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WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE NICKEY LINE

Planning Issues

East Hemel Hempstead Development

The East Hemel Hempstead Development has been incorporated into the St Albans District Local Plan. The developers have taken our comments / suggestions on board including installing a toucan crossing where the NL will cross the proposed new road. They have also confirmed to Friends that they are willing to make a financial contribution to improvements to the current B487 crossing immediately east of the M1.

St Albans District Local Plan

Friends have commented on the SADC Local Plan seeking improvements to the usability and safety of the Nickey Line to be elements of the new Plan, in particular better overall all-weather surfacing and safer crossings.

SW Herts Growth and Transport Plan

Friends have similarly commented on the draft SW Herts Growth and Transport Plan seeking improvements to the usability and safety of the Nickey Line throughout including Dacorum and SADC sections.

We supported elements such as the Cherry Tree Lane "Quiet Lane" proposal and associated new access ramp but felt that the proposal to install lighting on the whole Hemel to Redbourn section was inappropriate and a misuse of resources. We suggested higher priority items such as improved surfacing and safer road crossings should be included in the plan.

Hemel Hempstead News

Dacorum Council and GAP Plan

Friends have had very constructive meetings with Dacorum management on working together to improve the Nickey Line within Dacorum. Issues covered included the

Greenspace Action Plan (GAP), work required in advance of the GAP starting, insurance cover for Friends working parties within Dacorum and action on motorbike /moped riding on the line.

We still await publication by Countryside Management Service (CMS) of the next round of consultation on the Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for Dacorum's section of the Nickey Line.

Redbourn News

Redbourn Lane Car Park

Following lobbying by Friends, and with very welcome support from Redbourn Parish Council and local county councillor Annie Brewster, Herts Highways removed the earth bunds around the Redbourn Lane Car Park and replaced them with a fence to improve sightlines. They also expanded the parking space and resurfaced it plus the walkway to the formal crossing point. Our thanks in particular go to Councillor Brewster for moving this forward.

Our one reservation is that the entrance for cars is still very narrow and we suggest drivers need to enter at very close to 90 degrees to avoid damage. Users are recommended to go round the roundabout and turn right into the car park (NB with care re the fast moving traffic).



New Car Park from Redbourn Side



Resurfaced Walkway to Crossing Point

Redbourn Dog / General Waste Bins

The Nickey Line at Redbourn has only two bins on it - both red dog bins - at Chequer Lane and by the Millenium Site. Going East towards Harpenden, there is a dog bin on the East side of the crossing on Redbourn Lane but there is nothing West of Chequer Lane. Some users have complained about the absence of dog bins along this section West of Chequer Lane and objected to uncollected dog waste here.

General waste bins can be used for dog waste now so Friends have asked Redbourn Parish Council to consider a general waste bin along the Chequer Lane / Hemel Hempstead Road section. After consultation with local Friends and users, we are recommending this be on the intersection of paths by the bench behind numbers 75 and 77 Hemel Hempstead Road (near the Church).

Redbourn Commemorative Plaque

Another copy of the 1985 plaque commemorating the opening of the Nickey Line as a footpath/cycleway has 'surfaced' on the bank of the Ver river under the Nickey Line Bridge crossing it. It was spotted by Nickey Line user Nigel Winterbottom and recovered by Friends.

The plaque is, barring a couple of logos, identical to the one already in the Redbourn Millenium site and which we thought at the time was the only one still existing. We currently believe the Harpenden Luton Road bridge near where the first plaque was found would be a strong possibility for this second plaque so both Redbourn and Harpenden would then each have a plaque as was clearly originally intended? Your views on this or any other suggestions on what to do with the plaque are welcomed!



New Plaque Found Still On Its Board



The Millenium Site Plaque

Redbourn Classics Motor Show and Village Fete

Friends ran a membership table at the Redbourn Classics event in September. We were generously lent a Sustrans gazebo by Luton and Dunstable Cycle Club (thanks guys!) in case it rained again this year but the weather stayed friendly and we had a successful day, recruiting new members, especially from Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead.

Harpenden News

Vandalised Sign

The Roundwood crossing signpost was again lifted out of the ground and one of the signs damaged in June. After a few weeks the damaged post with the residual sign was re-erected. SADC have ordered a replacement sign and it should be re-fitted shortly.

FRIENDS NEWS

Facebook Group "The Nickey Line"

Our Facebook Group "The Nickey Line" now has over 200 users who publish pictures, comments and stories about the Line as well as communicating problems noticed. Why not join the group today and add your favourite photos and stories?

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/363326034099616>

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) 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! ****

Work Parties

The Friends have already run 3 general work parties this Autumn at different locations, as well as a number of litter picks in Dacorum.

Our volunteers have cleared away a lot of vegetation in the vicinity of Cherry Tree Lane Bridge, allowing the historic bridge to be seen in all its glory.

The grass scallops in the vicinity of Knott Wood have had their annual cut and rake, and the hedge line has been reduced, once again exposing the magnificent views across the Ver Valley. Please avoid walking on the grass edge alongside the scallops, where the best flora is to be found. Finally, further hedge laying has been undertaken below Knott Wood.

We are planning to have more volunteer work parties on Wednesday 7th November (to be lead by CMS), Tuesday 20th November and Sunday 16th December.

Why not join our volunteer team? Just an hour or so is appreciated. Work and exercise in the company of like minded people. Contact Geoff on 01582 712073 to be added to our volunteer working party email notifications.

Walks Programme

This Year's Walks - Our walks this year were well supported, and covered a range of activities:

- Roger Green ran a walk in Hemel in April on the lost end of the Nickey Line, repeated in August as it proved so popular
- An ever popular Dawn Chorus and Breakfast walk using the Youth With a Mission (Harpenden) facilities in late April (with the local RSPB) was fully subscribed, and the following month a Redbourn Spring Watch Walk, co-organised with the Ver Valley Society viewing bluebells and orchids had good numbers
- On the annual butterfly walk in July to see the butterflies in the Knott Wood area, butterflies were in profusion, although less species were seen than in previous years
- In September Heidi Mansell, Harpenden Town Council's People and Wildlife Officer, ran a fully booked bat walk for us, using improved bat identification equipment. 26 of us walked from Roundwood to 'Five Ways' and back and with the help of the bat detectors provided by Heidi, we heard and saw a number of bats, all pipistrelles, but it was good to register so many.

Harpenden Springwatch Walk 2019 - provisionally Sunday 12 May from the Amenbury Lane Car Park, at 10am. See website nearer the event

Saturday 15 June 2019 Joint Guided Walk with Railway Ramblers - Hemel Hempstead to Harpenden with coffee stop in Redbourn where people may join the walk.

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

Nickey Line Talk To Your Local Group?

We typically give 2 – 4 illustrated talks a year on the History of the Nickey Line to local organisations who want a guest speaker, in return for a small donation to the Friends.

If you know of any organisation who may want one, please suggest they email us on friends@nickeyline.org.

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

We are pleased to welcome Harpenden based Diana Ortega to our small but enthusiastic committee.

We still ideally need another **committee member from both Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead** - Even a small amount of your time would be very welcome to help us monitor these sections of the Nickey Line, give feedback to the Councils and to build our activities further. Can you help?

Email 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.

Friends of the Nickey Line 01582 622771 www.nickeyline.org friends@nickeyline.org