MOLEWOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

OUTLOOK

Spring 2026

Please see our website
www.molewood.org.uk
for up-to-date information



Photo courtesy of Aśka Pickering

Save Bengeo Field Campaign Update

High Court Decision
Save Bengeo Field Ltd (SBF) applied in April 2025 for a Judicial Review of East Herts District Council's decision to grant planning permission for 118 homes on Bengeo Field. Permission was refused in November 2025, but SBF requested a Reconsideration Hearing. On 22 January 2026, the High Court confirmed the Judicial Review will not go ahead.

The Court's reasoning was that the District Plan's main objective is to build homes. The developer argued that building 118 homes is essential to delivering the Plan's target of 18,458 houses. The Court also concluded that councillors acted rationally based on the information they received.

Save Bengeo Field Concerns
SBF believed the case had strong grounds. The District Plan clearly states that quarrying must take place on the northern part of Bengeo Field before housing can be built on the southern part. SBF argued this condition was misrepresented to councillors as a "phased approach," which the Council claimed was no longer necessary. Important information,



Simon Collyer, Andrew Stevenson and Aśka Pickering represented SBF at the Judicial Review Renewal Hearing in High Court in January 2026

such as Bromate Plume pollution and availability of other quarry sites in Hertfordshire, was not presented to councillors.

Quarrying first makes the land suitable for housing, maximises mineral extraction, and allows land reprofiling to reduce the visual impact of the quarry and homes. This case was not about stopping houses, but about ensuring East Herts District Council follows its own plan which was made for good, sound and logical reasons.

Next Steps
Save Bengeo Field Group will be contacting the Environment Agency and the Lead Local Flood Authority to share concerns about the development.
Both organisations originally recommended that permission be refused for this project.

We would like to thank all our supporters who have contributed to the campaign.

https://savebengeofield.org.uk,
askawp@yahoo.co.uk

Note from the MRA:
As an association we are hugely appreciative of the immense effort, time and passion that has been shown by the Save Bengeo Field group in challenging the decision by East Herts District Council to permit development on the field to the east of Sacombe Road.

Whilst the eventual decision is disappointing, for many it shows how passionate people are about our area and demonstrates how well residents can work together.

Thank you all.

Membership Payments

If you would like to support us, please consider becoming a member. It is a £3 annual fee and all the funds collected go towards the work of the MRA in supporting local projects. To pay, you can do one of the following:

- Scan the QR code and follow the on-screen instructions
- Transfer to our bank account - account no 18411010, sort code 60-10-39 with your house number and road as reference
- Pay cash direct to Alan Sewell, the Treasurer or to the person who delivers your Outlook using the slip on the last page

We are very grateful for your support.

The Avenue Good News – Still for Sale!

As many of you know, Ash has decided to move on and sell his newsagent business on The Avenue.

Ash is still looking for a buyer, so for now we're lucky enough to keep him - along with his smile, friendly chat, fresh bread, newspapers, and a tempting supply of sweet treats!



The Secret Garden Café – Now Closed

After 22 years, The Secret Garden located at The Avenue parade of shops closed its doors on 24 December 2025. From the early days as a greengrocer, blossoming into a florist, and finally becoming the cosy café many have come to know and love, this little shop has lived many lives.

The owner Joanne's departure was met with an overwhelming response from the community - with one well-wisher saying, ' You are so loved by many and are a caring angel. Thank you from so many people.'

In Joanne's own words:
'To my wonderful customers, friends, and community: thank you. Thank you for every coffee shared, every flower purchased, every story told, and every moment you chose to spend here. You made The Secret Garden what it is, not just a shop but a home.



As I retire and close the doors, my heart is full. Grateful, proud, and ready for whatever comes next.

With all my love,
Joanne and family x'

A new buyer has not yet been found, but it is hoped that the premises will once again become a place that brings life and connection to the community. Please give any posters for the notice board to your local MRA committee member.

