



Partner Highlights - 2015

Here are some of the achievements, successes and news from Chesham Town Council's Town Partners. We are very grateful to all those partners who were able to provide us with these updates.



Chesham Action Partnership (ChAP) successfully ran Christmas in Chesham, the town's Christmas lights switch-on evening in 2014 and 2015. The event is now more financially sustainable and continues to provide a good fundraising opportunity for local causes, as well as showcasing local businesses and culture. Despite the awful weather, 2015 saw over 50 stalls, mainly charities and local businesses, in the town centre raising awareness & funds. ChAP has provided kickstarter funding for a wide range of local projects, including the local consultation on the Emerging Local Plan organised by the Chesham Society and the Town Council, the Lowndesbourne Town Picnic, the Fairtrade Flowerbed and the regeneration of Botley Playing Fields.



Chesham Allotments Group continued their impressive social calendar, including regular Saturday coffee mornings at Cameron Road, a Cheese & Wine Evening and fish & chip supper Quiz Night. One coffee morning was used as a fundraiser for Chesham in Bloom and raised over £70. The annual Open Day was a big success with many people attending who had never visited the allotments before and the 'veg for donations' and cake stalls were both very popular. The allotments once again made an impressive contribution to the Chesham in Bloom campaign, including their wildflower beds and a colourful tiered garden.



A busy year for the **Chesham & District Transport Users' Group** has included representations to Chiltern Railways to restore the 4 minute connection with Chesham Branch trains at Chalfont & Latimer; lobbying Transport for London which achieved agreement to upgrade ticket machines at Chesham Station to sell a wider range of tickets, discussing planning aspects of the proposed alterations to Chesham Station and meeting with their Property Department regarding the change of use of the former Coal Yard site. The group is also leading on campaigning for the provision of step-free access at Amersham Station. Representations to a Select Committee at Bucks County Council have resulted in a plan to initiate a "deep dive review of public transport in Bucks".



Chesham Environmental Group continues its monthly working parties on the first Wednesday and the third Sunday of each month. The 2015 programme included a clean up along the Moor Road part of the River Chess, where residents and the Town Mayor joined the group. Work is done in all parts of Chesham, mainly litter picking and general clearance and tidying. A number of members are qualified Riverfly Monitors, carrying out monthly healthchecks on our delightful river. Although regrettably the upper part of the River has dried up again for the fourth time this century. Sadly, a number of fish were lost. More would have died if wasn't for those rescued and transferred downstream by the River Chess Association, Environmental Group volunteers and members of the public.



Chesham in Bloom achieved the prestigious Gold Award in the Thames & Chilterns Regional Round of Britain in Bloom for the second consecutive year and was also awarded the Best Large Town for the fourth year running. During 2015 a whole raft of new projects were instigated across town, including the creation of new flower beds at Chesham Moor, Bellingdon Road and Lowndes Park, along with fundraising activities to place the campaign on a sustainable footing.



The highlight of the year for **Chesham Over Fifties Positive Action Group** was a trip to the Houses of Parliament, following an invitation by The Rt. Hon. Cheryl Gillan MP. Eighteen members got the coach and, after being frisked by the Police and going through the x-ray machines, they proceeded onto Westminster Hall. The members enjoyed an amazing tour and everyone came away with happy memories and still managed to get home in time for tea! COPAG has also very successfully started up a Pub Lunch Club in the Red Lion. This venture is not just for COPAG members but for members of the public who would like to socialise and not feel so isolated. For the first time ever COPAG will be giving their members a Christmas lunch this year.



