MOLEWOOD OUTLOOK - Special Edition September 2008

Molewood Residents' Association and Neighbourhood Watch

In this Special Edition we are concentrating on the three main current matters of concern, all of which are in some way connected, namely: -

Future of the MRA…..Possible Post Office closure…..The Rat Run

Editorial by Allan Streeton

Once again we were on the brink of extinction following the disastrous turn out at the AGM in May. However, we have been greatly inspired and encouraged by the massive support, shown in your response to a survey sent out asking everyone whether they wished the MRA to continue.

The encouraging fact is that now we know most of you are behind us in our endeavours to maintain the highest possible standards for this part of Molewood, and to resist with every means at our disposal anything which might infringe on this!

The letters of appreciation and ideas for the future came thick and fast and, whilst we cannot answer them all, we take this opportunity of thanking you for your continued support.

At our first committee meeting after the AGM we had a record turn out with lots of ideas on our three main hot topics. We also welcomed new committee member Heidi Scott from Woodhall Close. Heidi was on the committee some years ago.

Welcome to your revived MRA and MOLEWOOD OUTLOOK

Allan Streeton: Editor

FUTURE OF THE MOLEWOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

You have left no doubt in our minds that it is a clear majority wish for the Association to continue to represent you.

The encouraging response to the fundamental question as to whether or not we should continue in our present form were:

Yes……..170 (70%): No……36 (18%): Other opinions 23 (12%)

Naturally, we cannot expect to please all of the residents all of the time and so we welcome your criticisms and suggested improvements. On the question of the AGM turnout, there were some suggestions that an earlier time in the year might not clash with other seasonal events like holidays etc. Some were prevented from attending by age-related disabilities. We are sure that there would be neighbours only too willing to transport any elderly or slightly disabled members along to the school. In case of difficulty phone one of the committee members near the time of the next AGM.

One good suggestion was to have a 'social committee' to arrange occasional events. This entails a lot of organising and preparation but we need volunteers.

Some favoured going all electronic. We are certainly contemplating sending the newsletters out by email and/or having a website, but it is not a very practical procedure, although we are certainly willing to email this newsletter to those who would prefer it. So, for those who would like to see future Outlooks on their computer please let me have your email addresses by writing to allboye@btinternet.com. Or how about a Molewood website? Other residents' groups have them. Do we have any web designers with some spare time and energy out there?

Some members with young families say they find it difficult to get out during the evening but, as with the elderly members, we are sure something could be arranged which, after all, only amounts to about 2 hours a year.

We even had a potential new recruit for the committee, although we would still welcome a few more.

Many opinions came in response to our survey which were all read with interest and, while we cannot reply to everyone, we take this opportunity of thanking you all for your enthusiastic support and interest, giving us a clear mandate to continue to represent you as best we can.

BENGEO SUB POST OFFICE CLOSURE

Unlike the other two pressing issues this one is not controversial locally as almost everyone is against this being carried out.

Early in August Bengeo Working Men's Club was packed to capacity when about 300 local people attended a meeting chaired by County Councillor Sally Newton to protest strongly against this grossly unpopular proposition.

Sub Post Offices have been a focal point of community life in villages and suburbs where, unlike many town offices, there is usually a friendly atmosphere and service. The intended closure would hurt the most vulnerable who may not be able travel down to Hertford's main office when, most likely, they would have to stand and queue for a considerable time, possibly even out in the street. Pedestrians on the Molewood estate who may find difficulty in walking to the Co-op. can bus almost to the door. One suggestion was that Bengeo residents could always go to the local PO at Sele Farm….via the Rat Run, presumably.

Fortunately, we have our MP and local councillors campaigning against the closures. We, as a Residents' Association, are fully supportive of MP Mark Prisk's campaign to fight the closure of the sub Post Offices in his constituency.

If you have not yet acted already representations protesting against the proposed closures can still be made to: -
Laura Tarling, Network Development Manager, c/o National Consultation Team, Freepost, or email to consultation@postoffice.co.uk.

County Councillor Peter Ruffles writes:-

> *Have you said your piece to Laura Tarling yet? Because of the thousands across the nation who will be protesting to her, I can't imagine that every choice phrase you think of will be savoured and carefully reflected on by her or her staff --------so keep it simple and straightforward.*
>
> *Under the proposals Bengeo is set to lose a bright, modern, disability-friendly, accessible post office in the heart of a busy community. Did no one look at the contours on a map? Port Hill is an impossible barrier for many. Tell her how steep it is! Tell her how awkward bus stops are for Fore Street, and that travel to Sele Farm is absurd (4 buses)*
>
> *If you've been away and missed the deadline (26th August)……still write. Clear your conscience. Support your neighbours. There's a fair chance your letter will be weighed in still, and we need a heavy bag for Bengeo.*

THE BYDE STREET RAT RUN

As you may be aware councillors decided to recommend that residents of Byde Street and surrounding roads be supported in their request that an experimental barrier be put across Byde Street just below its junction with Fanshawe Street. Your committee is totally against this idea but wants to make positive alternative suggestions rather than simply disagree with it.

We are not going to expand on what has already produced pages and pages of arguments as this is a subject so controversial that ANY decision pleasing one section will ruffle many other feathers. If severe restrictions are imposed on traffic on the Run, many may find an extra ten or twenty minutes is added to their daily journeys to work causing, amongst other problems, more expense in this 'crunch' time as well as not helping with the carbon footprint. Traffic would make use of the Sacombe Road-North Road links by using Bulls Mill and Vicarage Lane/ Waterford Common, although the latter could not possibly cope with any volume of two-way traffic.

We do know that drivers offer a silent cheer is said whenever the Old Cross traffic lights fail. But spare a thought for the unlucky pedestrians having to dice with all you impatient drivers. One thing is certain; there are far too many cars for an old County town like Hertford to cope with.

Peter Ruffles comments:

> *The closure of Byde Street for six months was the majority decision of the Highways Committee locally. It doesn't yet have County Hall agreement. Sally Newton wants proof about the differences closure will make, so that later decisions are properly informed. I'm happy to guess. I think more harm than good will result.*
> *Members of the committee agreed with her that conditions are grim for Nelson Street and Byde Street residents, and respected the integrity of Sally's determination 'not to do nothing'. The last time an investigation reached this point, we did nothing beyond acknowledging that there is a problem!*

We would also like as many of you as possible to sign the petition that your subscriptions collector will be bringing round with this newsletter. Copies will also be available to sign in the shops on the Avenue.

The petition will be presented to the councillors on the Highways Joint Member Panel on Monday 13 October. Come along too if you want to help us get the message across. It meets at the East Herts District Council offices at Wallfields and starts at 5pm.