

A year in the life of the HGSRA Chair

As Chair of the HGS Residents Association, I regularly receive emails and the benefit of advice and ideas from our members (and indeed non-members) on their concerns and, in some cases, the additional good works that the RA might take on or find volunteers to organise.

I thought readers might be interested to read of some of the many suggestions that have come my way. I am writing in early December so have limited myself to a seasonal 12 good ideas. I am sure many of you agree with the sentiments and suggestions expressed by members here and may wish to be involved in leading the charge on some of them.

1. 'A fruit picking initiative in the Suburb: there are many fruit trees here and if there is surplus fruit on the trees that the owners don't want to use or are unable to pick, could that surplus crop be put to good use?'

Could the RA get a volunteer group of fruit pickers together? The surplus fruit would be picked free of charge. The fruit could be turned into jams, chutneys etc. Proceeds to benefit the community. (Brent has such an initiative. The proceeds are sold at Queens Park market.)'

Chair's note: this is a lovely idea and I have noticed in this bumper year for fruit, that people have generously shared quince, damsons, apples, pears etc. either via the HGS Email list or simply by putting boxes of picked fruit outside their gates with a 'please help yourself' sign. Thank you to the wonderful lady who suggested this offering to be our lead volunteer! More to follow...

2. 'Leaf blower machines seem to be in constant use on the Suburb and are a public nuisance. There was a critical article about them recently in the Times. The German environment ministry has apparently warned that they are damaging to wildlife. Would it be worth petitioning the Council to get them banned in the Suburb?'

Chair's note: are these machines the things we all love to hate? I loathe the sound and what I see the gardeners doing with them as they blast leaves and topsoil into the road for the fairies to clear up.



Yet how many Suburb residents cut their own hedges and lawns and rake their own leaves these days? When I moved here 30 years ago, in those halcyon pre leaf blower days, most residents did all these jobs themselves and it made things much quieter. Are Suburb residents prepared to do this again?

3. 'My son has a low emission car. When the controlled parking zone was introduced, his car was exempt from the charge for a residents parking permit. Last year a charge of £15 was introduced and this year the charge has been increased to £50. I have complained to our Councillors but they evidently think the charge is reasonable; I do not. There is apparently no way of controlling these charges which are not a charge for council tax. This is a ridiculous situation. I think the RA should protest.'

Chair's note: LB Barnet's CPZ charges have been set by reference to CO2 emissions with a view to charging more polluting vehicles at a higher rate. The rationale for the increases includes aiming to reduce the number of polluting vehicles by encouraging people to switch to lower emitting cars. These bring the bands in LB Barnet in line with DVLA road tax categories and are already in place in other nearby boroughs. Very little the RA can do on this one, I am afraid.

4. Street cleaning: despite the RA setting up a very successful litter picking volunteer team in 2019, our streets can still have a lot of litter, especially where it gets thrown out of car windows. Things are particularly bad in Autumn when LB Barnet can be very slow in clearing the fallen leaves which get slippery. Could the RA employ a street cleaning company to keep the Suburb clean? Perhaps at a cost of £50k per annum, so a relatively modest cost per household.

Chair's note: great idea and certainly I receive a lot of calls and emails on litter; fly tipping; removal of our street waste bins, etc. But we struggle to collect enough membership fees to cover our costs each year which include supporting some local good works, so I am afraid any expenditure commitment of this type is out of the question. On the bright side, we now have around 70 litter picking volunteers as a result of efforts to set up a new group in 2019. If you would like to join us, please email litter@hgsra.uk with your name, address and telephone number and where you would like to pick up litter. Litter picking equipment will be provided.

5. Security: can the RA employ a Suburb wide security service funded by a compulsory levy on each household? This would enable the service of the type provided by LCS (essentially a



meet and greet service) enhanced by more patrol cars to be provided at cheaper rates than they currently charge.

Your chair's estimate of cost based on 5,000 households at £100 per month = £6,000,000. Enough said?

6. There is too much speeding traffic on the Suburb: there are many calls for installation of speed humps and other speed reduction measures, in particular in Temple Fortune Lane, Meadway, Winnington Road, Hampstead Way, Willifield Way and Addison Way. Adjacent boroughs have introduced 20 mph zones and have invested in speed cameras to enforce 30 mph limits. Haringey and Camden have done this in a number of places. LB Barnet are very reluctant to do this as you can read in the minutes of their Residents' Forum and Area Committee meetings. However, readers might notice that they have just put extensive speed reduction measures onto Squires Lane in Finchley and in parts of Hendon. Can we get them to do something similar here? The flashing speed warning indicators that LB Barnet favours certainly don't seem to do the job. Getting more stringent measures put in will take a lot of pressure, petitions and attending Council meetings to argue for these measures which are extremely expensive.

7. Garden waste and green bins: the 2018 cessation of green bin emptying over the winter months caused a lot of concern. In 2019, we had to endure this being extended for a month so that whilst we were still trying to clear our gardens, our green bins were not being emptied. This move has come at the same time as the possible introduction of a charge to empty green bins.

