

The Old Ratton Residents' Association  
www.orra.online

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## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2018

Dear Old Ratton Residents

We seem finally to be emerging from a long cold winter, although mercifully little snow compared to the rest of the country – our famous micro climate doing its job! I hope that you are all keeping well and looking forward to the warmer months ahead. There are quite a few things to update you on and given that the AGM is only next month on the 17<sup>th</sup> May, this gives me the opportunity to highlight here some topical items.

### Road safety

I have to say that it has been difficult to drum up support for the working party needed to properly research this concern. However, we have managed to carry out a number of surveys monitoring traffic movements around the Old Ratton Estate. Many of us have assumed that the increase in volume seen is most likely coming from beyond our boundaries. However, our surveys are at best inconclusive on this point. As a result, I am not prepared to consider at this time permanent physical barriers to restrict access to our private roads.

Our possible options for traffic calming are also limited by lack of available funds, so I am very pleased to let you know that I have applied for and been granted a significant donation from the Ratton Ward budget for community projects. This will cover our immediate course of action, which has three elements and may or may not end up being called 'Phase One'.

- 1) We will replace the existing road signs at the three entrances to Old Ratton with a simplified message – access only – 20 mph speed limit – 18t weight limit - using a tasteful design in keeping with the environment we are trying to preserve.
- 2) We are purchasing a moveable 'actual speed' sign, which will illuminate only when vehicles are exceeding the limit. We believe this to have numerous benefits, providing: heightened awareness of speed; a deterrent to exceeding the limit; constant volume, speed and other data recording; the capability to pinpoint and evidence key problem areas before considering the possibility of more costly permanent measures.
- 3) With this newsletter you will have received two speed limit wheelie bin stickers. **Please stick these on your black and green bins so that they are visible to traffic,** creating a mass speed limit awareness drive every Wednesday / Thursday.

Finally, I would re-emphasise that the ultimate solution is cost free - goodwill and consideration for others when driving on our private roads.

### Social event – Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Having run out of time last year to get a social event organised before we also ran out of summer, as promised we are now planning for this July.

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For some years now, ORRA has been fortunate to have a 'windfall fund', donated as a legacy for former stalwart ORRA members, now sadly passed away, Derek Jones OBE and Peter Holder. The money relates to an unexpected recovery following the theft and subsequent location of the original 'Ratton Lions', which heralded the entrance to Ratton Drive. This 'Lions Fund' is designated to be spent specifically for the benefit of all Old Ratton residents - a surprisingly tricky brief. I am satisfied that a social event to which everyone is invited is a worthy cause and indeed a fitting tribute.

The plan is to close Manor Way and use that space for an afternoon tea for Old Ratton residents only. With a fixed budget, planning for unknown numbers is impossible, so you will receive a formal invitation in due course and we will need to have confirmation back from you of attendance and numbers. Save the date, watch this space....oh, and pray for fine weather!

### **Maintenance Fees**

Everyone benefits from the services required to keep Old Ratton running smoothly and it is only fair that we all contribute. Of course, not everything does always run smoothly and as a result of historic low maintenance activity some of our infrastructure is failing.

Since the major portion of Old Ratton roads were re-surfaced in 2015, financed by a 3-year advance payment from residents, by definition there has been very little income to spend on other projects. In fact, I am of the view that ORRA maintenance charges have been extremely modest for many years, sometimes increasing annually but by tiny increments and with no link to the cost of necessary works. Consequently, the 'too difficult / too costly pile' has been growing in the background and these neglected repairs are only growing more urgent and more costly. We all know how easily this can happen within our own homes. We have reached a point where we need to catch up with this backlog and start contributing to ORRA funds at a realistic level.

As I have said before, my focus is mainly on drainage. It is plain to see every time we get any significant rain that surface water drainage is no longer effective in Ratton Drive and Walnut Tree Walk to name but two. We know that there are blockages but only by investigating can we really quantify the extent of remedial work required and then set about those repairs, doubtless phased over a period of time. I hope you will support me on this mission!

