

Eaton Village Residents' Association – Chairman's Report to AGM 15th October 2015

My first year as Chairman has been very busy with several local consultations to deal with as well as organising the Spring and Summer Garden Competitions and setting up the Donkey Lane Project.

The year started with the news that the sub-postmaster at Eaton Post Office wished to retire and that the post office would close unless someone else was prepared to take this on. Our local councillors and our former MP, Simon Wright, actively engaged with local businesses and the Post Office HQ to seek a new owner. There has been a lot of activity during the year that has now reached a successful conclusion. We are pleased to report that the Cellar House run by Victoria Macdonald will be granted the licence to run the Post Office, in the pub, from January 2016. This will provide seven day opening with longer business hours. Great! We will be able to do our posting and maybe take a crafty drink at the same time!! We certainly wish Victoria well in her new project.

We were invited to view the proposals for New Students Residences on the Blackdale Plantation and Bluebell Road. The scheme aims to have sustainable buildings with low energy usage and low water consumption. It is intended to build student accommodation for up to 850 beds paces in two phases with the first being completed by the end of 2016. The proposed buildings will be 3-storeys fronting Bluebell Rd rising gradually to 8 storeys adjacent to the campus buildings. By accommodating more students on campus this will minimise the numbers of journeys to and from the University.

In early March Chris Stebbing and I met with representatives of McCarthy and Stone to view and discuss the plans for assisted living and retirement living on part of the Bartram Mowers site on Bluebell Rd. An exhibition of the plans was held in Eaton in late September prior to the submission of a planning application. Our two main concerns are impact on the environment of the Yare Valley and the impact of construction traffic during and after development. We will monitor progress on the development.

We re-introduced the Spring and Summer Garden Competitions this year. The Spring competition was very successful with twenty two entries. The winner was Pat Raby, 2nd was Lydia and Karl Taylor, and 3rd Mike Phillips. We were very pleased to hold the presentation evening at the Cellar House which proved to be a very enjoyable evening. The summer garden competition was held in conjunction with the Scarecrow competition. This time we had thirteen entries. It was won by Mike and Joan Major, 2nd was Michael Woodhouse and 3rd was Beryl and Keith Jackson. Our grateful thanks go to the judges, Neil Rout and Val Farthing, who judged both events. Our winners from this year will be invited to join the judging panel for next year.

Late August Chris Stebbing and I met with representatives of Norwich City Council and South Norfolk District Council for a pre-consultation briefing on the Eaton and Cringleford New Transport Project. This joint initiative aims to encourage an increase in the amount of cycling and walking in the area through infrastructure improvements under the Push the Pedalways project. We pointed out several danger points and highlighted things that would need to be addressed to achieve success. The full consultation should commence later in October 2015. You can read our list of concerns on the EVRA website and also see the plans of the Council at: <http://www.norwich.gov.uk/pedalways>

In April we initiated a project to improve the look of Donkey Lane. The City Council will only undertake minimal cutting back of foliage and grass cutting and we asked if EVRA could take on some of this. We met with the City Council and local residents and found that there was sufficient support to make this viable. The Project has moved ahead slowly but EVRA now has permission from City Hall to manage areas of the lane. The Council will continue to cut the grass and manage the trees. We will now set up a group of volunteers to come and support our community work days there. Please contact me, Rosemary Benton, if you would like to be involved.

I would like to thank Chris Stebbing for his very hard work during the year organising the Scarecrow Competition, co-ordinating our work on Marston Marsh and managing the website. Without his help this year I would have been LOST. Also thanks to all the committee members for their support throughout the year.

Julie Sayer, who has been our local PCSO for many years, has moved onto other duties working with school safeguarding teams. Julie was a regular attendee at our Committee Meetings and has been a great help to EVRA during her time here. We thank her for all her support, she will be missed. Reductions in PCSO staffing mean that we will not get the same level of coverage as we have enjoyed previously but we hope that we remain a very safe area.

We do need more members for the committee to help support our projects. Please do offer to join us if you feel you would like to help.

Rosemary Benton
EVRA Chairman
October 2015

Vice-Chairman Report to 2015 AGM

2015 Scarecrow Festival and Competition: Once again the Scarecrow week-end in July was a big success with some twenty three scarecrows around the village. The theme was "Around the World" and we had some very inventive and interesting interpretations of this. Notcutts sponsored the main prizes and EVRA sponsored the prizes for the public vote. Eaton Primary School PTA held a garage sale on the Saturday which encouraged many residents and visitors to tour the village and see the entries. We also included the locations of the gardens entering the Summer Garden Competition on the Scarecrow Trail Map. The EDP gave us good coverage of the event.

Marston Marshes Volunteer Group: We have held three community work days on Marston Marsh this year in conjunction with the Norwich Fringe Project.

- In February we helped plant new trees along a cleared path in Danby Wood. This was a joint activity with the Eaton Rise Residents' Association.
- In July we held a haymaking day on Marston Marsh. This was intended to be a joint family activity with the Yare Valley Society but heavy rain the previous night and during the Saturday put off most people from attending. However, several hardy local residents turned up and raked the mown sedge into habitat piles and cleared most of the area. The sun eventually came out but too late for our event!
- At the beginning of October we met to coppice willow and clear scrub on a section of Marston Marsh. This was included as an event under the City Council's Get Involved Week to encourage more people to get involved with their community through volunteering. We had several new volunteers join us on a very hot and sunny day.

We will continue to organise events during 2016 with our partners from the Norwich Fringe Project. We are grateful for the support that we get from Matt Davies, who leads our sessions and shows us how to look after the marsh.

Dyke Dipping: In May half-term we organised a day of dyke dipping on Marston Marsh. We filled all four sessions and had around 48 children dipping for water mini beasts with some interesting finds. The sessions are always popular and we hope that the Norwich Fringe Project will be able support us again next year. We are fortunate to have local nature sites such as Marston Marsh, Danby Woods and Eaton Common within easy reach.

Website and Facebook: We continue to use Facebook for alerting residents to website updates and for posting news of immediate and short term interest. Some of our postings have achieved high numbers of views – over 1500 in one case. Our website is the source for local and long term information about Eaton Village and we will continue to develop this.

Newsletters: We continue to distribute our Newsletter to all households and businesses twice a year. This covers the main events and activities in which we are involved and enables residents who do not have access to the internet to keep in touch with EVRA. We thank our band of regular distributors who deliver these to the 1500 households in Eaton Village.

Eaton Green Playground Project:

The analysis of responses to our playground survey highlighted what sorts of improvements were favoured.

In May we invited the children at Eaton Primary School to design their ideal playground based on the ideas and suggestions in the responses to the survey and the whole school got involved in this. Carol Plunkett and Chris Stebbing attended a morning assembly to present prizes to the winners of the best design from each class.

These designs were compiled into a “wish list” and have been used to seek detailed designs and quotations from playground equipment providers. Suppliers have since visited the site and their quotations cover a range of options.

We know that the costs are going to be at least £20,000, and probably far more, depending on the level of equipment purchased. However, not everything has to be done at once and we could make initial changes and then add to these in coming years. We will work with the City Council to get their approval and support for our plans.

We are looking at potential sources of funding from bodies offering support to community groups and at grants available from other sources. We have also started raising funds within the community and have received several donations in response to our Newsletter appeal.

We have set up a sub-committee for the Playground Project but progress is slower than desired – three of the members work full time and have family commitments. To help us move on we would welcome active support from residents to assist the sub-committee in taking things forward.