

Meeting with the University Vice Chancellor

Jill Owen, county councillor for St David's and St James, recently met with the University Vice Chancellor to raise residents' concerns about the problems caused by the continuing increase in student numbers as a result of the University's expansion. The main areas for discussion were student cars, rubbish and noise.

A very successful meeting heard not only about the benefit to the city which the university brings but also residents' perspective regarding the three issues mentioned. Parking in particular has become more of a problem with a higher percentage of students bringing cars to Exeter and filling up residents' parking spaces. This issue provoked a lively debate at the subsequent St James 'Have Your Say' meeting.

Having identified the issues, it is hoped a further meeting with the VC may go some way to addressing them. Whilst we all recognise the beneficial contribution to Exeter of the university, we in St James are experiencing a disproportionate adverse effect of ever increasing student numbers.



ST JAMES VEGETABLE GARDENS

Anyone who has taken a train to Exmouth will know the allotments behind St James Park station. Now revamped and renamed St James Vegetable Gardens, plot holders and friends are delighted that the Gardens have been assessed as 'Thriving' by the RHS 'It's Your Neighbourhood' scheme.

The assessor toured the site, heard about the wildlife and inspected the new eco-friendly rainwater collection system, supported by Rainshare, taking rain water from a roof in Powderham Crescent.

Sunday morning working parties of existing and potential plot holders have been working on maintenance tasks and clearance of shared spaces and potential vacant plots.

At the first SJVG AGM in July plans for the coming horticultural year were agreed and the ambition to be offered a Network Rail lease to be signed on behalf of plot holders by ESJCT Ltd to secure the site for St James in perpetuity was confirmed.

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Party in the Street

Prospect Park Residents' Association held its now customary Street Party on Sunday 25 October. Early showers were dodged whilst sharing coffee and setting up for the annual event but once they stopped the sun came out along with residents young and old to enjoy reclaiming the street from traffic and catching up with neighbours.

Offerings for a bring and share lunch were brought out and many delicious dishes were enjoyed by all before desserts and cakes appeared later on in the afternoon. A large number of students joined in, including many who were new to the street this term, and all enjoyed getting to know each other.

Children had fun riding bikes and playing in the traffic-free street and there were some great games of Jenga and Twister enjoyed by children, students and older residents alike!

One spin-off from the event has been the training of two PPRA members on a Road Closure Safety Course so that in future there will be certified people able to assist with street closures for parties and other community events across St James.

Station Spruce Up

In October a group of around 20 people came together for a tidy up gardening session at St James Park station. The beds created in the spring had a good weeding and trim, brambles were cleared from the banks and wild flower seeds were sown and over 200 spring bulbs planted.

The volunteers came from a number of community groups including Powderham Crescent Residents Association, St James Vegetable Gardens, the Football Club Senior Reds Supporters and University of Exeter Student Volunteers. Also taking part were the Avocet Line Rail User Group and the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership who organised the event.

The morning wasn't warm but the sun was shining most of the time. However the rain started as we finished - so heavy that several volunteers had to stay in the nearby St Anne's Well hostelry until it eased!



ABOUT St James

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EXETER ST JAMES
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a shared interest



DELIVERING THE NEWS AND STORIES AROUND AND ABOUT OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

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THE GARDEN'S LOOKING ROSY



The moment many residents have been waiting so long for could almost be here as a vital step towards developing the community's vision for Queen's Crescent Garden is about to be taken.

In previous issues we have mentioned the Compulsory Purchase Order of the Garden that the City Council first agreed to carry out as long ago as 2012 and at last the Order has been confirmed! A great deal of work has gone on behind the scenes at the Civic Centre to reach this final stage and we are very grateful to the Officers involved. The eagle-eyed will have noticed the yellow notices posted by the Council in the vicinity of the Garden.

