

The Riverporter

ST IVES AWARD WINNING NEWSPAPER



Issue 68: 18 September 2020

A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER • UNCONNECTED WITH ANY GROUP OR ORGANISATION

LATEST NEWS

Following his resignation from the Town Council Richard Bellamy has resigned his St Ives East Ward District Council seat effective 17 Sept.

What is the real cost?

From next Monday parking charges will be reinstated in St Ives and throughout Huntingdonshire.

Free parking was introduced to assist key workers during the lockdown period and charges were suspended on March 28 and continued throughout June, July and August to support the reopening of town centres as part of the Huntingdonshire District Council's Reopening Huntingdonshire campaign.

According to the council, residents will still be able to park for free after 6pm and all day on Sunday at all sites across the district.

The council has introduced a new digital system by Mi Permit, which extends payment options, enabling people to pay by a range of contactless methods; via apps, SMS Apple/Android and cash.

HDC has also confirmed that charges will remain the same and ticket machines will be cleaned regularly and hand sanitiser provided at each machine.

Councillor Marge Beuttell, Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment, said, *'As more people return to the workplace and visit our town centres again, car park usage is quickly returning to pre-Covid levels. We have delayed reinstating parking charges for as long as possible - whilst being mindful of the significant loss of revenue during the period of charges being suspended.'*

£1.3 million cost

'The free parking that has been provided over the last few months has cost the District Council approximately £1.3 million but it's not sustainable for the Council to continue to absorb such losses in addition to the wider financial impact of Covid-19 without it affecting vital frontline services.'

'With Council Tax covering less than 50 per cent of the services the District Council delivers, any surplus income generated from car parking directly supports services such as homelessness prevention, waste collection, street cleaning, and maintenance of our parks and open spaces. This income will also be used to help HDC deliver the tens of millions of pounds of investment it is planning in boosting and regenerating our market towns to help them recover from Covid-19 and prosper.'

Marge Beuttell also said that permit holders who had their permits frozen would be contacted directly to have them re-instated.

Warner's Park 14 September



Erik received this picture from one of his admirers - Hell N Bark [possibly not her real name. Ed.] She wrote: *I was hoping for some doggy friends, but as you see not even a group of six.*

Is there a better way to help our town recover?

For many years St Ives groups and residents have been seeking changes to parking charges in the town. The main argument is that the charges, as applied, deter many people from coming into the centre.

Parking in general is a hot topic and the issue has dominated recent town meetings. The last 6 months have been an opportunity to see the effects of a free parking regime. However the real effect has been masked by the Covid crisis with people staying away as shops shut.

With out of town developments seemingly growing daily, where parking is free, charges in the town centre can only be a deterrent to shoppers, especially the many people who only want to spend an hour or less here.

The side effect of people avoiding the car park charges is the chaotic parking on the streets, pavements and even on the roundabouts.

What the revelation of the lost revenue of £1.3 million shows is that parking income is not so significant. Of course many people will consider that this is a tidy sum to lose but that may not be the whole story.

£1.3 million of lost revenue in 6 months equates to £2.6 million per year, throughout the whole district. Assuming that is the profit after direct costs then compared to many other costs it is not so significant.

Of course that would be the total loss if no charges were made but that loss would be reduced considerably if charges were amended to give period of free parking, say for the first hour.

This would do two things that would benefit town centre businesses. Firstly it would allow shoppers to nip in to pick up items, go to the bank or get a paper etc, removing the need to go elsewhere and secondly it would help prevent some of the bad parking habits in the streets, making them safer for pedestrians.

What about the lost income?

Obviously any lost income, particularly now, is to be avoided but the main effect of a period of free parking is that it will attract people who would previously avoid using the car parks, so revenue may not be reduced by very much.

The other point to be taken into account is the overall effect of doing this on the regeneration of the town centre.

As Marge said (left) plans are afoot to invest 'tens of millions of pounds in boosting and regenerating our market towns'.

So the question is ...

Will a period of free parking be more effective than other measures planned?

Judging by the St Ives Masterplan proposals,

which *The Riverporter* highlighted in its 12 June issue, that may well be the case. Many of the 'projects' suggested are untested and some will be inappropriate following the changes in working practices that the Covid pandemic has brought about.

The plans for increased pedestrianisation will only be achieved with a sensible parking strategy and an integrated traffic management scheme agreed by all the authorities involved.

There is a need to encourage more use of public transport and discourage the reliance on cars, but making parking costly and inconvenient is not the answer, especially as public transport is poor and improvements will take a long time to come about if they ever do.

