



## Friends of the Nickey Line Newsletter 20 – July 2016

### WHAT'S IN THIS NEWSLETTER?

- What's Happening on the Nickey Line
- Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for the Nickey Line published
- Events and Work Parties Updates
- Book Holidays with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays and Earn the Friends £s
- We need work party volunteers and a committee member for Dacorum

### WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE NICKEY LINE

#### Dacorum News

The summer has helped the surface overall to dry out and be more usable over the as yet untreated stretches. Litter, fallen trees / large branches and encroaching vegetation have been concerns. Friends' volunteers along with Dacorum BC have worked to clear problems.



The good news is that Dacorum BC plan to allocate some Section 106 planning gain funds from local developments to improving the Nickey Line. No dates or amounts are available yet. We expect the funds to be spent on much needed surface improvements and tree management along this heavily wooded stretch of the Line.

#### Redbourn News - Crossings

Following our surveys of the two Redbourn Nickey Line crossings, Friends of the Nickey Line called for action 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, Herts Highways has been very resistant to any suggestion of significant changes to improve safety here, citing costs plus the lack of any road deaths (*our comment - so far...*) on either crossing. They have ignored the arguments from users and the impact of the poor perceived safety on the potential usage of the (off-road) Nickey Line route.

However, after Redbourn Parish Council's active support on this issue, Highways have restored the verge and sightlines maintenance (which had apparently dropped off their radar until our report) and this is clearly welcome – see photos below.

We have worked with the authors of the Greenspace Action Plan to highlight the crossings as an issue affecting the sought-after increase in Nickey Line route local usage and we shall continue to press for action on improving crossing safety and ease of use.

### Redbourn Lane Car Park

This has been subject to several fly tipping incidents which have left unsightly mess and reduce space in this already small car park. Ease of exit has however been improved with the renewed Highways maintenance – again see photos below.



**Redbourn Lane Car Park**



**Fly Tipping in Car Park**

**Improved  
Visibility  
from  
Redbourn Lane  
Car Park**



**Improved Visibility from Crossing**

### Fly Tipping:

If you see any fly tipping actually taking place call the police on 999 or 101 and give as much detail as possible. *Do not approach the person dumping the rubbish.*

If you discover fly-tipped waste after the event, see the SADC or Dacorum BC websites to report it.

## Harpenden News

The surface from Roundwood Crossing to the 'Fiveways' junction and beyond is currently dry and usable but was very muddy early in the year and remains a concern for the Winter.

Whilst no formal count has been made, we are pleased to see continued increased use of the Roundwood crossing to Ambrose Lane section with the new ramp and better surface.

Highways has substantially improved the level access in Park Hill following complaints from local wheel chair users. (This was an item left over for them from the Sustrans led 2014 project on this section of the Line.) Our thanks to both Sustrans and Highways...



## Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for the Nickey Line

Countryside Management Service presented a summary of the draft Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for the Nickey Line at our AGM in May. We subsequently had a detailed discussion meeting with them and they agreed to take on board many of our suggestions. See the final version online at <http://www.hertslink.org/cms/content/features/gapnickeyline>

## FRIENDS NEWS

### 10<sup>th</sup> Year AGM

We held our 10th Year AGM in May complete with birthday cake and sparkling wine. It was well attended – thank you to everyone who came, including the Mayor of Harpenden, Councillor Mrs Nicola Linacre. There was a lively discussion of the Greenspace Action Plan and a trip down memory lane with historic films from Redbourn Museum.

## Ramblers Worldwide Holidays Walking Partnership

We continue to receive donations from our arrangement with this company – *Reminder: Book a holiday with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays ([www.ramblersholidays.co.uk](http://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! \*\****

## Report Summary - Ten Years of Nickey Line Work Parties

Since our formation in 2006 the Friends have run about 70 large work parties, mainly in the St Albans District Council section of the pathway but one of our Hemel based members, Roger Green, has more recently organised numerous small work parties in Dacorum to clear the bridges and historic structures from invading ivy and improve the sight lines.

We estimate that Friends volunteers have now contributed over 2,300 hours of voluntary work while the local councils have benefited from another 300 hours from other groups attending work parties on the Nickey Line - conservatively valued at over £26,000 overall.

We are very grateful to all our volunteers for their work on a wide range of tasks including, for example, hedge laying, coppicing, tree planting, habitat management, installing and/or maintaining new seats and information boards. **Please contact us if you want to join for our Winter programme which will start in October.**

## Spring /Summer Walk Programme

The 5th Dawn Chorus Walk and breakfast at YWAM, organised jointly with the local branch of the RSPB, was again well supported with 32 attendees. This event is run every two years, and we expect to run it again in 2018.

The Harpenden Spring Watch Walk, held in early May as part of the Hertfordshire Year of Walking, gave us sightings of several spring migrants and numerous wild flowers and butterflies. 13 people attended.

The 3rd 'Come and see the Orchids' walk, run with the Ver Valley Society in June again proved very popular, with 26 attendees. Bee, pyramidal and fragrant orchids were seen. Sadly the water company dug up the NL bee orchid site just 3 days before the event to access a water main, and it remains to be seen whether bee orchids will appear another year.

## Next Walk Planned

### Butterflies on the Nickey Line, Sunday 24 July 2016 at 10am

Starting from the Roundwood Park School crossing with the Nickey Line, the walk is about 3 miles long. The site we will visit is managed for butterflies, and has large numbers of butterflies when the weather is fine. Wear stout footwear.

See our website [www.nickeyline.org](http://www.nickeyline.org) for events as they are announced.

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

We 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. Can you help? Email [friends@nickeyline.org](mailto:friends@nickeyline.org) or ring 01582 622771 to chat about what you could do.

Comments and feedback on this newsletter and any aspect of the Nickey Line are welcomed – email [friends@nickeyline.org](mailto:friends@nickeyline.org).