

CANONS PARK ESTATE LIMITED

April 2023 Newsletter

Dear Residents / Friends

Greetings to everyone. We hope 2023 will be a year where we as neighbours can enjoy and appreciate the Estate in which we live.

In the last year, particularly the last few months, the Directors have had to deal with some very difficult issues and have spent an enormous amount of time with professionals to obtain specialist advice.

During the past year, the Directors and Committee members have greatly appreciated the support expressed by many of you and appreciation for the work we have carried out. We have also received comments from some people who have been dissatisfied. Whilst all feedback is appreciated, sadly, a few of these expressions go further than merely sharing a viewpoint and have been offensive and on occasions threatening. They have felt that the Directors ought to be punished because of decisions that are not in line with their views. I consider such comments to be totally out of order.

On a positive note, the Queen's Jubilee Party took place on the Estate last year. We thank all those involved who participated in the organisation of the hugely successful Jubilee Party. The money that was raised was sent to a well-deserved charity. Well done to you all.

Regrettably, since then we have lost Queen Elizabeth II who reigned for 70 years. Her lying in State was attended by millions who waited for many hours in the cold to see and pay their respect to this wonderful lady. She gave stability to the State and worked tirelessly for years.

King Charles III will be crowned on 6th May and this will be a most momentous occasion. We are arranging a party to be held on the 7th May to celebrate the King's Coronation. The party will be held around Orchard Close and further details will follow. When you receive the details, book early for catering purposes. Your support will be much appreciated.

The major issue that the Directors have had to deal with is the Insurance covering the Estate. This has consumed an enormous amount of my time and also the time of the Directors and Committee members and will be the main Agenda item at the AGM to be held on the 27 April 2023. A reminder will be sent to you nearer the time.

The issues are as follows:

The Estate comprises of various roads branching off Canons Drive either directly or indirectly and it has the Seven Acre Lake and another water area called the Basin.

The Directors have over the years obtained insurance to cover the Estate, third party liability, Directors & Officers cover and Land & Building cover. We have received over the last few years notifications of potential claims from insurance companies representing residents who have suffered subsidence to their properties. I asked residents in a previous newsletter to speak to a Director if subsidence to their house was obvious so that that we could discuss the issue. This request was ignored by most and they referred to their property Insurers. Once notification was lodged with their insurers a claim was recorded and a process began. We know that insurance companies try to recoup their costs from a third party and in this case, CPEL and its insurers.

We had several potential claims reported to our insurers, covering the Estate during 2020 - 2022. Because of the claims history, the CPEL insurers at the end of 2022 firmly declined to continue cover and merely extended cover for a brief period of time.

We then approached a highly recommended broker who knows the market very well. He spent over a month scouring various companies in the market to obtain cover but the cover he did find was not comprehensive enough to satisfy the needs of the Estate.

We began our search again with another broker who was able to recommend an insurance company to provide cover. Each time an insurance company was approached, they had to be provided with full details of all the potential claims lodged from 2018 until 2022. It took three months of my phone calls and emails every day. After a very uncomfortable period of about five weeks during which the Estate was not insured, we were very fortunate to obtain cover, this time to a certain degree and at an affordable premium. I do not believe this will be achievable again if we continue to see a spate of claims.

During this time, the Directors decided that, if an acceptable level of Insurance cover was not available, we would resign as a group based on legal advice. We received advice to liquidate the company if cover was unavailable. If we considered this action members would be invited to urgently discuss the position at an EGM. From another professional source, we were advised that we could probably continue trading as the household insurance companies would probably not pursue claims against CPEL, if they realised that we were not insured and had a small level of reserves. This level of stress and uncertainty was totally unnecessary and is not what we as volunteers, interested in protecting our Estate and environment, signed up for.

I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT YOU LOOK TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD INSURERS TO DEAL WITH ANY SUBSIDENCE CLAIMS AND ENSURE THAT SUBSIDENCE IS ON YOUR POLICY.