Whilst 'tarting up' the town centre will make any visit to the town more enjoyable that in itself will not draw people in. As someone once said no one ever visited a town because it had nice pavements!

A parking regime which charges a minimum for two hours, when you only want to visit for 10 minutes is a deterrent. To compete with the out-of-town centres there must be a level playing field, where town centre shops are not at a disadvantage because of parking costs.

Read on-line at
www.theriverporter.uk

George Returns



From our Markets Correspondent Billy Insgate

George's Cakes made a fabulous return to the St Ives Farmers Market on 5th September - you know - the market stall the town council tried to ban.

Huge queues formed, stretching from the Octagon right the way up to Station Road.

Simon Hepher, George's dad, told *The Riverporter* that he had just spoken to a couple in the queue who had driven over from Coventry to resume their regular Saturday morning trips to St Ives.

It seems George is back to his lip-smacking and finger-licking best and full production and sales after moving his bakery from home to a handsome sized unit on St Ives industrial estate.

The next Farmers Market is tomorrow 19th September.

Photos: Left Anna Quay. Below Snapper Jack.

HOSPITALITY AT THE METHODIST CHURCH

After receiving a grant for £73,168 to redevelop and modernise the premises of the Methodist Church on The Waits, you may have spotted some changes already. As well as the front of the building looking different, there will be major changes inside. All designed to extend the welcome through hospitality.

There will be a servery and toilet near the front of the church which will support FEST activities such as the band concerts on The Waits, as well as joint activities with The Norris Museum and Holt Island Nature Reserve.

The photo below shows Project Team members (L to R) Jim Knell, Rachel Young, Leonore Charlton and Fiona Fish imagining the servery in use.

Fullers Finer Furniture will provide an elegant oak facing to the servery which will match new furniture throughout the church, especially designed to reflect the existing architecture and to echo themes which are part of the whole project.

The Upper Room has always been popular with some groups and that is having a major overhaul too with the addition of a small servery to make drinks and a large smart TV. With the stair lift making this space accessible to all, this room is going to be in big demand.

Reverend of St Ives Methodist Church, Heather Walker, said: *'I can't tell you how excited I am to bring the church up to modern day standards. I am also really looking forward to welcoming back all our church congregation who have missed out as a result of Covid-19.'*



Above: Mary Gatehouse (left) and Reverend Heather Walker (right). Picture: Heather Walker

'One of the renovations of the church I am particularly happy with is the enhancement at the front of the church, which backs onto the riverbank and The Waits. A blacksmith has created some panels, which evoke the riverscape and the reeds, they also have depictions of dragonflies on them.'

Mary Gatehouse, church property secretary, said: *'Our church is a well-used community space and it is wonderful to see our vision for the space moving closer to reality. We are extremely grateful for the funding the FCC Communities Foundation has given us and we're looking forward to reopening for all to enjoy.'*

As work on the building progresses, the Leadership Team at the Church is looking at how the mission of the Church can be more effective with a fully modernised base. **Check out the Facebook page for details of outdoor family activities over the coming months, and for information about worship, prayer and study groups all of which are continuing.**





Get it off your chest, email Erik at: editor@theriverporter.uk

Dear Erik,

I read most of your publications. I love your publications and thank you for all your great work. In your recent publication (RP67 4 Sept), there is a complaint about my dogs barking. I want to highlight my side of the story and my concerns.

I live in Wellington Street, and I take my dogs to my friend's garden nearby for about 2-3 hours a day. My dogs bark at other dogs. I understand the inconvenience, and I am trying hard to discipline them. But in the course of the last few days, I have noticed a few incidents, and I would like to share it with you. Two weeks ago, a man claimed to me as a local resident approached me and said that he had written to the council and RSPCA about the barking of my dogs. He further added that it would be my last warning, and he would shoot my dogs and me. He said he owns firearms too. His behavior was very threatening and violent. As a resident, if someone owns a gun, it is a big concern to me.

Secondly, I have noticed children tantalizing my dogs or even poking my dogs with sticks. That is animal cruelty, and their parents watch them. They never stop their children. I intervene to stop them from doing this. I am appalled by their actions.

Thirdly, I would like to raise a crucial concern. I noticed lots of dog's mess in Wellington Street. And my dogs pick them up. It appears that dog owners are ignoring the penalty notice sign. Recently, I have picked up all the dog mess so that my dogs don't pick them up. Lastly, I spend about 2-3 hours in the garden every day. And I am sure that it cannot be all day ... '7 days a week, day and night, all hours, there's people's dogs constantly barking' as mentioned by 'Get It Off Your Chest' in the last issue.

