



Kissing gates and sewage

By Ann Bronkhorst

Kissing gates and raw sewage were two of the issues raised when Lynne Featherstone, MP for Hornsey and Wood Green, and Haringey Councillor Martin Newton, both Liberal Democrats, came to the April meeting of the Friends of Coldfall Wood and Muswell Hill Playing Field.

With the sale for development of the Lynx depot, £500,000 will be released to the locality under Section 106. Haringey has allocated one third, £166,000, to the Vampire Sports Club. Fine, say the Friends, but the local area should receive more than that third. They point out that the new housing will bring 550 new residents, so use of the field and wood as leisure facilities will increase.

The Friends plan to bid for some of the potentially available money, to install so-called 'kissing gates' at key access points to the field and wood so push-chairs and wheelchairs can pass through but not motorbikes. Ungated access could result in yet more damage to the football pitches, dumped household and builders' rubbish and burnt-out scooters.

Martin Newton agreed to

obtain a written response from Haringey clarifying what is meant by 'local' use of the Section 106 money. Lynne Featherstone remarked that any local area usually "bears the weight" of development so, because of that impact, residents should always be consulted. She said she would write personally to the council.

The MP and the councillor were also told, in graphic detail, about the drainage difficulties affecting the field and the wood. New measures such as reed beds may alleviate the stream's pollution, but the meeting felt that Thames Water must identify and deal with the 'rogue plumbing' notorious for causing the pollution. Lynne Featherstone, agreeing that the situation is highly unsatisfactory, said she would help to put pressure on Thames Water to sort out this longstanding problem.

Secret garden

Did you know that London has a secret garden? Mike Watson will describe it to the Finchley Society's meeting on 25 May at 8pm in Avenue House, East End Road.

He will be speaking about the Chelsea Physic Garden, where he is a guide. The garden was established by the Society of Apothecaries in 1673. He'll explain its contributions to medicine, botany and horticulture and will illustrate some of the garden's features, especially the medicinal plants and their importance today. Entry to the talk is free and non-members are more than welcome.

Pastures protected - for now

An area of open land off Long Lane is to be turned into a nature reserve after a community group was given a seven-year lease for the site.

THE ARCHER reported last spring that Long Lane Pasture, just north of the North Circular Road, was in line to become a wildlife haven that could be opened to the public.

Long Lane Pastures Action Group had been fighting for some years to prevent the space being sold to developers for house building.

But there are still concerns from the group that the seven-year lease will give the land little protection if Barnet Council changes administration and the decision to keep the land for community use is reversed.

In the meantime, members are pressing ahead with their plans to create wildlife-friendly habitats and a walk way through the site.

Stay at home and widen your horizons

A charity is looking for people in the East Finchley area who would be interested in having an occasional visit from an international student studying in the UK. There are many such students who come here hoping to get to know British people and to learn about our local cultures and customs.

Unfortunately, some find it impossible to make much contact away from their immediate campus or city surroundings. This is where the charity HOST UK can help.

Set up more than 14 years ago with the backing of the British Council and the Foreign Office, HOST arranges short visits for students with volunteer families. These can be for a day or weekend, or across Christmas and New Year. Hosts and students are matched so they know about each other and have something in common.

"From the first moment we met I felt very welcome and comfortable," said a German student from Kings' College, London. "My hosts were so friendly! We had lots to talk about and it was never boring."

The hosts can be equally pleased. "Am I just very lucky

Barking up the right tree

By John Lawrence

Disposable plates seem an unusual idea for a restaurant but when they are made from the bark of trees dried in the sunshine of southern India they become an attraction in their own right.

The use-once-only wooden plates are one of the brainwaves of restaurant owner Tejas Somaiya that are drawing diners to his new eaterie in the High Road.

Cochin opened its doors in early April and has proved an instant hit with its promise of a complete cultural experience, including live sitar music and genuine dishes from southern India cooked with organic ingredients and designed to be eaten with your hands if you wish.

Tejas had the idea of bringing in as many influences as he could from the Kerala, Goa and Karatak regions of the sub-continent and that includes his chefs and restaurant staff.

He said: "Cochin was once a fishing village in southern India, now it's a major city. The region is hot but the food from there is much milder than some Indian cuisine, with cream and coconut used a lot."

Tejas's father found a village community to supply the bark plates and they are being shipped over specially.

The split-level, 40-seater, non-smoking restaurant, converted from its former use as a café, will be a family business. Tejas is excited at the potential that East Finchley has to offer.

He said: "More and more people are choosing to eat out in East Finchley rather than go



Tejas Somaiya and his innovative tree bark plates at the new Cochin restaurant. Photo by John Lawrence

to North Finchley or Muswell Hill and now they will have one more restaurant to choose from."

Cost of postage goes up

UK and international postage rates were increased in April. It now costs a minimum of 32p for first class mail and 23p for second class mail in the UK. Minimum prices for posting to Europe and Airmail to world zones 1 and 2 are now 44p and 50p respectively. A copy of the Royal Mail's leaflet 'Pricing Made Easy' is available from the Post Office or on their website, www.royalmail.com

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