

NESTON CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No 96

Autumn 2018



Public Transport in Neston

Chairman's Chatter

First, some updates since the summer newsletter...

In Brook Street, the Turkish Barber is in business, and every time I go past they look busy. Despite the number of hair and beauty shops in Neston, all seem to be thriving. It's good to see Brook Street almost full: we continue to await promised developments in The Lodestar.



The Cheshire Community Pride competition awards are being presented on November 1st. Janet Griffiths and I are planning to go, and will report back. On the Bushell Fountain at The Cross is the plaque awarded when we won in 2008. Janet has organised many weeding parties, and we hope the work of her volunteers will be recognised.

Some new matters...

We are very sorry that Stephen Quicke has had to resign from our committee. He has been a great help in many ways. You can read separately about the excellent talks he organised in July – the fifth in this splendid series. I'm pleased that Robina Hetherington, with help from husband David, will cast an architectural eye on what is happening in the Neston area as the new “Out & About” contributor.

Further afield, we are delighted that at last Burton Manor has planning permission for development as offices, with 16 houses being built to replace the 1960s buildings, as enabling development. The Manor has been empty and deteriorating for a long time. We understand that the volunteers will be able to continue to look after the gardens, and we look forward to the return of the café and shop.



In Little Neston, Welsh Water are improving the storm drains. Inevitably this causes disruption to cars and buses, but that's better than floods and over-loaded sewage works. In the Neston area United Utilities bring water to us, but Welsh Water (whose controlling parent



company is unique in the water and sewerage sector as a company limited by guarantee and as such has no shareholder) take away our waste and rainwater.

At the junction of Mill Street and Buggen Lane, the grass area used to be protected by bollards. For some time cars have been parked where the bollards used to be, creating an unsightly muddy area. Celia Garvey has been pressing Cheshire West, on our behalf, to re-instate the bollards and create an area where cars can be parked without damaging the grass.

Happy Healthy Neston is a new venture, led by Cheshire West and Chester Council. On September 29th Michelle Johnson and I staffed a stand at Neston Town Hall, part of a Freshers' Fair, an opportunity for people to find out about activities in the Neston area..

Another initiative is Re-imagining Neston, also led by CWaC. I hope this might lead to Neston becoming a more popular tourist destination. We now have excellent cafés and restaurants, and interesting shops, as well as the Friday market and the historic town centre. With our Town Trail and the Town Council's Countryside Trail, we have lots to offer visitors who might otherwise go from Parkgate to Ness Gardens without stopping.

And looking ahead...

With new rail and bus service providers in the town from October, we look to the future of local transport in this issue.

On October 29th the new facilities in Sytchcroft Park will be opened. The Society has paid for two seats with suitable plaques, using money from the Ruby Holloway bequest. The park is between Neston station and Liverpool Road, and we hope that the seats will be appreciated by people carrying shopping from the town centre. A lot of the funding for the park came from Sainsbury's £106 money, as well as the Town Council. Janet Griffiths and I represented the Society as non-voting members of the £106 advisory group, which met from 2011 until 2017.

In the spotlight Transport and Travel in Neston

The Town Council highlighted its concerns about local transport at its October meeting, calling for urgent improvements. In this edition John Allcock and Phil Lloyd explains why and what is needed.



On 5 October Avon Buses called it a day and ceased trading, leaving the town temporarily without a direct public service to Chester and Heswall. Fortunately the service was taken over by Stagecoach, but with no guarantees beyond the immediate future.

On 14 October Arriva Trains Wales were superseded by Transport for Wales as operator of the rail service through the town. At least here the news is slightly better, as John Allcock tells us below.

On Track for Better

John Allcock, Chair of the Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users' Association looks at changes to our rail service

On 14 October, the Wales and Borders franchise transferred to KeolisAmey under the auspices of Transport for Wales (TfW) from Arriva Trains Wales.

I am pleased to report that some of the changes proposed by the WBRUA have been included in the new franchise, including “class 230” 3-car battery/diesel hybrid trains, more powerful than the current trains, and a two trains per hour service from 2021.



Neston Station should see busier times soon

The 'new' class 230 trains (pictured on the cover) should start appearing on the line sometime during the middle of next year. The existing trains will be fully rebranded in a rolling basis. We have already seen Arriva taken off them. In the near future Transport for Wales will appear on them and in due course they will be fully rebranded in the new colours (but this may not happen before they are redeployed).