At the AGM on 17<sup>th</sup> May, I will be proposing a change in methodology for calculating ORRA maintenance charges. Instead of applying a small inflation-linked percentage to the previous year, I will be setting out the work that I have judged needs doing and associated costs. I also want to introduce the aim of transferring funds into a 'reserve' each year, to build up a buffer to protect residents from potential unforeseen surprises in the future. I have divided the result by council tax band to arrive at the proposed charge per property for 2018/19. To give you a feel for the proposed increase, subject to AGM approval: Band C would be 58p per week and Band G £1.33 per week. As an aside, it has been suggested by some that we all benefit equally so we should all pay an equal share, which has some logic, but I don't propose to 'upset the apple cart' completely!

### **Construction and Courtesy**

We seem to have an unprecedented number of construction projects underway at present and probably more to come. It is fully understood that these works will take place and from time to time we will have periods when a lot is happening simultaneously. Please remember to be considerate to all those adversely affected by your building work and impress this upon your contractors too.

Please make sure that any skips positioned on roads have appropriate lighting. Please avoid early starts (before 8am), late finishes (after 6pm), Saturday afternoons wherever possible and all day Sunday. When this may not be possible, let people know what to expect and why.

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Deliveries / earth removal by huge vehicles are a problem with very tight access commonplace around the Estate. These vehicles are damaging our newly re-surfaced roads, verges, hedges etc. Although it is often difficult to physically witness this damage taking place, please do raise the problem either directly with contractors or with the resident having the work done. All damage must be made good. I have recently had such a situation myself but am pleased to report that my verge was very promptly repaired by the delivering contractor. Please make it clear to contractors when access is restricted and make every effort to ensure only suitably sized vehicles are used. Please also direct drivers into and out of the top end of the Estate via Babylon Way.

### **Trees and Verges**

In a leafy environment like Old Ratton, we should all be reminded about the responsibilities associated with tree ownership. Last year ORRA was legally required to fell a healthy mature Oak tree, which was deemed to be the 'dominant cause' of minor subsidence damage. I now need to make ORRA members aware that the Association is facing a cost recovery claim in respect of the same case from the relevant household insurer. Suffice to say that this sort of claim could easily 'wipe out' ORRA funds, which is why our own insurance cover is so critical. This case is now in the hands of our insurer, with the outcome as yet unsettled. I have noticed that many verges around the Estate are really taking a hammering at the moment. This is a very obvious eyesore, which spoils the look and feel of our beautiful roads. Please remember your responsibility to repair your verge and keep it in good order, reminding visitors to park carefully and keep off the grass.

### **ORRA Facebook Group**

I know that many of us would not consider ourselves to be part of the Facebook/Social Media generation but, the fact is, it is becoming an increasingly important and direct route for communication. To get messages out quickly to residents, we have created an Old Ratton Residents Association Facebook group. This is a private group and anything posted there can only be seen by other residents. We would like to encourage as many of you as possible to join the ORRA Facebook Group (link below). It's straightforward and will really enhance the level of two-way communication we can have on any number of issues, such as, the proposed new highway changes in Willingdon Road. If you would like to join this group put this link in your browser and press Enter/ Return <https://www.facebook.com/groups/oldrattonresidents/>. Alternatively, go to this page on the ORRA website, where you will find instructions for both joining Facebook and the ORRA Facebook group <https://www.orra.online/latest-news/orra-on-facebook/>.

### **Cycle path**

The concerns of so many residents re the proposals for a shared cycleway/footpath were comprehensively aired at the Public Meeting held by the Ratton Neighbourhood Panel in January. An Officer from East Sussex County Council attended and listened, promising to take back all comments and include them with the other consultation submissions. We understand the full report will be submitted to the lead Member at ESCC by early May. As soon as the information is ready to be made public the Panel Chairman will advise ORRA for circulation to everyone.

### **Rats**

Frustratingly I still receive reports about the presence of rats in various locations. I guess it's a fact that they have always been present and always will be but we can all discourage them from being so active 'close to home'. Please do not put out ANY food for ground feeders as rats will beat a path to your door, followed shortly by seagulls. Promptly report problems to the local authority.

I hope you have enjoyed Newsletter Number Two. Please come to the AGM on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2018 (see attached invitation) if at all possible to hear more.

Kind regards

Mark Thornton, Chairman, ORRA