



Friends of the Nickey Line Newsletter 27 – December 2020

WHAT'S IN THIS NEWSLETTER?

It's a bumper issue since it covers a full year since our last newsletter.

- **What's Happening on the Nickey Line**
- **CPRE Hertfordshire 2020 Rural Living Awards Commendation**
- **Lockdown Usage Survey**
- **Book Holidays with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays and Earn the Friends £s**
- **Committee members for Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn**

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE NICKEY LINE

CPRE Hertfordshire 2020 Rural Living Awards Commendation

Earlier this year Greg Ault of Herts CC Countryside Management Service nominated the Friends of the Nickey Line for one of CPRE (Council for the Protection of Rural England) Hertfordshire's annual Rural Living Awards. The nomination mentioned the range of achievements since our inception in 2006, including those achieved through lobbying (e.g. the Ambrose Lane ramp / Park Hill steps project) as well as through direct action by our dedicated group of volunteers. We were pleased to be nominated and our thanks go to Greg Ault.

In July a CPRE Herts Trustee came to view some of our achievements and discuss our work. The awards were announced online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4X4drwgdbDo> because of the Covid pandemic. The Friends were awarded a Commendation (effectively being ranked second out of 6 contenders) and it was pleasing to receive this recognition for all that we have achieved over the years.

Lockdown Usage Survey

The March Lockdown immediately resulted in a very large increase in Nickey Line usage. After some spot check counts seemed to confirm this, with the help of volunteers we carried out a formal survey in May 2020 to measure the very high usage being seen throughout the Line.

Whilst two formal surveys had been undertaken by us over the Harpenden section (2006 and 2013) and one on the Redbourn Lane roundabout crossings (in 2015), this was our first major survey to also include Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn.

More than 50 volunteers reported counts for their section of the Line, ranging from before 7.00 until 21.00 each day for more than two weeks. The main results were:

- Daily usage over the individual Redbourn to Hemel Hempstead sections was about 350 uses per day and over 1,000 uses per day for the Harpenden sections.

- Overall Nickey Line Lockdown usage was 12,000 uses per week. This was almost 3 times the last count we had of 4,100 normal uses for the Harpenden section in July 2013 and reflected greater use by people from all the Line's three major communities of Hemel Hempstead, Redbourn and Harpenden.

N.B. We want to say thank you to all our volunteers for their time and diligence. You made the survey possible despite the restrictions and challenges we all faced in the Lockdown period.

A copy of the Survey report is available from www.nickeyline.org/home/news.

Lockdown Users Near Five Ways, April 20

Usage during our recent lockdown was noticeably higher than a normal November but lower than the hectic May period which enjoyed very good weather as well as being in a stricter lockdown.



New 5 Year Greenspace Action Plan Being Developed for St Albans

A new 5 year Greenspace Action Plan for the St Albans sections of the Nickey Line (ie everywhere but Dacorum) is being created. (See www.stalbans.gov.uk/consultations for the outline plan document).

The first stage of consultation has closed but we can still investigate a good idea. What improvements / features / changes would you like to see? Please let us know at friends@nickeyline.org.

More Trees Blown Down

Friends were busy clearing trees and branches along the Line earlier in the year. See our Facebook Group for more pictures.



Branch Down Near Roundwood Crossing



Tree Down by Rugby Fields in H. Hempstead

Harpenden News

Oak Processionary Moth

The caterpillars of this moth eat huge quantities of oak leaves and have hairs that can cause quite serious irritation to humans. We were advised in June that a colony had been identified on an oak tree near Five Ways. The tree was treated and we hope the moths will not re-occur.

Five Ways Waste Bin Moved To Take Dog Waste

We have had repeated problems with the Five Ways (Townsend Lane extension junction) dog bin filled to overflowing. This was the main reason a general waste bin was placed there by St Albans DC some time ago - waste bins can take general and dog waste so seemed a good solution.

However, it was set up on the other side of the west barriers and was not being well used. To improve the situation, the bin has now been brought closer, on to the main crossroads. **Please use it for dog waste** - in fact, in preference to the dog bin so users who still think they "have to" use the red bins can do so without overfilling it.



