

## **Chairperson's Report to RACKS AGM 25 April 2016**

- I am Ian Ratcliffe, Chair of the Residents' Association of Cherryvalley, Kensington and Shandon, known as RACKS. This is a short report on the activities of the Association over the past twelve months.
- We are interested in your views on how we are doing. You will find a short questionnaire on your chair and we would appreciate if you could complete it this evening and hand it in!

### **A55 Knock Road Widening Scheme**

- DRD has confirmed that it still plans to proceed with the scheme when funding is available;
- In August 2015, DRD vested further lands for the current design, suggesting that the scheme is still very much alive;
- We have suggested two enhancements:
  - Firstly, using land surplus to DRD needs to link the Connswater Community Greenway to Cherryvalley Glen and the Comber Greenway, adding to local amenities (I have some brochures on the Connswater Community Greenway if anyone would like one);
  - Secondly, since the roadlines are now known, to commence the environmental landscaping early so that mature shrubbery or trees will be established by the time work commences, protecting our area from the impact of the scheme during its construction and operation;
- We will continue to lobby for the maximum protection for our area.

Thanks to Gavin Robinson, MP, for facilitating meetings and offering to put our case forward to the Minister.

### **Traffic**

There are several current issues:

- Firstly, there have been a number of accidents or near misses at the Shandon Park lights. Drivers of vehicles coming up Sandown Road and turning right towards Forestside seem oblivious to traffic from Shandon Park having right of way going straight ahead down Sandown Road. Recent engineering works seem to have exacerbated the situation.
- Secondly, the standard of footways and road surfaces has deteriorated in the area and some of the footways pose risks to the safety of pedestrians. We are taking these issues up with DRD via Chris Lyttle, MLA, Alliance Party.
- Thirdly, following complaints from residents neighbouring the pinch point on Shandon Park (the bollards that narrow the road width just before the Golf Club gates) DRD has commenced a consultation to replace the bollards by a ramp. Residents were experiencing difficulty exiting their driveways at busy times, increased risk, road rage and selfish driving behaviour by passing motorists. After consulting with local residents RACKS has supported its replacement. The consultation is live now on DRD website. You can find it by putting 'Shandon Park Traffic Calming' into Google. If you have strong views we encourage you to respond by email by the closing date 13-May to [traffic.eastern@drdni.gov.uk](mailto:traffic.eastern@drdni.gov.uk)
- Fourthly, a number of pedestrians find it difficult and dangerous at busy times trying to cross Gilnahirk Road to get to the shops at Cherryvalley. We asked DRD to consider provision of a crossing, but their assessment is that it is not a high enough priority to attract funding. We have 300 names on a petition, if you would like to add yours, please do so this evening. We are progressing this with help from Ald. Jim Rodgers and his colleagues in the Ulster Unionist Party.

### **Planning issues**

In accordance with the mandate given at previous AGMs, the Association has focussed its attention on those planning applications of wider significance across the area. It has therefore not involved itself in individual planning applications which can, on occasions, be a source of controversy between individual neighbours.

- While there have been a number of planning applications in the area over 2015-16, none have had a wider impact attracting the attention of RACKS.
- We hoped that the DOE Minister's adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP) would afford some degree of protection against high density replacement housing. This added the Cherryvalley Extension

Area of Townscape Character (ATC) to the existing Cherryvalley ATC. Together they cover the bulk of the RACKS area, with the exception of Shandon Park and the more modern properties in Kensington Gardens, Gardens South and West. However a Judicial Review concluded that the Minister had acted unlawfully by not seeking approving from Executive colleagues. It is unclear what the remedy is. The minister's adoption of BMAP is now subject to a judicial challenge.

### **Environment**

- During the year, fly-tipping and graffiti has become evident in areas bordering Knock Road. We have taken this up for action by the relevant authorities with the help of Cllr Ross Brown and his colleagues in the Green Party.
- As you have heard, Northern Ireland Environment Agency now opens Shandon Park Mound on the first Sunday in each month from 12 noon to 4pm. RACKS is discussing with NIEA whether we can help to provide more frequent access, subject to agreeing an acceptable legal basis with NIEA for doing so.

### **Neighbourhood Watch**

- Police report that the RACKS area is one of the most crime-free in Belfast, and they attribute this in part to our having an active Neighbourhood Watch scheme.
- As you have heard, Morris Duncan has taken over as the lead coordinator and has just given you an update. Please consider volunteering to help, it doesn't amount to much more than being a good, vigilant neighbour.
- The PSNI relies on us to help them by reporting vandalism, suspicious vehicles or happenings to PSNI Strandtown via the Police Non-Emergency Number, 101.

### **Communication with residents**

- We have recently commissioned a new website that will be available shortly at [www.RACKS.org.uk](http://www.RACKS.org.uk). Watch that space which will shortly be filled with details of progress and contacts.
- If there is anybody who would keep the website content fresh when we have re-established it, you would be a most welcome volunteer.
- We also plan to produce a quarterly newsletter containing articles of interest to residents.

### **Financial Report (2015)**

- Highlights of the report are:
  - Income £535
  - Expenditure £191
  - Cash held in bank (at 31 December 2015) £3,102
- Most of our expenditure goes on stationery.
- We rely on your annual subscriptions, it's only a fiver, but if you have difficulty with that, don't worry, we want you as a member, this Association is for the benefit of all residents in the area.

### **Election of Office Bearers**

Now to the election of office bearers. A number of Committee members have retired from the committee in recent years, and we would like to increase the number on the committee to spread the workload and ensure that the committee is representative of the RACKS area. It's not onerous; if you can manage a few evenings a year, please put your name forward.

### **Finally, I would like to thank:**

- Members of the Committee for the time they devote to the Association;
- Our local councillors, MLAs and MP who help us to get our concerns addressed;
- Members of RACKS for their support and attending this evening; and finally;
- Shandon Park Golf Club for letting us use these marvellous facilities for our AGM and committee meetings.

That concludes my report. Thank you for your patience and support.