Community Path Clearing and New Rail

We are delighted that following campaigning by Molewood Residents' Association, Hertfordshire County Council has fully funded and installed a much-needed handrail along the steps between The Avenue/Church Road and Molewood Road. It provides extra safety and reassurance, just in time for the cold, icy weather!

A group of local neighbours, supported by local councillors, came together once again in November to clear the footpath. Their efforts have helped make the path lighter, safer, and easier to use for the whole community. Huge thanks to everyone involved!







Bulb Planting

At the beginning of October, a small group of us, armed with bulb-planting tools and plenty of daffodil bulbs, set out to turn the green opposite the Avenue shops into a sea of yellow this spring.

Once again, we were thwarted by the extremely hard ground after last year's dry summer and autumn - hard to believe now, given the amount of rain we've had since!

Despite this, we managed to plant around 40 bulbs, with a few more added to the flower beds in Lys Hill Gardens.

Linda Pryor

Christmas Lights Competition – Winners

A big congratulations to our Christmas lights winners! These are:

John Debnam 35 The Avenue

Helen, Curtis and Edison Feurier 3 Buckwells

A donation will be made to a charity of their choice.





Love Bengeo Community Group

The Love Bengeo Community Group respond to planning applications when they're relevant to the planning policies in the Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan, and we oversee a number of community projects, including the Bengeo Community Garden, Bengeo Mosaic, Bengeo Trails, and Bengeo Front Gardens. Love Bengeo's primary role is to bring all the communities of Bengeo together.

The Love Bengeo steering committee includes representatives from resident associations, local councillors, volunteers, and community project leaders. We hope you enjoy our updates and initiatives.

If you would like to get involved, please contact us at **info@lovebengeo.org.uk** or join our Facebook group: 'Love Bengeo'.

Andrew Stevenson, Chair and Aśka Pickering, Deputy Chair
www.lovebengeo.org.uk

Bengeo Community Garden and Bengeo Front Gardens

Bengeo Community Garden is coming alive as spring gradually arrives! Bulbs planted last year are starting to appear, and the hellebores are showing off their stunning purple blooms. As the main flowering season begins, we can enjoy many of the new plants purchased thanks to last year's successful fundraising – a big thank you to everyone who contributed and a reminder that we continue to welcome plant donations.

Working with local plant experts and Mudlarks, we aim to ensure the garden continues to evolve as a peaceful haven for both people and wildlife, focusing on native and natural-looking plants.

We are now looking for volunteers to help with basic garden tasks such as weeding, dead-heading, and watering during once-a-month Saturday sessions. You don't need to be an expert gardener, and you don't need



to attend every month. If you're interested, please contact **garden@lovebengeo.org.uk**.

Back by popular demand, we will also be holding another Bingo fundraiser in March. More details are on the 'Bengeo Community Garden' Facebook group. Finally, don't forget to join the 'Bengeo Front Gardens' Facebook group and share your spring photos – we love seeing the community bloom!

Veronica Fraser

Bengeo Trails

Bengeo is full of hidden treasures: historic buildings (including a Norman church), a thousand-year-old Common, beautiful rivers (including a rare chalk stream), its own theatre and arts centre, two community gardens, and stunning surrounding countryside with beautiful views.

Many of us enjoy walking, jogging, and cycling around Bengeo, and the Bengeo Trails project aims to share walking routes that showcase all the fascinating aspects of the area.

To get started, the Bengeo Trails group has created four walking trails featuring special views, green spaces, community facilities, and listed buildings given additional protection through the Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan.

- **Trails 1–3:** Can be walked individually or combined as a circular route
- **Trail 4:** A standalone route around Hartham Common, Cowbridge, and Port Hill

Available Trails:

1. View across Beane Marshes
2. St. Leonard's Garden, Hartham, and Ware Park Manor Views
3. Bengeo Field Views
4. Around Hartham Common, Cowbridge and Port Hill

All trails are available on **https://lovebengeo.org.uk/bengeo-trails/** and the 'Bengeo Trails' Facebook group.