There was international activity a-plenty for members of **Chesham Town Twinning Association** this year, the highlight being when they hosted the annual International Weekend which brought 16 French and 13 German visitors from the twin towns of Houilles (France) and Friedrichsdorf (Germany) here in May. In addition their members visited twin town Archena (Spain) in February and Friedrichsdorf for the annual Cultural Weekend in September. The International Weekend was a big success, with a visit to Waddesdon Manor, a civic reception at the Town Hall and a hugely successful dinner and dance at Chartridge Park Golf Club. At the civic reception, newly-elected Town Mayor Peter Hudson said he felt that town twinning projects were needed now more than ever. "I believe that town twinning has the ability to broaden people's perspectives, culturally, linguistically and socially" and he thought the town twinning association needed more and especially younger members to carry forward the traditions. Among activities in Spain in February members were taken to a museum of musical instruments and in Germany in September visited a castle where the current German flag was said to have been first flown.



Chesham4Fairtrade had a busy year, attending and holding numerous events to raise awareness of Chesham's 10 years as a Fairtrade Town. This culminated in Chesham's Fairtrade Town status being renewed until 2017. The group held a well-attended birthday party in Market Square with local musicians and Fairtrade birthday cake. Innovative ways of raising awareness this year included a Fairtrade-themed flowerbed and carrying a model of 18th Century Chesham anti-slavery campaigner, Lydia Hardy, through the town centre.



The Captain's Wood & Chesham Bois Common Conservation Group of the **Chiltern Society** has continued to focus on Captain's Wood in the past year removing dense holly and other invasive species, thus increasing light levels to the wood floor and improving the habitat for a diversity of plants, animals, invertebrates and birds for whom they are currently installing nesting boxes. They have also been working on other local sites including Hockeridge & Pancake Woods in conjunction with the Royal Forestry Society. As well as returning to Latimer churchyard and the burial ground at Tylers Hill and dealing with some of the overgrown footpaths and bridleways around the town. They have occasionally been joined by a number of corporate sponsored work groups from local companies which is greatly appreciated. Over 1500 volunteer hours have been worked, and new volunteers are always welcome. Contact the Chiltern Society's office or Euan on euarrussell@tesco.net



Chiltern Citizens Advice has had a busy year, in particular seeing increased numbers of clients with benefits issues because of welfare reforms. They are currently preparing for the introduction of Universal Credit in the county this autumn. They have introduced Saturday morning opening at the Chesham office, so they can provide advice to those who work 9-5 through the week. They have continued their popular outreach sessions at Children's Centres and GP surgeries.



Through its involvement in the Chilterns, Herts & Middlesex Riverfly Hub, the **Chilterns Chalk Streams Project** (CCSP) has trained new Riverfly Monitors this year to increase the number of sites on the River Chess that are surveyed monthly to detect pollution. The CCSP has been working with the River Chess Association and BBOWT to carry out a water vole population survey along the length of the Chess this summer. Preliminary results are very poor, so further work is now needed to understand why our local population of Britain's most endangered mammal is once again in decline.

Friends of Chesham Cemetery

The **Friends of Chesham Cemetery** worked with the Town Council on a successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid to renovate the Hearse House into an exhibition centre. The first exhibition was held on Remembrance Sunday on the topic of Chesham and the World Wars and was a great opportunity to find out how to best make use of the new space. An official opening will take place in Spring 2016. The Friends have also been liaising with Thames Valley Police over incidents of anti-social behaviour. The Friends are planning guided walks in conjunction with Chesham Museum.



Month in month out regardless of the weather, a committed band of volunteers from **The Friends of Lowndes Park** carry out an array of gardening tasks to benefit the park. However this year, they also decided to branch out and combine their third Lowndesbourne event with a Town Picnic. Without the generosity of funders and the support of the Town Council the event would not have got off the ground. Volunteers came forth to carry out a myriad of tasks associated with putting on such an event. With the help of fantastic weather and the beautiful music, around 800 people came along to enjoy a picnic in the park with family and friends and some great music. It was a lot of work and took a lot of organising but the volunteers who made the whole thing work wish to hold another Town Picnic in the future.

