

Wokingham Waterside Centre (WWC)

June 2022

Although the Covid pandemic hit many businesses badly WWC was very fortunate that, with dedicated hard work from our management company, Cloud 9 and their team, there was a large increase in numbers of users of the Centre over the last 2 years with a consequent and welcome improvement in the bank account.

Unfortunately, at the same time, with the building of the park and ride (P&R) next door and Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Highways Department's continued refusal to effectively screen WWC's campsite from it, usage of the camp site has been much reduced as it became a safeguarding issue for youngsters. Consequently much of that part of the business has been lost.

Despite being completed last year the P&R was unable to operate initially as a bus contract could not be agreed by WBC and Thames Valley Business Park (TVBP). However, whilst Winnersh P&R has had a 2nd floor added its business has moved temporarily to the TVBP, but it was recently announced that this service will close shortly. Presumably it will remain as a chargeable car park for users of the 'Local Green Space' by the Thames. There is also a suggestion it could be used as P&R for hospital staff. During the time the P&R has been open litter does not appear to have been removed from site, extra planting and pruning of the 'hedging' has not been done and dead trees have not been replaced. Also, Bat numbers have reduced due to the nighttime lighting. It was drawn to WBC's attention that lighting was overly bright and, although it was reduced, Bat numbers still appear to be low.

WBC Councillor Shirley Boyt joined the board of trustees last year in her own right as a resident of Earley Whitegates ward and was able to inform trustees that WBC had made a commitment to fitting solar panels to all their buildings. Following a meeting she arranged with relevant WBC officers WWC was assured that, not only would WBC fit solar panels (provided nearby trees were pruned to allow sufficient light to the roof) but that they would also arrange to change all the lighting to run so cheaply that WWC would be as close to carbon neutral as possible. The new lighting was fitted almost straight away and it is hoped that the solar panels won't be far behind as the trees have been pruned as requested.

WWC opened in 2000 and the trustees were keenly aware that, 22 years later the floor covering in the changing rooms and showers needed replacing along with some of the showers and carpeting in the rest of the centre. This was completed in March of this year and plans are in place to update other areas of the building later in the year along with the purchase of more canoeing equipment. The centre has also taken on a new cleaning company who are doing a good job.

Following this year's May elections and the political changes at WBC Cllr Boyt became the WBC representative at the Centre. This should lead to closer working with the Council but also means that WWC will be looking for a replacement trustee??

I understand that a few members of ETC have visited the Wokingham Waterside Centre by the Thames in Earley Whitegates. If anyone else is interested I would be happy to arrange it.

Jenny Lissaman