Unfortunately, when TfW announced details of the franchise in June, it identified that the increased service on the line would involve a limited stop service but did not identify the stations it would miss. The WBRUA believes that missing any station will isolate the community it serves, and, as there are no obvious stations to miss from the station usage figures, it has developed objective evidence to share which demonstrates class 230s can operate a robust all stations service.

But these improvements should be seen as just a start. The WBRUA is pushing for more.

The more frequent service should be starting earlier and running later than now. Electrification of the line with a through service between Liverpool and Wrexham is a long-term aim of Mereytravel – we'd like to see it as a more urgent need.

I am also pleased to report significant positive progress for stations on the Wrexham-Bidston line. The WBRUA's proposal for Deeside Parkway is now being actively developed by the Welsh Government, Flintshire County Council and NR. If sufficient finance can be secured over the next few years, Deeside Parkway could open as early as 2021!

The Welsh Government is progressing plans to transform Wrexham General Station into a transport interchange. Plans are also being developed for Shotton Station to improve it as an interchange. I have seen an early outline plan which could see the high-level platforms moved onto the bridge over North Wales Main Line and the low-level platforms extended under the bridge

Other promised improvements were outlined at a briefing attended by Phil Lloyd of WBRUA and Friends of Neston Station. Phil is also a former Town Councillor and continues to lead the Council's Transport Working Group.

Phil reports

- Free travel for under 5s extended to under 11s. Half-price fares extended to 16 – 18 year-olds. Under 16s go free off peak.*
- More than 700 new customer information screens across the network and in other locations including colleges, hospitals and workplaces.*
- More than 200 new ticket machines, and sell tickets through local convenience stores to improve access.*
- Support for an integrated network that will ensure there is appropriate signage at all stations to promote onward travel by public transport*

The WBRUA represents rail users, potential rail users and the rail transport interests of communities along the Wrexham-Bidston rail corridor

Among other things WBRUA is pushing for: A more frequent service, starting earlier and running later than now; electrification, and through trains to Liverpool.

Neston's Transport Charter

On 12 September as the Town Council's transport lead I was able to facilitate a discussion *By Phil Lloyd* and walkabout involving CWaC and Town Council councillors and officials that aimed to focus the town's concerns about its road, rail and bus connections, particularly those to Liverpool, Chester and the booming economy of Deeside.

Key issues were identified, some of which were debated by the Town Council on 9 October in the form of the proposed Neston Transport Charter.

The chief concerns are:

- The need for a half-hourly rail service that terminates in Liverpool
- The safety and efficiency of the A540, and its absence from Government's Major Roads Network.
- The lack of a direct bus service to Chester in the evenings and on Sundays;
- The higher fares paid by Neston residents compared to others in CWaC; off peak day return from Neston is £6.70 but only £4.50 from Hooton;
- The need for a review of traffic flow and parking in the town centre.

The Town Council considers that a comprehensive review, such as that provided for Northwich, is needed to address these issues effectively.

There did seem to be progress on one concern - that of vandalism at Neston station. CWaC officials were requested to expedite provision of a site for the CCTV camera funded by the Town Council as long ago as 21 February 2017.

On 9th October the Town Council unanimously endorsed the Transport Charter with the addition of an aspiration for cycling improvements in the town.

Out and About

Neston with *Robina Hetherington* and *David Oldham*

It is with some trepidation that we take over this feature from Steve Quick who brought all of his knowledge and contacts to the writing of this feature. However, there is such a considerable amount of development going on in our area that someone needs to report and Steve is currently very busy.

In Neston a number of relatively large projects are coming to an end. George Court, formerly known as the Kevin Engineering works site, is nearing completion with (according to a site operative) 8 out of the 10 homes already sold, all to first time buyers.



Boundary Lane, with 33 dwellings, is the biggest development seen in Neston for a while, is proving popular with many of the houses again already sold. Within the development there are 8 semi-detached 'affordable' houses, those that the purchase price will be

covenanted to be below the 'market rates'. Whilst these affordable homes are welcome, especially to those who have been able to purchase them, it is arguable as to whether this can meet the needs of many in our community who may never be able to buy a property.

In this context it is great to see a start being made on 8 one bed roomed flats in a two-storied block on a site off Romney Close which formerly contained 41 lock up garages. The planning

application states that they will be “affordable and owned and managed by the Council”. However the site hoarding implies that it is being developed by Sanctuary Housing. The garages have now been demolished and the site has been established.