Brenda Heninghem

Meet your Neighbour – Singing in The Avenue!

'Just Love to Sing' is a group for anyone who enjoys singing a wide range of songs - from Fleetwood Mac and Queen to George Ezra, Bucks Fizz, and Cyndi Lauper! The list is endless.

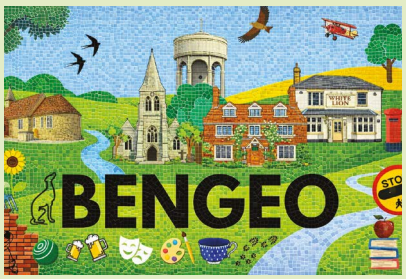
Vocalist and Musician Jenny Salmon says: 'We meet once a week, either on Monday or Tuesday, and we're much more than just a choir - we're like a little family and a close-knit community. We look after each other and always enjoy a good chat over coffee.

New members are always welcome, and when you join, you won't just be joining a choir... you'll be joining our little family!'

For more information please contact Jenny at **jennysalmon123@yahoo.com.**



Bengeo Mosaic



We are thrilled to celebrate the success of the four community workshops, full of creativity, collaboration, and brilliant community spirit. All the pieces for Bengeo Mosaic are now in Costello Mosaic studio and will be assembled and completed by the end of March. We would like to thank everybody who contributed and made this project possible. We can't wait to share what's been created at a special big reveal in March. Please check our website or 'Bengeo Mosaic' Facebook group for further updates.

Catie Geering & Aśka Pickering

Response to Planning Proposals



The Love Bengeo Community Group continue to, where appropriate, review and reply to planning applications within the boundary of the Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan.

In the last few months, we have:

- Supported the proposed conversion of a Grade II listed Port Hill building (most recently 'The Oak Veterinary Practice') into a home.
- Objected to a Farquhar Street application for a 5-bedroom home, due to concerns about the potential for damage to trees adjacent to a steep bank above Archers Close.
- Made modest recommendations on a proposed replacement house in Church Road. This application was refused by East Herts District Council. The applicants have appealed.
- Objected to a proposed new-build on land adjacent to the River Beane and Footpath 93, near Woodville Place. We expressed concerns about potential damage to natural habitats.
- Supported the Hertford Castle Gardens proposals

For further information visit **https://lovebengeo.org.uk**

Brenda Heninghem

Report from our local councillor, Ben Crystall



Thank You, Molewood Residents' Association

Hello! I want to start by thanking the Molewood Residents' Association for championing the new railings alongside the steps to Molewood Road! They make the route much safer for everyone. It was also wonderful to see so many residents helping to clear the steps last autumn – well done to all who joined in!

Get Involved: Monthly Litter Picks

Councillor Alex Daar is organising monthly litter picks around Bengeo, finishing with a friendly coffee on the last Saturday of each month. Everyone is welcome so please do come along and help keep our area looking clean!

Waste Collection: Big Improvements

Thanks to your efforts, the new waste collection system is having a real impact:

- Household rubbish has almost halved
- Recycling rates are up
- Food waste sent to the anaerobic digester now generates enough electricity to power around 600 homes every month

Not sure which bin to put out? Download the East Herts Council app for guidance.

20 mph Zones: Safer Streets Ahead

Herts County Council is rolling out more 20 mph limits, with Hertford identified as a priority area. I fully support this and am pushing for reduced limits on Bengeo Street and Port Hill. First meetings were held in February - with residents' support, we can make our main roads safer.

Pavement Parking: What's Next?

Pavement parking is still a hot topic. The top end of Bengeo Street has already improved thanks to the new parking scheme. Meanwhile, the Government is considering banning pavement parking by default. How enforcement will work and where exemptions might apply remains to be seen.

