

SEPTEMBER 2005

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Scathing attack on Southern Water

Southern Water, which has been highly criticised for constructing a main drainage sewer through Snodland town centre, has been slated for keeping local residents and retailers in the dark about its plans.

The sewer is to connect the new Berkeley Homes development at Holborough Valley to the existing system in Rocfort Road.

A notice was pinned to a roadside sign from Kent County Council advising that vehicular traffic would be prohibited in Malling Road from Rocfort Road

junction, along Holborough Road to its junction with the A228 from 5th September for 21 days.

At the same time a public notice was published in the Kent Messenger stating that the order was for eight weeks.

Southern Water was accused of lying by Charlie Grayhurst, chairman of Snodland Town Council.

The company issued a statement to *Town Talk* which stated: "Southern Water has been communicating regularly with the town council and

chamber of commerce with regards to the construction plans and they are welcome to pass that information on to residents if they see fit."

Said Mr Grayhurst: "It is disgusting that they listen to our views, turn them down flat and now say they have been in communication with the council all the time. It is a pack of lies."

Alan Totham, chairman of the chamber of commerce, said the chamber had received only one letter, in reply to the original objection to the route of the sewer.

"We find it regrettable that Southern Water decided to proceed with the route despite objections and alternative suggestions."

We have pressured Kent County Council and Tonbridge & Malling Highways Department and have been told that letters will now be sent to residents and visits made to businesses on the route of the works as soon as possible.

In addition, traffic lights will be used rather than road closures whenever possible.

Last minute change of plans?

Following pressure from the Chamber of Commerce and the intervention of MP, Jonathan Shaw, there is a possibility of a last-minute change by Southern Water in its plans for constructing the sewer.

Bob Thian, chairman of the company, has written to Mr Shaw stating that the contractors, HMP, will be able to use directional drilling. This technique would mean the works could be completed by the end of October

Mr Thian pointed out that if problem areas were found HMP would have to revert to conventional excavation which would put completion back by a month.

He told Mr Shaw that, irrespective of the method used, if work was not completed it may be possible to stop completely at the end of October and recommence in mid-January.

There were a number of difficulties, including

significant re-mobilisation costs and whether HMP would have a gang available to recommence the work.

Mr Thian asked when the town council felt the Christmas trading period for retailers began in earnest and, if the council accepted the company's plan, he would put the proposed course of action in place.

He hoped this was a reasonable compromise for local traders.

BOWLS CLUB INVITE

Snodland Short Mat Bowls Club is inviting non-members to an open day to try their hand at the sport. The open day is on 11th September at the community centre and bowls will be provided together with tuition.

'Town Talk'

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Editor: Mel Rayfield; **Editorial:** Peter Rimmer; **Advertising:** Alan Totham

Design & Production: Art & Design Services, 69 High Street, West Malling - Tel: (01732) 842454

Paper: Kindly Donated by Smurfit Townsend Hook

Town Talk is published quarterly by The Snodland Chamber of Commerce and is delivered free of charge to over 5000 homes in Snodland and Halling

Snodland Chamber of Commerce:

Chairman: Alan Totham; **Secretary:** Robert Beswarick; **Treasurer:** Sean Rustrick;
Membership Secretary: Jeanne Bingham

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Our Front Cover:

The impressive Holbourn Court, frequently visited by royalty, prior to its demolition in 1932.

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"Report Vandals" appeal

The chairman of Snodland Town Council has appealed to members of the public to report vandals who are damaging playground equipment in Nevill Park.

The Albatross, a wooden climbing frame shaped like an aeroplane and especially constructed to be used by disabled children, was damaged before it was completed.

"It was vandalised, bits

were broken from it and rubber safety matting was burned," said Charlie Grayhurst

"Residents live close by, but nothing was reported to the police. People need to be more pro-active. All they have to do is pick up the phone and call the police."

Mr Grayhurst said that vandals had also set fire to the swings at the other end of Nevill Park.