Ken Denham Trust

The **Ken Denham Trust** assists young people (aged under 21 years) who live within the Chesham town boundaries or the parish of Chartridge with funding for projects that support their education or development. Over the past 20 years we have given grants for saddlery tools; towards purchasing a musical instrument; for attending sports courses; to go abroad as part of a 'gap year' and many others. Unfortunately the reduction in interest rates in recent years has greatly reduced the trust's income and as a result the grants are small, usually a maximum of £150. So the money provided can often only be a part of the total required. But the trustees hope that an award from them will encourage the young person to further fundraising. Application forms can be obtained from aketteringham1@btinternet.com.

Rachel Johnson Trust



Rachel Johnson Trust is one of four Chesham Education Charities. Rachel Johnson owned property in Chesham and, following her death in 1875, left money to help the finances of Chesham schools. These objectives became impractical over time, but the will also authorised the use of the income of the fund for the "advancement of life" of pupils who attended Chesham schools for at least two years. The funds are used for purposes such as paying for books for academic study or equipment for professional trainees.

Transition Town Chesham (TTC) has started Green Drinks evenings in town. This is a social networking evening giving environmentally-minded people the opportunity to share ideas and support each other in seeking a greener lifestyle. TTC has worked with the Town Council to make an application to become the national pilot town in Sainsbury's £1 million Waste Less, Save More pilot to find innovative ways to reduce food waste in the community. TTC continues to work in partnership with the Town Council to run the award-winning, monthly Chesham Local Produce Market which provides a regular opportunity for residents to discover local food, drink, plants and crafts.



Chesham Walkers Are Welcome (WaW) launched four new, free walking leaflets covering 'station to station' walking routes encouraging walkers to visit Chesham. The leaflets are available to download from the Town Council web site and hard copies can be picked up at the Town Hall, Chesham Library and Chesham Museum. WaW promoted Chesham as a walking destination to all members of the Ramblers in the South East of England through an article written for their magazine. WaW is also working with Chesham Museum to produce downloadable versions of their history walks and St Mary's Church on their annual Beat the Bounds walk.

We'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the following organisations to the Town Partner Scheme:

- Chesham & District Community Association
- Chesham Museum
- Chesham Theatre Company
- The Theatre Shed



Above left: Crowds in the town centre for the Christmas in Chesham event organised by **Chesham Action Partnership**



Above Right: The **Chilterns Chalk Streams Project** worked with BBOWT and the River Chess Association to survey the length of the River Chess to assess the status of its water vole population (Image used with kind permission of Allen Beechey)

Right: The first ever Lowndesbourne Town Picnic was held in September 2015, thanks to the efforts of the **Friends of Lowndes Park**.

(Image used with kind permission of Louise Hobley)



Right: The annual Allotments Open Day held at the Cameron Road allotments and organised by the **Chesham Allotments Group**

(Images courtesy of the Allotments Group)





*Left: The first exhibition to be held in the newly refurbished Hearse House in Chesham Cemetery. The exhibition was put on by the **Friends of Chesham Cemetery** and looked at Chesham and the World Wars.*

*Right: The local produce market, operated by **Transition Town Chesham** and the Town Council, has been running monthly for 5 years.*



*Above left: **Environmental Group** members' riverfly monitoring equipment converted into a rescue kit to save fish from the drying channel of the River Chess*

Above right: Dead and dying sticklebacks and gammarus shrimp on the river bed



Above left: a new flower bed created in Lowndes Park by **Chesham in Bloom**.

Above right: Chesham in Bloom representatives collecting their Gold at the regional awards ceremony. (Image courtesy of Phil Folly)

Right: Celebrating 10 years as a Fairtrade Town in Market Square, thanks to the dedicated work of **Chesham4Fairtrade**



Left: Visitors from Friedrichsdorf and Houilles together with their host families, Town Mayor Peter Hudson and other councillors, at a Town Hall civic reception during the International Weekend hosted by Chesham in May.

(Image courtesy of **Chesham Town Twinning Association**)