HCC Locality Grants: Supporting Our Community

Over the past year, I've been proud to provide funding to a variety of local groups and projects, including:

- 2nd Bengeo Scouts
- Love Bengeo community group (supporting Bengeo Mosaic workshops)
- Hertford Men's Shed
- Hertford Pantry
- Hertfordshire Festival of Music
- Arts workshops in our libraries

...and more! It's fantastic to see these grants helping our community thrive.

If you have any questions or want to discuss issues, please call me on 0300 123 7551 or email me at **ben.crystall@hertfordshire.gov.uk**

Best wishes,
Ben Crystall

Report from our local councillor, Susan Barber



A Positive Year in Our Community

I'm pleased to report that it has been a positive year working with our local community.

Over the past year, I've been involved in ongoing footpath clearance and litter-picking initiatives alongside local residents.

I was also delighted to be invited by the 2nd Bengeo Scouts, based on Watermill Lane, to join their annual litter pick around Bengeo. They do fantastic work and are currently looking for new Scout leaders and volunteers to help continue this great local tradition.

Local Issues and Changes

It was sad to see the Secret Garden Café close after being such a valued part of the community for many years. I hope it will be replaced by another community-focused business in the near future.

The trees around the Water Tower have caused ongoing issues due to a lack of maintenance. I have been working with affected residents and fellow councillors to address this. While it is a long process, the situation is being actively monitored.

Working Together for Bengeo

Having represented different wards over the years, I've worked with councillors from across all political parties. I believe it's important that residents know we work together constructively to achieve the best outcomes for Hertford and to support as many local projects as possible.

Finally, I'd like to recognise the Molewood Residents' Association, who work tirelessly to make Bengeo a wonderful place to live. If you need support with a local project, please don't hesitate to contact your local councillor. And if you have some time to spare, consider joining in with one of the events advertised in this newsletter.

Kind Regards,

Susan
Councillor Susan Barber JP

Chair's message from Emily White



Welcome to our Spring edition of the Outlook. Since my last article we have witnessed some changes and had some updates.

Farewell to Jo James

Firstly, a huge thank you to Jo James for her years of service to our community. The Secret Garden has closed its doors and we wait to see who will take over this lovely establishment. I know many of us enjoyed the opportunity to relax with a cuppa and cake or sandwich.

The bereavement cafe offered a safe space for those that needed it, and local artists and other small businesses were given opportunities to share their work. I wish Jo all the very best for her future plans.

Love Bengeo Updates

Save Bengeo Field Ltd continues to campaign whilst Love Bengeo Community Group instigates projects to support the local area. For many the news that Judicial Review was refused will have been disappointing and may bring to an end the chance to challenge development. Ultimately it was the landowner's decision to promote and sell their land for development and we will, of course, welcome new residents to Molewood just as we did with Buckwells and The Stiles..

Community Projects and Christmas Lights

There are plenty of Love Bengeo projects for residents to get involved with. The Bengeo Mosaic is progressing well, and the Bengeo Community Garden has improvement plans.

We encourage residents to reach out to these groups directly if you'd like to help. If you have ideas for other projects we can support, please let us know.

The handrail on the steps from The Avenue to Molewood Road is a project we proudly supported to make this well-used route safer. We worked with our local councillors and Hertfordshire County Council to make this happen and appreciate all of their support and commitment to these works.

This edition also celebrates our Christmas light winners and their chosen charities. I love seeing Bengeo lit up at night and have many fond memories of taking my boys on 'light tours'.

AGM and Editor Announcement

Our AGM will take place in May. We aim to keep it informal and encourage local councillors to attend, so they can respond directly to residents' questions. Keep an eye out for more details.

Our brilliant editor Jess is stepping down. She has done an incredible job producing the Outlook and delivering a quality free magazine. Thank you, Jess!

We are now looking for a new editor. You do not need to join the committee formally - we can support with articles and content. Perhaps there's a media student in your household who would benefit from the experience?

Please get in touch if you can help.

I wish you all a happy, healthy and successful 2026,

Emily, Chair

Cheese of the Month – by A Little Bit of Cheese!

