

## **Chairman's Report for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012**

Well, another year has flown by but what a lot has happened in that year. At the start of the year, we were waiting on planning permission for the Marston Marshes Easy Access Path, Planning application was being also made for the old Civil Service Sports Ground and the second Scarecrow competition was being organised.

The Scarecrow competition was much better organised thanks to a sub-committee led by Chris Stebbing. There were more entries than the first one and a public vote was introduced to involve more people. Many thanks go to all who entered and to Notcutts for hosting the prize-giving and supplying the Garden Centre vouchers for the winners. This year's competition was again a great success which gave Waitrose considerable publicity. Thank you Waitrose for your sponsorship in providing vouchers for the prizes and the use of the café for the presentations.

Planning permission for both the Marston Marshes and the Sports Ground were eventually granted. Delays in getting approval from some national environmental bodies held up the Marshes project and then, when it was approved, a spell of wet weather delayed the construction of the path. It was finally completed and a very successful grand opening was held on 24<sup>th</sup> September with about 200 people attending. Since then we have been awarded a further £3,469 as a sustainability grant for maintenance of the path, to purchase maintenance equipment and to pay for training to use it. The grant has also provided some money towards the cost of a new information leaflet and funds to provide guided walks on the marshes with specialist leaders. The first of these walks took place last month to mark the first anniversary of its official opening and three more will take place in the spring of next year. The themes of these will be an early Dawn Chorus, Flora and Fauna and one to get young people involved with Pond Dipping. Full information will be in the next newsletter in April and other publicity. A Volunteer Group, organised by Chris Stebbing under the guidance of Matthew Davies from the Norwich Fringe Project, is doing valuable work on the Marshes, but more of that later.

The Marshes Project has created much interest with a large increase in the number of visitors and with the Anglia in Bloom competition. It was the winner of the Biodiversity Award competing against other sites from all over the Anglia region. Certificates for other awards are all posted on our web site for which I thank Chris Stebbing, who is kept busy keeping it up to date.

When finally the planning permission was granted for the Sports Ground, Persimmon's associate company, Charles Church, launched the development under the name of Wentworth Gardens. At one of our public meetings with Persimmon, they indicated that the time to complete a development of this size would probably be at least three years but the interest has been so great, making headline news in the local papers, the whole building programme looks like being completed a lot earlier. Development of a site with such limited access was always going to be difficult, but hopefully the early completion will compensate for any inconvenience caused. A report of the current situation will be given in the second part of our meeting.

Occasional meetings are held with Eaton Primary School to try and improve the traffic problems with the school runs both morning and afternoon. The meetings have been well represented by City Hall staff, Traffic Wardens, local police, councillors and local residents. Unfortunately not a lot seems to be available to prevent the bad parking, but the children are being encouraged to learn what constitutes good driving and hope this will rub off on the car drivers. At the latest meeting it was realised Eaton Elephants had not been included in the discussions so this was being redressed.

For the future we will continue to strive to fulfil our constitutional aims. Several overhanging shrubs and hedges restrict both the width of the path and visibility of the road. This, together with keeping the footpath network clean, getting a management plan with the owners for the plot of land behind Brentwood adjacent to Greenways and Donkey Lane, traffic problems and the Notcutts sponsored Scarecrow Competition will keep your committee occupied over the next twelve months.