



Changed Plans at School

By Daphne Chamberlain
Bishop Douglass School has abandoned its original plan for a sports hall and community centre because it would have been inappropriate for the site.

The scheme, which was backed by New Opportunities Funding, would have entailed extensive hall lets, a fitness club and a youth centre. However, the school had reservations about its suitability for the area. These doubts were reinforced by a petition and feedback from neighbouring residents, who feared increased noise and traffic.

Scrapping the plan meant the loss of New Opportunities Funding. However, the Department of Education and Skills has agreed to give 100% funding for a new school sports hall, to be open to the public for no more than 10% of its total hours of use. It will continue to be available for small community groups.

Outgoing Head Mike Kelly invited neighbouring residents to a meeting at the school last month, where they viewed the plans. Work on the sports hall is due to begin this August and finish next May, while the science block should be completed this September.

Care for the community

The revised arrangements will still provide extra parking

space, which should help to relieve congestion in the roads. Angela Murphy, due to take up her post as Head in September, told residents that staff and pupils would park on school premises.

A part-time gardener will 'soften' the car park area and frontage with landscaping, and although an electrical sub-station has to be installed at the junction with Manor Park Road, residents were assured it would be safe.

The meeting agreed that social events at the school would finish by midnight, with everyone out of the building and away from the immediate area by then. The school also agreed that building work would not start before 8am.

Angela Murphy pledged to continue Mr Kelly's work in 'turning round' pupil behaviour, emphasising that all complaints would continue to be taken seriously.

Both Heads stressed the importance of good community relations, and it was agreed that Bishop Douglass would host regular meetings with its neighbours in future.

Waste Watching

By Erini Rodis

Delegates in Avenue House tucked into a breakfast of croissants, scrambled eggs and lashings of tea and coffee on 3 June while guest speakers provided information on "why it pays to be green".

Run by the Waste Watch Business Network, the free breakfast was held to inform businesses about implementing simple cost saving ideas that will also benefit the environment.

Delegates were asked to imagine the scenario of a business required to reduce environmental impact and were asked to choose quick and low-cost savings from a range of waste reduction, energy and water efficiency actions. The idea was to get them thinking about environmental initiatives that could easily be introduced into their work places.

Best green practice

Waste Watch Business Network is a membership based not-for-profit waste minimisation network that has been running since 1998. Its aims are to help its members reduce waste disposal costs and improve their overall environmental performance. Their services include waste minimisation surveys; a helpline for advice on environmental issues; recycling and purchasing discounts and regular newsletters and seminars. For more information contact Victoria Howse on 020 8745 4117 or victoria@wastewatch.co.uk, or visit www.wastewatch.org.uk



Whetstone Farmer's Market is a local source of fresh, organic and unusual foods. Photo by Daphne Chamberlain.

Barnet Stalls on Market

By Daphne Chamberlain

Why is Barnet in danger of losing its Farmers' Market? London Farmers' Markets are threatening closure unless trade picks up, while markets elsewhere are holding their own.

I spoke to the stallholders, who all told very much the same story. Initial response was very good, but then the customers disappeared. Takings on one stall have dropped by 80%, and another now has one person serving instead of two.

All but one of the stallholders stand regularly at other markets, which they say are much better supported. There may be a slight downward trend everywhere, one told me, but nothing like here. Others are still busy, and have many more regular customers.

Use it or lose it

So what is the problem? Is it the venue? Some would prefer a site in a busier area, but others are happy with the main road, and one was particularly appreciative of Barnet's signs.

Is it the day? That probably can't be changed. "Anyway," said one, "If people could come at the beginning, they could still come now."

Has it been the weather? "Well, Whetstone has certainly lived up to its name," but then "all markets are affected by weather."

Most of them agreed with the London Farmers' market representative, who would like parking restrictions relaxed to allow them an earlier opening - at 10am.

Glimmer of hope

Meanwhile, there is a glimmer of hope. Trade has picked up slightly in the past couple of weeks, and they are just coming into the summer fruit and vegetable season.

Last week I saw wild rabbit and pheasant, fresh eggs, buffalo's milk cheese, fresh fish you can order, hand-made bread, honey straight from the hive (the beekeeper is there only once a month), and some 'different' plants. The Farmers' Market is at High Road, Whetstone, almost opposite Waitrose, at 11am every Friday.

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