Many residents will fondly remember Janette's weekly residency at the Secret Garden Café. She continues to share her favourite cheeses, tasting tips, and pairing ideas to help you enjoy the very best of Bengeo's local and artisanal produce.



Ogleshield Raclette – A semi-hard washed rind cheese from Somerset, tasting fabulous on its own right now. Try it with tomatoes, in a fried/toasted cheese sandwich, or combined with Cave Aged Cheddar, Sparkenhoe Vintage Red Leicester, onions, chutney, or a few dollops of Cayenne Hot Sauce from local Tewin Greens. Its gently pungent orange rind is washed in brine every three days, giving a bouncy texture and subtle umami flavour.
Pairs well with: crisp Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Semillon, Pinot Gris, fruity reds, dry cider, or pale ale.



Corra Linn – A hand-made raw milk sheep's cheese from Lanarkshire, Scotland, with deep earthy nuttiness and a firm, slightly grainy texture. Produced by Selina Cairns using milk from Lacaune sheep, it's named after a local waterfall in the Falls of Clyde. Each wheel is pressed, rubbed with rapeseed oil, wrapped in muslin, and aged 4 months–2 years.
Pairs well with: honey, quince paste, olives, unoaked Chardonnay, or fruity IPAs.

You can find Janette in her shop at The Vergers House, 43a St Andrew Street, Hertford, or you can get in touch via the below:

Website: https://www.alittlebitofcheese.co.uk/

07533 970483

cheesy.business1@gmail.com

Travel Tip of the Month with Sue Wilson at Travel Luxe Unlocked



Our local travel expert Sue shares her practical tips to help you plan this summer's holiday.

Planning Your Summer Escape
Summer holidays are just around the corner, and if the idea of planning feels overwhelming, don't worry-you're not alone. Here are a few tips to help get your holiday planning off to a smooth start.

Start with the Experience
Think about the kind of holiday you want: a chance to relax, fun activities for the kids, opportunities to explore, or a little bit of everything. Maybe you're dreaming of an adventure-filled escape. Clarifying this first makes the rest of your decisions much easier.

Focus on What Matters Most
Next, consider your priorities. Do you prefer a large resort or a smaller boutique hotel? Is beach access a must, or would a fantastic pool do? Would you like to be able to step outside and explore the local area? Think about your preferred dining options too-self-catering, half-board, or all-inclusive. These details will help narrow down destinations that fit your style perfectly.

Insider Tips Make Planning Easier
Working with a knowledgeable travel professional can take the stress out of holiday planning. Travel agents often have first-hand experience at the destinations you're considering and can provide insider tips you won't find online. They also have access to deals and options that can save time, money, and frustration.

Happy planning, and feel free to get in touch if you'd like a little extra guidance!

@SUEWILSONTHETRAVELMUM

LOCAL EVENTS

Hertfordshire Health Walks
Our Hertfordshire Health Walks in Bengeo offer a friendly way to stay active, enjoy the local area and meet others. Whether you prefer a gentle stroll, a longer walk, or an evening walk in the summer months, there's something for everyone. Some walks also offer the chance to enjoy a tea or coffee together afterwards at the Bengeo Club. Thank you to the Bengeo Club for providing a place to meet after our walks.

Do you work from home? Can you adjust your hours so you can join us on one of our Bengeo walks? It would be great to welcome you to our lovely walks

Find out more on **www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/healthwalks,** call 01992 555 888 or email **Healthwalks.cms@hertfordshire.gov.uk**

The timetable can be accessed here via the Hertfordshire Health Walks website: **https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/doc/env/hhw/2026-01/east-herts-health-walks-timetable-january-to-april-2026.pdf**

We'd love to see you there!