The other sizable development that has recently been started is 10 detached dwellings on the Old Dairy site with the dairy now demolished, the site enclosed and some houses already up to DPC. Meanwhile Serpentine house is still under development with its height and depth making a considerable impact on the street scene.

In addition there continues to be a steady supply of infill developments, some of which barely get noticed and some that cause a great storm in their neighbourhood.



The bungalow at the bottom of Sandy Lane is now nearing completion and represents a much better use of the site for a single dwelling than the two that were denied permission after quite a battle by the local people. The adjacent site that faces onto Lees Lane is also looking good.

The two houses behind the White House on Parkgate Parade are nearing completion with permission recently gained for a third to be added to the site. Again this was hotly contested. Currently there is much discussion about a new proposal for a modern house on the land behind Townfield (listed) and sitting on a prominent corner within the Conservation Area.

It is regrettable that the Council Places Committee rarely looks at planning applications and did not choose to make any comments on this particularly sensitive site. However, the Civic Society Committee continues to look at all applications in the town and

have been encouraged by the planning authority to be much more explicit in reasons for objecting. On Parkgate Road two more demolitions have occurred with large houses being developed. One of these, just a few doors down from the Library, is up to eaves level but sadly is to have a flat roof (objected to by the committee).

In the Town Centre the shops in Brook Street are all let and looking busy and lively, with only one being a charity shop. Unfortunately the Lodestar still remains to be sorted. Dominos have decided not to proceed with the old HSBC property so sadly two of our three former banks still lie vacant. However, it is great to see how Elephant Collective imbued the former Natwest bank with life as a restaurant.

Another shop that is getting a new lease of life as a café is the lovely pillared shop down Parkgate Road. One is aware of lots of mutterings about the number of cafes and hairdressers/barbers that the town is acquiring, but bring it on if it makes the town centre look busy and inviting. It is great that people are prepared to invest in our town.



Regrettably some of the units are looking rather sad, in particular Ladbrooks. The committee have been in touch with the hope of getting it repaired. The committee is also pursuing unsightly signage (erected without permission) on the White horse building.



Finally along Raby Road the new High School, the Rec and the allweather pitch, which represent a considerable financial investment in our town, are developing the look of an American campus. It is great to see some of the money has been spent on



landscaping around the all weather pitch whilst the lovely old oaks lining the road in front of the school buildings set it off very well. Sadly it appears that the money could not be found for a permanent, properly designed changing rooms but that a refurbished portacabin

Council Matters



*News Round-up
Janet Griffiths*

Since our Summer issue we've lost four members, but gained four new co-options. Cllrs Cray, Fleetwood, Hine and Howe have been replaced by Lynn Bennoch (Neston ward), Simon Davies (Riverside), Sion Jones (Little Neston) and Steve Wastell (Little Neston). Pat Kynaston was re-elected Chairman (and so Mayor) and Dave Carter her deputy.

Work is in progress to try and improve the signs to Neston and Parkgate from the Wirrwl Way to encourage walkers and cyclists to come into the town and use the facilities and not just travel through without stopping.

Planning is now in progress for the Christmas Lights Event. The Council is working with local groups organising the entertainment and switch on of the lights. NTC is organising the Christmas Market which we hope will be as successful as last year.

Grand Designs and River Views 19 July 2018

This was the sixth in the series of Neston's Grand Designs, organised by architect Stephen Quicke, and once again the audience filled the URC Hall and heard fascinating accounts of three new buildings designed by Stephen.

Serpentine Court

Stephen himself gave the first talk, with local builders John and Christopher Ferguson on hand to help answer questions. Serpentine Court is the new build at the top of Parkgate Road, next to Vine House.

The Mostyn Map of 1732 (part of which is copied in the Neston Town Trail) shows no Vine House. It was the home of a doctor, who extended it to make room for a surgery. It had the famous crinkle-crinkle wall, which helped protect non-hardy fruit trees.

In the mid 20th century Professor Mansell Prothero and Peggy divided the garden. In 1988 they got planning permission for a detached house (designed by Stephen) in the further part of the garden, subject to moving the wall back to create a footpath. They put in the footings, and paid for an inspection by Ellesmere Port and Neston Council, but went no further.