I wanted to highlight my side of the story and raise a few concerns as a responsible and loving resident. I practice zero tolerance for threatening behavior and violent action. I look forward to your feedback and advice.

Thank You

Kevin K Anandan

Dear Erik,

Ref: The copse in Chestnut Road, St Ives

Who is responsible for the maintenance of the copse in Chestnut Road, St Ives? St Ives desperately needs trees but these are being overwhelmed by ivy.

Mrs FizzCrick

Dear Mrs FizzCrick

We believe that Hunts DC are probably responsible for this copse, but it is highly likely that they don't have the manpower to deal with it at the moment. However we contacted our ODD JOB MAN who has been out to remove some of the ivy already.

He has also told us that there are signs up on Cedar Road, Chestnut, Oak Tree Close and Beech Drive indicating that they will be closed for resurfacing in October. See below.



Sadly many of these signs have fallen down as the Highways staff or a contractor has used rather flimsy material. Two holes are made through which a cable tie is inserted to hold the sign to a lamp post. Strong winds cause the material to fracture leaving a large hole so the sign falls to the ground.

Using a piece of the ivy, (that ODD JOB MAN had just cut down!) it was a simple matter to ensure that the force caused by the wind is distributed over a much bigger area. Not very elegant but effective.

Note the sign does not explain if residents can leave once work has started or whether vehicles have to be removed beforehand.

Editor

NO PANTO FOR THE TOWN THIS YEAR

For the past 43 years the Centre Theatre Players have been providing the town with seasonal entertainment in the Burgess Hall of One Leisure.

Sadly, due to the pandemic and in particular the current social distance restrictions they have had to postpone their forthcoming pantomime CINDERELLA until January 2022.

Obviously this will be a big disappointment to the group's many followers who look forward to their annual trip to the pantomime but the Centre Theatre Players will be back in 2022 with the promise of a bigger and better production.

OH YES THEY WILL!

Voted Best local newspaper of the year 2019/20 in the Cambridge Building Society's Community Magazine Awards

NEWS UPDATE

Covid testing is 'shambolic'

A lack of availability for coronavirus tests is causing widespread frustration across the district. Many people have reported issues, including phoning the 119 testing line and being kept on hold for 90 minutes, only to then be disconnected or told to call back as there is nothing available.

Children have been sent home from school with a high temperature, but with no testing available, parents are forced to self-isolate, sometimes, unpaid because they can't book tests. Under current school guidelines, pupils are not able to return to school unless they have been tested.

Mobile testing sites were set up in St Neots and Huntingdon last week. But a Somersham resident who turned up at One Leisure with her daughter, who had been sent home with a high temperature and is not allowed back into school until she has had a Covid-19 test, found the mobile test centre was no longer there.

A spokesman for Huntingdon District Council told the Hunts Post *'The decision of when and where Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) are set-up is a decision made by the nationally commissioned testing service.'*

'In response to concerns about the long-term viability of the One Leisure Huntingdon site, the testing service made the decision to cancel the use of One Leisure Huntingdon as a site at short notice. HDC has offered assistance to find another suitable local site.'

Old NatWest bank could be a nail salon

Huntingdonshire District Council planners have approved an application by St Ives firm SD Construction and Developments Ltd to convert the old NatWest bank's ground floor into a retail space, including a nail salon, together with a residential use involving a single-storey extension to the rear.



The bank can be seen on the right, behind the blue barrier, in this picture taken of shoppers returning to St Ives last Thursday.

The conversion involves lowering the window sills on the front of the bank and restoring the original banking hall. Plans for the conversion had to be resubmitted to correct drawings from an earlier application for listed building consent.

The rear of the building will have a single storey extension proposed to serve the new residential unit including replacement windows and doors as well as the replacement of the existing stairs and balustrade with a new fire escape level with the flat roof to serve the upper floors and the Corn Exchange which adjoins the premises.

Cromwell Surgery keeping quiet

The Cromwell surgery has been curiously reluctant to talk to people: neighbours or patients, about the progress of its contentious building programme on Cromwell Place which started in the autumn of 2019. Its own website's entry on progress was last updated on 1 June, some 3 months ago.

The Riverporter understands that completion may well be by mid December 2020. Though details are not being confirmed by the new enlarged Grove Practice which is in charge of the build.

Fair cancellation confirmed

It is with regret that the Showman's Guild and St Ives Town Council have come to the joint conclusion that it will not be possible to operate the Michaelmas Fair this October in the town with the current social distancing restrictions in place. Although a number of options were considered no workable solution could be found that would allow everyone to enjoy all the fun of the fair whilst keeping everyone safe.