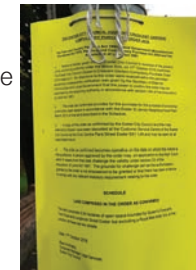
We are now in a 6 week consultation period during which time any objections to procedural aspects of the CPO may be registered. If it remains unchallenged the way will paved for Exeter St James Community Trust to take on the long term lease on behalf of all residents of St James, hopefully early in 2017.

The City Council's legal team is preparing a draft lease prior to negotiations with solicitor Keith Biggs of OTB Eveling, appointed by the Trust. Having previously negotiated Heads of Terms pro bono, Keith has now kindly agreed to act for the Trust on the lease at a capped community rate.

Meanwhile regular mowing teams of local residents are maintaining the Garden and practical help has been given by individuals, families from St Sidwell's School Gardening Club, Exeter Round Table and most recently a group from the University's Environmental Society Student Community Volunteers.

Do you have ideas for using the Garden or wish to help in some way? Do get in touch by email.

This is your project run by the Community for the Community!



Have You Put Your Trust In St James Yet?...

Exeter St James Community Trust Ltd was set up by the Forum as the legal body to take on and deliver improvements to our community.

Now with over 200 members we are keen to grow further as we stand on the brink of taking on the permanent lease of Queen's Crescent Garden. The more support we can demonstrate, the more successful we will be in raising funds. As a charitable organisation the Trust exists solely for the benefit of our local community so if you haven't yet joined us please consider doing so. For as little as £5 you can have a say and share in the future prosperity of St James. Application forms can be downloaded from the Trust section of the website –

www.exeterstjamesforum.org

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Previous copies of About St James can be seen on the website.
Produced by Exeter St James Forum and Exeter St James Community Trust.

MORE STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN ST JAMES? THE GOOD AND BAD NEWS

It was a triumph for the Neighbourhood Plan when one of its policies, relating to large scale purpose built student accommodation not being supported within intact residential streets, was used in the Planning Officer's Report as the reason to recommend refusal of a 68 bed development on the site of the City Service Station in Well Street. However, after listening to the strong representations made by each of our three local city councillors in support of the key aim of the Plan, that of addressing the current community imbalance, Planning Committee resolved to add the detrimental effect on community balance as a second reason for refusal. We can only hope that an important line in the sand has been drawn.

Since then 3 further student accommodation developments have been proposed within St James, as well as a major development on campus. Two of the proposals are pre-application and therefore confidential, but we can say that it is clear that every potential in-fill or redevelopment site is being identified by developers as ripe for student accommodation. The 3rd is the addition of a 6 bed annexe in the grounds of Hope Court, an existing student block on the corner of Prince of Wales and Pennsylvania Roads. The need for the Neighbourhood Plan is as great as ever and each proposal will be carefully scrutinized by the Forum's Planning and Design Panel.

WHAT COST A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

The legal challenge over the decision to grant planning consent for the Football Club development - involving purpose built accommodation for over 300 students - was ended when the Judge refused the Forum's application to seek judicial review. The decision, met with dismay by residents, left the community questioning why we had worked so tirelessly for more than two years to produce a Neighbourhood Plan whose central aim was to prevent the further studentification of St James in favour of a more balanced and diverse population.

This will be the focus of a meeting the Forum is currently seeking with Gavin Barwell, Minister for Housing and Planning. We will want to know why in our case neighbourhood planning did not deliver government's promises to empower local residents to determine the future of developments in their locality, why when put to the test the Neighbourhood Plan carried so little legal weight and why its policies were so readily set aside.

Disappointment was confounded further by the Judge's surprising refusal to allow a Protective Costs Order on the grounds that the issue was not of national significance despite obvious implications for neighbourhood planning across the country. Although made liable for Exeter City Council's costs, we were deemed not responsible for those of the developer or the Football Club and our own costs were minimal thanks to the pro bono advice received from barrister Gavin Collett of Magdalen Chambers. The Forum is now faced with a bill for £4,000 and as a community organisation without assets we must raise this money through donations. Please help if you can - details in the panel below.