After they died, the family sold the house and part of the garden separately. John Ferguson (who already owned the adjacent building) bought the garden plot. He realised that a block of apartments would provide accommodation for more people than one detached house, and that people would appreciate small apartments near the town centre. Stephen designed a three-storey building, with four apartments on each floor, the same height as Vine House, but broader. The apartments on the top floor were set within the roof, to reduce the bulk of the building. The design was modified to create two large apartments on the top floor instead of four.

Bricks from the wall were cleaned and re-used, with lime mortar. The old wall had been roughly built and was leaning out. The

garden had to be supported by a concrete wall before the new brick wall was built.

Challenges included the slope of the plot, and the narrow road. Foundations were good, as sandstone was found one metre below ground level.

It was not possible to source reclaimed bricks for the building, but Imperial bricks were used. Every sixth course is a traditional 'header course', actually made of half-bricks. In the light of the Grenfell fire in London concrete was used for floors and stairs providing good sound-and fire-proofing.

Two ground floor apartments have a small rear garden. The Conservation Officer wanted the building closer to the road, to match others, but this would have reduced the number of parking spaces.

Many questions came. On parking, there are two spaces for each top-floor apartment, and one for each other. Stephen pointed out that many flats in Neston town centre have no parking, and local authorities discourage parking in town centre dwellings, to encourage people to use public transport. One member commented that they would prefer the wall to be in new brick: it was suggested that the wall would mellow. Asked about objections, Stephen said that occupants in Beechways Drive were concerned about street parking, and the owners of Vine House were worried about privacy, but had planted trees in their garden.

The Curlews and The Sandpipers

Stephen explained that the White Cottage, on the north Parade in Parkgate, had been in the same family since the 1950s. It had a deep garden, around which houses had been built in Bevy Road and Moorings Close. The cottage and garden had been bought by White House Homes (North West) Ltd, run by well-known Neston estate agent Ian Mellor and local historian Anthony Annakin-Smith.

Anthony first introduced Tom McKeown of Apollo Builders North West. Tom had been looking forward to attending a Tom Jones concert, but this had been cancelled, so Anthony then described the development of the two houses, interspersed with titles of Tom Jones songs!

The 2015 planning permission for two houses in the garden, behind White Cottage, was revised In 2017 to increase the size of The Curlews (plot 1) by 21%, with an integral double garage and a master bedroom on the second floor, and The Sandpipers (plot 2) by 18%, with a separate garage. Both have a big kitchen-diner at the back (32 feet in 1, and 38 feet in 2) with smaller rooms at the front, and six bedrooms. From the upper floors there are beautiful views over the Dee.

The old entrance from the Parade was narrow, with poor visibility. The new entrance is wider and more central. The sandstone wall is being built with new sandstone, the process of mellowing being accelerated by yogurt and soot!

The plot is in the Parkgate Conservation Area, between older houses to the south and newer properties to the north. The buildings are finished with traditional slate tiles and white cement render, in keeping with much of the Parkgate front.

Several trees have Preservation Orders, including sycamore and beech. The building process had to protect the roots. A landscaping plan, involving seven new trees, hedges and lawns, was agreed with the local authority.

Anthony highlighted several features that cost extra. These included oak gallows as brackets at the front, sandstone coping on the chimneys, and extensive lead on the balconies. There is underfloor heating, ATAG boilers from The Netherlands, oak finish on internal doors, and oak stair rails. The kitchens will be fitted by Marilyn Philips of Heswall, to suit the buyers.

Anthony's nightmare was dealing with the utilities SP Energy, United Utilities, and BT Openreach, the last taking seven months to quote for moving a telephone pole a few yards and threading

cable through a duct - £4,800!

Finally we saw drone shots of the site, with some impressive pictures of the salt-marsh. Following the talks members (and 21 visitors) were offered complimentary tea, coffee and biscuits, and a visit to The Curlews.

NESTON CIVIC SOCIETY

ENVIRONMENT • PLANNING • ARCHITECTURE • CONSERVATION

We campaign to bring about improvements in and about Neston with particular emphasis on the Conservation area

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Our Programme of Thursday Talks

**United Reformed Church Community Hall,
Moorside Lane, CH64 6QF beginning at 7:30**

15th November AGM followed by Michael Murphy:
1947....what a winter that was!

17th January 2019

Glyn D Parry

'The Big Ditch...'

The story of the Manchester Ship Canal

21st March 2019

Ken Pye

The Story of Wirral