I say the following to householders living along Canons Drive. Most of the homes along Canons Drive were built in the 1920's and 1930's The Wellingtonia Trees were planted around 1860, some sixty or seventy years prior. The building requirements at the time were not as stringent and the depth of the foundations were a lot shallower than now and very likely the roots were under your homes before the house was built. I suspect Harrow Council as the body responsible at the time for planning permission and building regulations had not considered the close proximity of the trees and the houses. Anyone who acquired a house on Canons Drive must have been aware of the trees - they would have been substantial even 50 years ago when some of our more established residents moved to the Estate. These trees would have been in situ for more than 60 years prior to the first group coming to the Estate and the height of the trees would have been at least 70 feet. Property surveyors must have noticed the trees and should have alerted potential purchasers to the risk of a potential problem at some stage.

We have been advised by an eminent arborist and specialist on tree root claims (Dr Martin Dobson, BSc (Hons) Biol, DPhil, FArbor A, FCArborA, MEWI) on the 32 Wellingtonias and 13 cedars in Canons Drive. He says that the risk of trees causing subsidence is regarded as being extremely low and is considered to be a 'possible' rather than a 'real' risk. This means that no pruning is advised. "In order to have an effect on the water use of the trees, reductions of 70-90% of crown volume would be required, and this is likely to kill them and is therefore unreasonable." Most of the houses in Canons Drive are within the zone of influence of the roots from the trees in front (data provided by Bartlett Consulting Arborists). The appropriate defence of house foundations is underpinning or tree root barriers. Chopping down any of these venerable trees is likely to cause 'heave' and do more harm to the house.

Basically, the Estate cannot and does not have the funds to finance these claims. The CPEL charging Members £150 per year could never build a large enough fund to cover and defend the costs of claims, whilst carrying out its other estate maintenance functions.

As you can see the situation is becoming untenable. It is feasible that if we carry on as we have been doing, the Estate will deteriorate and fall into disrepair. I am sorry for going into such detail because it is now becoming impossible for the Estate to survive in its current form.



The Canons Park Estate Pillars before the Storm Damage

Regarding the storm damaged pillar at the entrance to Canons Drive, your Committee are aware that the present appearance is unsightly and that it is now more than a year since a tree from Lodge Close demolished this pillar. Because the pillar is classified as a Listed building, there are restrictions on what may be done in the rebuilding of this pillar, with approvals being necessary at all stages by Harrow Council's Conservation Officer. Securing detailed quotes from specialist contractors using specified Conservation methods and materials and obtaining approval from the insurers, all takes time.

We are proceeding with the advice of specialists in Conservation and have now had approval to the proposed method of rebuilding, and secured competitive quotes from specialist contractors and we are at the stage of seeking approval to start work from our insurers.

For many years, it has been recognised that the two metal girders across the inlet stream at the top end of Seven Acre Lake are unsuitable for prams and buggies. They are too narrow, and one has sagged lower than the other due to lack of underpinning. Last year it was planned to strengthen the bridge with a timber superstructure that would provide a safe crossing for pedestrians and light wheeled traffic such as wheelchairs. This requires a level walkway, wide enough for a double buggy, child-proof handrails on both sides, non-slip surface, and approach paths not too steep.

A builder who had done similar work on the bridge at the weir was asked to quote and started work in August 2022. A structural engineer who lives on the estate had volunteered his advisory services. Unfortunately, the engineer had a family tragedy and could not continue. A contract was signed with the builder to complete the work but, without advice on the underpinning, he could not re-start. The CPEL Committee is looking for a structural engineer to provide advice on the foundations of the bridge.



Your Committee has worked relentlessly in the last year dealing with these major challenges.

All of these issues will be discussed in detail at the AGM. It will help our discussion if any members who have constructive suggestions notify me so that they can be considered for inclusion in the AGM discussion.

There are other challenging issues on the Estate apart from the financial vulnerability of the CPEL due to the tree issues. Some easier to solve and others a lot more controversial.

We have a programme of maintenance works which are budgeted for. We retain competitively priced professionals to obtain value for money. We have an accountant who works 24/7 even now chasing Membership whilst ensuring that every pound is accounted for. All expenditure is approved by the Board and accounts are presented at an AGM.

Another issue to be discussed at the AGM is the bench on the hardstanding in front of the Basin water area. The bench was discussed at the last AGM and it was agreed that it ought to be reinstated for a period due to the number of requests received by those who felt this would help their wellbeing. The Committee went through a consultation period for 6 weeks and the substantial majority of responses wished for the bench to be reinstated. We then learnt that some interested parties said they had not received the AGM notification nor the consultation information. The Committee respected this feedback and temporarily removed the slats. At the AGM in April, we will ensure that every household will receive the Newsletter with the required notifications. The Committee has monitored and will carry on monitoring the area to ensure that the bench does not cause any unacceptable anti-social behaviour issues.