Apparently, Councils can legally do this, and LB Barnet would be following the example set by some other boroughs. Concerns include that this may lead to increases in fly tipping - already a big issue in the Borough and throughout the UK.

8. Pedestrian crossings: residents would like these introduced in a number of places: often suggested are the Hampstead Way/Meadway junction; outside Temple Fortune Health Centre; by Barclays Bank at Market Place, and most recently on Finchley Road outside Glentree. Is anyone prepared to get a petition going and attend the LB Barnet evening meetings to push for any of these? In days of very tight funding, success is unfortunately far from certain, but you certainly don't get if you don't ask.

9. Pavements and pavours: concern about the disappearance of our conservation original paving and pavours (the red bricks used in certain roads in the Suburb). Where LB Barnet do repairs and replacements now, they increasingly put down tarmac which is not in keeping with the original materials.

This has been raised with LB Barnet, but one major issue is that they no longer have storage for our vintage materials since the recent move to Colindale. Does anyone have a spare garage or two that could be used?

10. Farmers' Market/special events to help support our local shop keepers, especially in Market Place. Other areas do these. Would anyone like to lead the charge?

11. Light pollution, especially from security lights which are often extremely bright and if angled without consideration to neighbours can be very disturbing. Some residents apparently have them set so that they are on all the time which seems to defeat the object of them sensing motion. This seems an easy one to fix: please can people be sensitive to their neighbours from such lights to ensure that they do not cause disturbance. There are much less bright ones available now, and also, they can be set so that their area of activation is fairly limited whilst still doing the job.

12. Fireworks: Like Marmite, you love them or loathe them.

Many residents definitely feel there are now too many fireworks displays and that they may not be appropriate in our lovely green area where there are lots of pets as well as wild birds and animals. One resident has told me she does not join the RA because we do fireworks each year, and her dog is terrified by them. Do you think we should carry on with our New Year's Eve fireworks? These were first done for the millennium celebrations and have become something of a tradition since then. They are expensive and it may be time to stop. Let me have your views on this one.

So many good ideas; so much time needed to push them forward. What we do need in order to sustain the HGSRA in the next decade are new volunteers willing to spend time and energy doing things for our community. If interested, please contact chair@hgsra.uk with details of what you might like to do, and a contact number.

EMMA HOWARD

Letter to the Editors

We welcome letters from our readers. Please include your name and contact details for verification (we will not print your contact details). We cannot guarantee publication and any letters we do publish may be edited in the same way as we edit all Suburb News content. Letters should be sent to: suburbnews@hgsra.uk.

Dear Editors,

The pavements in this area are getting worse and more dangerous. We have broken pavements, some that rock, and raised ones when it is safer to walk in the road. There is a particularly bad one at the junction of Temple Fortune Hill and Erskine Hill. As you walk downhill from the church and turn left into Temple Fortune Hill right under the street name on this junction there are uneven cracked paving stones and a raised up metal plate. Very dangerous. If you, or any of your readers have noticed this, I would be very interested to know how long it has been like this, and whether it has been reported to Barnet Council. Please let me know if this is the case by contacting me on 07957 147143.

Yours

C. E. Youlden

Dear Editors

I was in the garden the other day, listening to yet another gardener blowing leaves as though there was no tomorrow, when it occurred to me that in all the discussion about the noise nuisance to neighbours, nothing has been said about their ecological impact.

Blowers are used all year round but particularly in the autumn and winter to clear leaves and leave gardens looking 'nice and tidy'. The problem is that, by so-doing, we are depriving countless small and beneficial insects and much-needed pollinators (inter alia bees, butterflies, ladybirds and moths) of shelter for the winter.

Larger species, such as birds, frogs, bats, and ultimately even we ourselves, all depend on a healthy insect population and the protein-rich food sources they represent.

Research published earlier this year in Biological Conservation shows that, over the past 25-30 years, insects have been lost globally at a rate of 2.5% per annum. "Insects make up about two-thirds of all life on Earth [but] there has been some kind of horrific decline... We appear to be making vast tracts of land inhospitable to most forms of life" (Prof Dave Goulson, Sussex University): 10% of all insects have already become extinct worldwide. In Germany, three-quarters of flying insects in nature reserves have vanished in 25 years and in Britain, the number of widespread butterfly species fell 58% on farmed land between 2000 and 2009. The fragile ecological network on which all life depends is in jeopardy.

Much of this decline is, of course, down to the use of the pesticides; however, climate change, urbanisation, loss of habitat and light pollution all play their part.

Seen in this context, our gardens can provide valuable and desperately needed habitats. Insects and pollinators overwinter in pieces of bark, hollow stems, ornamental grasses, holes in the ground, cracks and under leaf litter. So giving up garden blowers is not just about showing consideration for neighbours, it is also, more importantly, about helping to protect our ecosystem.

Yours truly,
Isabelle Ficker

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