Walk	Day & Time	Meet	Notes
Longer Walk	Tuesdays, 10.00am	Avenue shops	Option to visit the Bengeo Club afterwards
First Steps Walk	Tuesdays, 10.15am	Avenue shops	Gentle pace, finishes at the Bengeo Club
New Monthly Longer Walk (5–6 miles)	First Thursday of the month, 10.00am	Avenue shops	New walk! Complements the longer walks from The Feathers, Wadesmill (3rd Thursday). First walk: Thursday 7 May
Evening Summer Walks	Wednesdays (from May), 7.00pm	Avenue shops	Popular summer walks

LOCAL EVENTS CONTINUED...

Bengeo Coffee Pot: Pop-up café in Duncombe Road Church Hall to raise funds for local charities. Thursdays, 10.30am-12pm.

Bengeo Parish Church Hall, Duncombe Road:

Mondays:
Keep Fit, Church lunches monthly, Brownies

Tuesday:
Hertford Adult Learning Group, U3A Tai Chi, U3a Simply Fit, Tap Dancing

Wednesday:
Craft Club monthly, U3A Ukulele Band, WI monthly, Move it, Keep Fit

Thursday:
Bengeo Coffee Pot, Chair Yoga, U3A Pilates, Children's Chess Club, Evening Pilates

Friday:
Keep Fit

Saturday:
Dance school, Children's parties / Family Celebrations

Sunday:
Children's parties / Family Celebrations

If you would like to book the hall, please ring Wendy on 01992 589538

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Good News: 6.30am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday, 7.30am – 4.30pm Saturday and 8.00am – 12.00pm Sunday

The Secret Garden Café: Permanently Closed.

Headlines: is open from 8am on Tuesdays – Fridays. Check their website for more details **https://headlineshertford.co.uk/**.

Walton Lodge Vets: is open 9am- 5pm Mondays to Fridays

The Avenue Pharmacy: is open 9am - 6pm every weekday and 9am - 1pm on Saturday

Your Association

The Molewood Residents' Association was formed in the late 1960s to represent residents of the then new Molewood estate, Bengeo. This has now expanded to cover residents in the area north from The Drive (including all of The Avenue), west of Bengeo Street and Sacombe Road as far north as Woodland Grove. We also now cover the new developments of Buckwells and The Stiles. The aim of the association is to support Molewood residents and contribute to community events and projects.

The association issues two Outlook newsletters annually which are delivered and saved down onto our website and the annual membership of Molewood Residents' Association costs £3 per household a year.

The Committee always welcomes new members! If you interested in getting involved, please get in touch by emailing us at **enquiries@molewood.org.uk**.

Committee details

Chair: Emily White ..... 27 The Drive
Treasurer: Alan Sewell ..... 16 The Avenue
Secretary: Kath Richardson ..... 138 Cowper Crescent
Editor: Jess Chan ..... 124 Cowper Crescent

General Members

Nick Gough ..... 11 Lys Hill Gardens
Marie Archer ..... 55 The Wick
John Edwards ..... 8 The Wick
Rachel Ogier ..... 23 Trinity Grove
Aska Pickering ..... 168 Sacombe Rd
Mark Harley ..... 76 Buckwells Field
Chris Simmons ..... 6 The Wick
Linda Pryor ..... Lys Hill Gardens
Catie Geering ..... 46 Buckwells Field

Website Manager

Paul Ogier

Outlook Design

Jim Martin

MRA Committee meeting

The next committee meeting is on Thursday 7 May at 138 Cowper Crescent.

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Mobile Stationery & printing center limited
Unit 10 Hartham View Industrial Estate
Hartham Lane, Hertfordshire, SG14 1QN

If you want to support MRA complete the slip below and put it through the letter box of our treasurer, Alan Sewell, 16 The Avenue or pay online as detailed in the membership section on page 2.

Please tick appropriate boxes below

☐ I/we want to support the Molewood Residents' Association for 2026.

☐ I/we have paid our subscription by electronic banking (details highlighted above) or

☐ I enclose my £3 per household payment for this year's subscription.

My/our name is.....

and I/we live at.....

I/ we would be happy to be contacted by email about local issues by the residents' association so here is my email address:.....