We are now all looking forward to starting to plan for 2021.

The COURTYARD St Ives

Open-air boutique market, run by independents

Arts & Crafts - Lorenzo's Coffee -
Eco-Refills - Floristry
Vintage & Festival Clothing
Pet Accessories - Baby Clothing & Gifts
Antiques - Jewellery
Home Furnishings - Books
Soy Wax Candles - Upcycled Furniture -
Photo Framing - Greetings Cards
Stocking Fillers
& much more to come...



Visit us..

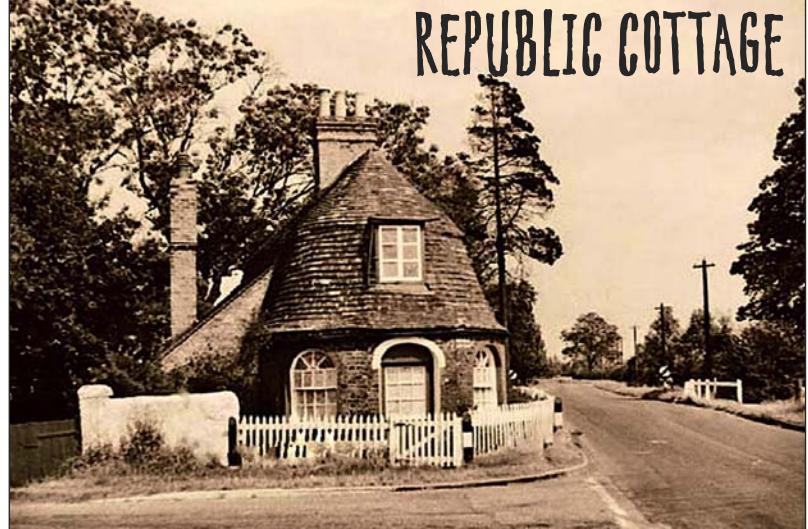
Mon-Sat: 9-5

Sun: 10-4



The Courtyard at Hyperion Antiques,
Station Road, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, PE27 5BH

REPUBLIC COTTAGE



This picture taken in the 1930s is of Republic Cottage which was a toll house on the St Ives to Somersham turnpike (opposite what is now the mini Tesco store). Republic Cottage was named by owner Henry How in the 1880s because he opposed the monarchy and favoured a republic. The cottage was demolished in 1968 to make way for road widening and is today a very busy roundabout.

However this roundabout may be removed in favour of a traffic controlled junction if the A141/St Ives Traffic study goes ahead. This study is due to be discussed at HDC's Cabinet meeting (17th Sept). The proposals include a 'No Right Turn' from Needingworth Road onto the A1123 (St Audrey Lane). Concern has been voiced by local organisations, such as the Civic Society, about the lack of consultation on these plans, which may be approved by this week's HDC's Cabinet meeting in order to access funds from the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority.

Thanks to the fabulous website **St Ives 100 Years Ago** - which gives a host of information and images about St Ives - for permission to reproduce their work.

The new rubbish and still no bins ...

10 weeks ago we reported that new recycling bins were to be installed in the town centre. Some of the old ones were removed but the new ones have never appeared.

We asked HDC, who are responsible for the installation, what had happened, but true to form they have declined to answer our enquiry and the Town Clerk said she had no idea why they hadn't been installed either.

Right: Is this the rubbish of the future?



ADVERTORIAL

GOING, GOING, GONE ...



Tenants are scrambling around looking for properties in a market that's gone a little crazy, we haven't experienced anything like this in the fifteen years that we've been managing rental properties and it doesn't look like it'll stop anytime soon. Over the last few months we've let almost 80 properties, a record for us, with average move-in times being quicker and void periods (empty times between tenancies) being almost non-existent.

We can't pinpoint one particular reason why it's so busy, it may be a combination of a number of different factors, the lockdown,

where tenants wanted to move but were unable to, the sales market being busy but unaffordable to most young people who accept that they'll be renting for a long time or people not buying for job security reasons. The knock-on effect however is likely to be even higher rents over the next few months.

Over recent years Landlords have been hit hard with tax hikes, red-tape and new health and safety regulations, last Friday in a shock announcement the Government said they were extending the suspension of evictions for a further four weeks, not good news for any landlord who's tenant isn't paying rent.

And so, for landlords this busy market is a welcome relief, we're not sure how long it's likely to last but certainly, at the moment, demand is far outstripping supply.

If you're a landlord and having difficulty letting a property, call your local Ellis Winters office and talk to one of our rental specialists they'll be happy to help.



ellis&co winters