Hemel Hempstead News

Hemel Hempstead Leading Volunteer Roger Green Dies

Our leading volunteer in Hemel Hempstead, Roger Green (in orange Hi Vis jacket in photo after leading a litter collection work party in Hemel Hempstead) sadly died earlier this year. He led many walks and work parties and helped to keep the Line clear of fallen trees to mention just a few of his contributions. We shall miss him. See our website for more about him.



We want to thank Roger's wife, Sylvia, for her donation of Roger's personal work party equipment to the Friends. This included some machines we do not use so, with Sylvia's permission, we sold them and raised over £100.

Adeyfield Road Nickey Line Symbol Vanishes Then Found



The Adeyfield Road Nickey Line symbol in the Roger Green photo above disappeared. It was presumed stolen at the time but later found in vegetation nearby. Our thanks go to the (unnamed) user who spotted it.

We have re-instated it (action shot left ...).

New Surface Planned East from Maylands

Countryside Management Service expect to re-surface the Maylands to around Hunters Oak section over the Winter

Keens Field Lighting Fixed

After much lobbying by Friends' committee member Karen Summers, the Keens Field lighting has been fixed.

Residential Encroachment

We have identified a Hunters Oak residence where the Nickey Line border has been used to extend the resident's garden. Dacorum management are investigating this.

General Waste Bins Take Dog Waste

Both Dacorum and St Albans general waste bins take dog waste and Dacorum have now decided not to set up any new red dog bins but use general bins instead. We have requested additional waste bins in the Hunters Oak section.

**** Please use any available waste bins for your dog's poo bags ****

Redbourn News

Lawes Trust Proposals for Redbourn

The Lawes Agricultural Trust proposed development is still not in SADC's proposed Local Plan but we expect abandonment of Radlett housing plans to push the Lawes Trust project up the agenda.

Chequer Lane Ramps

These ramps were completed and are a big improvement on the old ones. Our thanks to Countryside Management Services who led the project



West Ramp From Chequer Lane



East Ramp From Chequer Lane

New Bollards at Redbourn Caravan Site

Additional bollards have been added to the entrance to the Caravan Park after many reports of quad bikes being used on the Line.

The bollard gaps are 34 - 36 inches which is narrower than the average quad bike but wider than most wheelchairs / buggies.



FRIENDS NEWS

AGMs 2020 and 2021

The 2020 AGM was held 'virtually' with the Chairman's and other reports sent by email to members with comments and voting on motions requested by email. Thank you to all those who responded. All motions were supported.

The 2021 AGM is planned for May 25th at Redbourn Council offices but, depending mainly on the Covid situation, we may hold it by a Zoom meeting if enough members are happy with that.

Facebook Group "The Nickey Line"

Our Facebook Group has grown substantially since the Lockdown and the increase in people using the Nickey Line. The Group now has over 690 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

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!**

100 Trees Received from The Conservation Volunteers and I Dig Trees

100 trees (20 each of goat willow, dog rose, hawthorn, blackthorn, and dogwood) from I Dig Trees have been given to us by The Conservation Volunteers. This is our second batch of whips from I Dig Trees. They will be used to thicken up very sparse hedges to create a better habitat for wildlife.

Walks Programme

The February "Identifying Trees In Winter" walk was very successful but some walks had to be cancelled with the Lockdowns. The June Butterfly walk was held with a maximum of 6 participants in accordance with covid guidelines. We hope 2021 will be an easier year.

Work Parties

A number of work parties have taken place over the year including a recent (socially distanced) litter pick in Dacorum.

New work programmes have been agreed with both Dacorum and St Albans and in particular we look forward to being more actively involved in the Dacorum section on a wider range of Line management, as we are already in the St Albans managed sections.

Why not join our volunteer team? Our work parties are fun and enjoyable, and a great way of contributing to making the Nickey Line even more enjoyable for all. You can work for as long as you wish, and all contributions are welcomed. Contact Geoff at geoffbunce@talk21.com or 07903 476584 to be added to our volunteer working party email notifications. Watch the website for details of future planned work.

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

Nickey Line Zoom Talk To Your Local Group? We can give illustrated talks on the History of the Nickey Line online via Zoom 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 have recently welcomed a new Harpenden based committee member, Annette Cotter.

We ideally still need another **committee member from both Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead** - Can you help? Contact friends@nickeyline.org or ring 01582 622771.

A Happy Christmas and Covid Free 2021 to all our Friends!