HELP TO FUND LEGAL COSTS

We would be grateful to receive any donations to meet legal costs incurred in the defence of our Neighbourhood Plan.

Please send cheques to:

The Treasurer
ESJF
c/o St Sidwell's
Community Centre
Sidwell Street
Exeter EX4 6NN

Alternatively by bank transfer to:

ESJF
Sort Code: 08-92-99
Account No: 65493429
Please mark bank reference
"For Legal Costs".

Thank You

Rest assured we remain committed to the Neighbourhood Plan, its policies and vision for St James as a vibrant place to live and work.



Fireworks in Powderham Crescent

Powderham Crescent Residents' Association held its traditional annual Bonfire Party on November 5th. Around 170 residents and friends enjoyed mulled wine and an impressive array of food in the Crescent Garden which was flood-lit for the occasion. The firework display ran for 25 minutes to a musical backing including the Ride of the Valkyries.

Historic Street Furniture

As part of the QCG project we have an interest in the decommissioned post box in York Road. While the Council is keen for all historic street furniture to be maintained in situ it will require an audit of all such items in St James before being listed for protection. So, please help! Take a close look at streets near you and tell us what you've found by emailing us and make sure these significant items of our heritage are not lost forever. info@exeterstjamesforum.org



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OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS

Anti-social Behaviour and Public Spaces Protection

Open Public Meetings on –

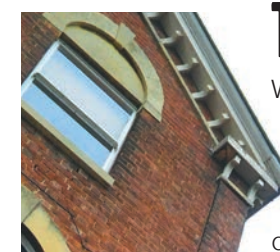
- **Wednesday 7th December** at 7pm, Exeter Community Centre, 17 St. David's Hill
- **Thursday 8th December** at 7pm, St. Sidwell's Primary School, York Road.

The Exeter Community Safety Partnership wants to hear your views on proposals for a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) covering St. David's, the lower part of St. James and the wider City Centre.

The PSPO is designed to prevent and manage down anti-social behaviours in public spaces that are having a negative impact on residents and businesses – namely:

- **Street drinking and injecting/taking drugs**
- **Urinating in public**
- **Groups or individuals acting in an anti-social/intimidating way**
- **Aggressive begging**

We need your views on whether controls over this type of anti-social behaviour are needed in St David's, St. James and the City Centre. Please come along to hear the proposals, ask questions and have your say.



THINGS ARE LOOKING UP!

We often take the familiar for granted but St James has a wide range of architecture from tower blocks to terraced streets. Next time you're out instead of keeping your head down look up and you'll see a variety of brick patterns, window shapes and eaves designs. Even the simplest terraced street can surprise – **take a look.**



Celebratory Summer Event in QCG

A very successful and enjoyable Tea in the Park event took place on 25 June to celebrate the improvements achieved earlier this year and raised over £400 for QCG funds. The Mosque and St Sidwell's School both contributed to the event. The Mosque organised a number of fund raising stalls – face painting, henna painting, name-writing in Arabic and a table-top sale - and the school choir proved a great attraction with enthusiastic rendition of a number of songs about the outdoors, the sun and insects. As well as the well-established tea and home-made cake sales and well-stocked plant stall, Theia, the Little Owl, entranced many as she posed beautifully for intrigued onlookers, and locally-themed prints kindly donated by well-known local graphic artist, Aylwyn Bowen, proved a great attraction as treasure to be won in the QCG Treasure Map competition!

Bricks of the Community

Many thank to Ginny Lyons of Thornton Hill who has organised two private garden parties this year raising over £200 for QCG funds. Ginny was given great support by Aylwyn Bowen and a mention must go to pianist, Bee Harley, who played at the cream teas.

Thanks also to Elissa Mood of Prospect Park for donating 300 bricks towards future work on QCG boundary walls.

Christmas Carols

Season's greetings! All are welcome to join residents on their carol singing journey round St James on Wednesday **14 December**. Meet at the Prospect Park notice board at 6.30pm or join in along the way.