The security company we retain have been very diligent with the guard ensuring that the Basin area is clear whilst they are on duty. We intend to increase the three night sessions to four nights starting April 2023. Now that we have introduced the Direct Debit payments, the Directors feel more financially confident increasing the security sessions.

The Directors will propose at the AGM to increase the Membership fee from £150 to £200 per annum as from January 2024. Costs are increasing and the Directors believe the Estate should hold a reasonable surplus.

I NOW REFER TO YOU, THE NON MEMBERS. It is unfair to expect two thirds of the residents to fund all the costs on the Estate.

Please ask yourselves the following questions;-

- 1) What do I get from this unique Estate?
- 2) Why do I have to pay for Security if others are paying for it ?

To answer, you chose to live on this unique Estate. You made this choice, not because it is undesirable, but because you thought it had a great deal to offer. The Estate is maintained by kind volunteers, it is clean, and it has a private seven acre Lake, Volunteers act and try and keep you safe by organising security on the Estate. You do not pay for administration, this is all FREE. Yes you are requested to pay £150 (increasing to £200) per year if agreed at the AGM, equivalent to £3.85p per week which a group of diligent volunteers spend on services to maintain the Estate. Most of your neighbours contribute to the cost of security patrols so that the Estate is a safer environment for all of us.

PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR NEIGHBOURS, IT IS TOTALLY UNFAIR.

I write this Report with a great deal of trepidation about the future. I intend to step down from acting as Chairman due to the time it consumes and the stress levels with which my wife and I have had to contend. I will stay on as a Committee Member and Director position for a limited period of time.

I thank each individual Director and Committee Member for all the support they have given me throughout this period and those residents who have offered support directly and indirectly.

Please make sure that you support your new Chair whoever he or she may be.

We would like to welcome residence who wish to help maintain the estate to join the committee and eventually as directors of CPEL. We assemble every 6 weeks to discuss various issues from Governance to Coronation Parties

All the very best.

Chairman Canons Park Estate Ltd
Edwin Solomon

Hundreds enjoyed the Jubilee Celebration





We hope you all join in to Celebrate
the Coronation Tea Party on 7th May 2023
2.00pm to 5.00pm
in Orchard Close
Save The Date



- Main Home
- Holiday Homes
- Investment Properties

- Motor
- Classic Cars
- Valuables / Art / Collections

Studio 203 | 7 Pearson Square | London | W1T 3BP
T: +44 (0) 20 3811 0489 | M: +44 (0) 7917 330912

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Useful contact information

HARROW COUNCIL

You can contact Harrow Council via the internet (www.harrow.gov.uk), or via Harrow's general switchboard (020 8863 5611). Here are some direct numbers for the most commonly used departments:

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|-------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Bins/Environment: | 020 8424 1754 | |
| Street lighting: | 020 8424 1887 | |
| Planning: | 020 8424 1441 | Email: planning.applications@harrow.gov.uk |
| Conservation enquiries: | 020 8424 1467/8 | Email: conservation@harrow.gov.uk |
| Tree enquiries: | 020 8424 1471 | |
| Environmental hazards: | 020 8863 5611 | (EMERGENCY USE ONLY) |
| Street hazards: | 020 8863 5611 | (EMERGENCY USE ONLY) |

To report anti-social behaviour: Harrow Council ASB Team – 020 8736 6307 or 07927 548479

Email: asb@harrow.gov.uk Web: <https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/asb/asb-b/report-antisocial-behaviour/>

LOCAL HOSPITALS

Nearest Hospital: Edgware General. No accident and emergency unit. Tel: 020 8952 2381

Non-emergency medical, including coronavirus (COVID-19): Tel: 111

Blood Donation Centre: Edgware General Hospital: Tel: 0300 123 23 23

Nearest Accident and Emergency Units: Northwick Park Hospital: 020 8864 3232,
Watford General Hospital: 01923 244366
Barnet General Hospital: 020 8216 4100

OTHER USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

Friends of Canons Park: www.canonsparkfriends.org Email: canonspark@outlook.com