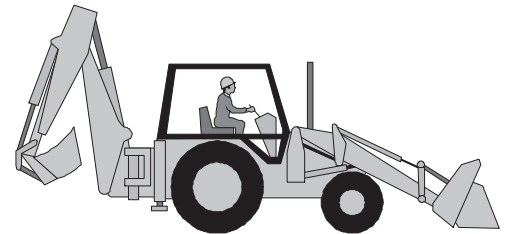
Youngsters playing on the Albatross at Nevill Park.

NIGHTTIME CLOSURE

The car park at Brooklands Lake is to be closed to vehicular traffic at night as a deterrent against vandalism. There will be a gate for pedestrians

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Park Ranger is promoted

Daniel Gooch (pictured right), the Assistant Ranger at Leybourne Lakes Country Park when it opened last September, has been promoted to Head Ranger.

Initial teething problems have now been ironed out and he said he has "loads of plans" for the park's development.

"We have health walks within the park starting at 10am every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, lasting from one to one and a half hours.

"On the first Saturday of every month we are having a three to four hour health walk, starting and

ending in the park, but going on a different route each time and stopping off for lunch on the way. Walks start at 11.30am from the rangers' office in the car park and may include gates and stiles."

A survey of people using the park has been carried out and a user panel will meet at Snodland Community Centre at 7.30pm on 6th September. For more information and to confirm attendance the rangers' telephone number is 01634 243397.

There have been triathlon events in the park during the summer, the most recent, sponsored by Berkeley Homes, was due to take place as *Town Talk*

went to press.

The company has been very closely involved in the creation and development of the 225-acre site, which is now owned and managed by the borough council. A 1,500 metre swim across one of the lakes, followed by a 40 kilometre bicycle ride in the surrounding area and finishing with a 10k run, consisting of two laps of the park, were planned.

Leigh Hallendorf, Marketing Manager of Berkeley Homes (SE London) Ltd, said: "Judging by the popularity of previous races, we know this year's triathlon is set to be an even bigger success."



Guided walk

As part of Heritage Open Day on 10th September, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is arranging a guided walk round the park, starting at 2pm. The walk is free but bookings must be made through the Tourist Information Centre at Tonbridge Castle.

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Late night call for medical centre

A Snodland woman has appealed for the new medical centre to be opened for one late night during the week or on Saturday mornings.

Linda Hasemore of Malling Road said: "We have a lovely new surgery, but it seems to be running on shop hours.

"It is difficult for people who work shifts, outside the town or who are self-employed. Work patterns have changed, people don't live and work in the same area as they used to."

Linda, who works at Snodland Post Office, said a number of customers had spoken to her about the problem.

"The appointments system seems to work very well," she continued. You telephone in the morning for a morning appointment and in the afternoon for an afternoon appointment.

"But what about those people who work away? They might have to take time off work to see a doctor. I cannot see why the doctors cannot work a rota system for one late night a week or a Saturday morning."

Elaine Manooch, Practice Manager at the medical



Medical Centre in Catts Alley

centre at Catts Alley, said the practice has a contractual obligation to be open for a minimum of 45 hours each week and is currently open for 48 hours.

On Mondays and Tuesdays doctors are seeing patients up to and sometimes beyond 7pm when the demand is high.

"it had been difficult to recruit and retain GPs"

"It is important to bear in mind that GPs are not shift workers, they are day time workers like solicitors, accountants and dentists," she explained. "Their working hours are from 8.30am to 6pm, which are already longer than most daytime workers.

"Additionally, they need to stay back beyond that to complete their referrals, paperwork etc, which is an unseen but significant proportion of their workload."

Elaine continued that with the introduction of the new

contract in 2004, Primary Care Trusts took over the responsibility of weekend and night time cover between 6pm and 8am. Before the change it had been difficult to recruit and retain GPs due to the long, unsocial hours.

The practice runs an advanced access appointments system whereby patients can make an appointment for the day they phone to request one and each doctor has early morning and late afternoon slots set aside for people who wish to pre-book due to work commitments, etc.

Elaine added: "Last year we ran a patient questionnaire, one of the questions asked how happy they were with our opening times. The percentage who were satisfied was just under the benchmark percentage for the whole of England.

"We will be conducting another questionnaire soon and will review the situation based on patient feedback."

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