and Earn the Friends £s
- We need work party volunteers and committee members for Dacorum and social media

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE NICKEY LINE

Dacorum News

Dacorum plan shortly to level an area on the Nicky Line past Hunters Oak where installing two manhole covers slightly higher than the footpath effectively created a ramp. This was brought to the council's attention by a cyclist - so user feedback to the councils can work!

Dacorum are considering working with Herts Countryside Management Services on the Greenspace Action Plan for the Nickey Line which is at consultation stage at present.

Redbourn Crossings



Redbourn Roundabout Twin Crossing



Redbourn B487 Crossing

With the support of Redbourn Parish Council, over June and July we conducted a survey of Redbourn residents as well as other Nickey Line users into the perceived safety of the two main road crossings. We also conducted a count of users of the Redbourn roundabout twin crossings. ***We want to thank everyone who participated.***

(continued ...)

The full Redbourn Crossings Report is available on the website but the main points are:

1. The Redbourn roundabout crossings see heavy weekly crossing traffic. Over the late June/early July period, Friends of the Nickey Line measured over 1600 crossings per week with over 1 crossing per minute at peak times. Cyclists form 60% of users; runners and walkers about 20% each.
2. Users are very concerned with crossing safety on both Redbourn crossings:
 - 84% of users expressing an opinion of the roundabout crossings felt they were unsafe
 - 77% of the users expressing an opinion of the Hemel Hempstead B487 crossing felt it was unsafe

The main issues include:

- Traffic speed at both sets of crossings especially at busy periods
 - Poor sightlines made worse by totally inadequate foliage control (mainly the Roundabout crossings)
 - Unpredictability of traffic on roundabout made worse by crossings being too close to roundabout
 - Family groups in particular can really struggle to cross safely. "This is a death trap - nearly been run over twice with a buggy - impossible to cross. The Harpenden crossing really puts us off using the Nickey Line when with children. Literally nearly been killed there"
3. The by-pass and unsafe crossings clearly creates a large 'severance' for Non-Motorised Users from accessing the traffic free route between Hemel Hempstead & Harpenden and the countryside to the south:
 - One in three respondents said they would use the Roundabout Crossings more if they were safer
 - Over one in six respondents said they would use the Hemel Hempstead Crossing more if it were safer
 - User feedback reported potential NL users who refused to use it because of the perceived crossing risks
 4. **CALL FOR ACTION** - Friends of the Nickey Line call for actions to improve the safety of both crossings:
 - Highways to regularly manage verge vegetation to improve sightlines
 - Speed limits be implemented on all approaching roads and the roundabout
 - Both sets of crossings be upgraded to formal Zebra / Toucan crossings
 - The Roundabout crossings to be repositioned to be further away from the roundabout to allow drivers to have more time to see them and space to stop.

*****Disappointingly, we are still awaiting a formal response from relevant county councillors and the County Council. Informal feedback indicates a surprising lack of concern, interest and priority on the safety and opinions of users and local residents but we will continue to press for action on this important issue. *****

Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for the Nickey Line

GAPs are map based management plans and that are designed to give focus and direction to the running and improvement of all types of open space. They provide a clear and logical process to determine the activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time in order to meet the agreed project objectives and core aspirations.

The Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for the Nickey Line will be produced by the Countryside Management Service in partnership with St Albans & City District Council to cover a 5 year period from 2016 to 2021. This will cover the section of the line that falls within St Albans District. (N.B. Dacorum Borough Council *may* also participate.)

Effective consultation is at the centre of a successful GAP. In order to enable as many stakeholders and interest groups as possible to have the opportunity to feed into the production of the new GAP, there will be a structured two-stage approach to consultation:

- For the first stage (up to 11 December), local interested parties (mainly organisations) were invited to make comment on the core aspirations being put forward so that any further aspirations and/or issues can be addressed through this information gathering process.
- For the second stage (planned from 18th January to 12th February), consultees will be invited to read through and make comment on the draft GAP.

Following this exercise, the final document will be produced, published and promoted more widely to the general public, **including a presentation at our AGM on May 12th.**

FRIENDS NEWS

Ramblers Worldwide Holidays Walking Partnership - We would like to thank the unknown person who earlier this year nominated the Friends when booking a Ramblers Holiday and so earned us a useful donation. Two holidays were taken this year earning us £60, bringing our income to £140 since the scheme began.

Reminder - Book a holiday with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays (www.ramblersholidays.co.uk) and you can nominate Friends of the Nickey Line to receive £10 per head for UK holidays, £20 for short haul holidays, and £30 per head for long haul holidays.

****You must nominate Friends when you book! ****

Fungus Foray on 14th October - About 20 people participated in the Fungus Foray on 14th October; nearly 100 species were identified.

*****YOUR COMMITTEE – CAN YOU HELP?*****

We urgently need **another committee member from Hemel Hempstead** - Even a small amount of your time would be very welcome to help us monitor the Hemel Hempstead section of the Nickey Line and give feedback to Dacorum Borough Council.

We also want a committee member to help us with social media.

Can you help? Email friends@nickeyline.org or ring 01582 622771 to chat about what you could do.

EVENTS PLANNED – Dates for Your Diary – See www.nickeyline.org for details.

AGM -Thursday 12th May 2016 at Park Hall, Harpenden, at 7.30 pm – Herts Countryside Management Service will give a talk on the new Greenspace Action Plan. It is also the Friends 10th Birthday. Do try and come along and help us celebrate it in style.

WORK PARTIES (also see website)

Our volunteer work parties have been busy since the summer.

In Dacorum the bridges over the pathway have been opened up, and the task of removing the invading ivy well on the way.

By Knott Wood, the four grassy scallops have had their annual cut and the views re-established. The flora at these locations continues to improve, with marjoram, very attractive to butterflies, ever increasing.

In the coming months we plan some further hedge laying, and opening up parts of the pathway to make it more appealing.

Our Woodland Trust application for another 30 free tree whips was successful and they have been delivered. They are to be planted at the bottom of Ambrose Lane ramp.

If you would like to volunteer for any work parties, we would love to hear from you. This applies to you too ladies. Even an hour or two is welcomed. See below for contact details.

WALKS (also see website)

Dawn Chorus Sunday 24 April 2016 starting 5am at Youth With a Mission, Harpenden.

Harpenden Springwatch Walk, Sunday 8 May 2016 at 10am - We are contributing to the Hertfordshire Year of Walking with this approximately 4 mile circular walk taking in the local wildlife. We will meet in the Amenbury Lane Car Park. Stout footwear required. Contact Roger on 01582 763560 if further detail required. All welcome - just turn up!

Come and See the Orchids, Sunday 19 June 2016, starting 10am from Redbourn Common.

See our website www.nickeyline.org for events as they are announced.

We wish all our Friends members a Happy Christmas and good 2016....

Comments and feedback on this newsletter and any aspect of the Nickey Line are welcomed – email friends@nickeyline.org.

