

BVRG Newsletter May 2009

Police Activity

Members who attended our AGM last year will remember that one of the invited speakers was Sergeant Tim Bennett, of the Metropolitan Police's **Blackheath Safer Neighbourhoods Team (SNT)**. After a couple of years of sterling work, Tim has taken the opportunity for a sabbatical. The SNT now has a new head, Sergeant Layne Strong. We invited Sgt Strong to join us at our March Steering Committee meeting, and he very kindly gave up a couple of hours of his free time to meet us.

Layne told us that the focus of the SNT will be somewhat modified: efforts are going to be concentrated more on known trouble spots and troublemakers, meaning that the patrolling schedules leading to regular "visible presence" of SNT members - several PCSOs, several constables, and the sergeant - will be modified. Sgt Strong told us that he realised the value of the visible presence in officers in reassuring local residents and said that there was now a move to make an explicitly measurable difference to crime levels in the Blackheath SNT's beat area (which is considerably larger than Blackheath Village alone - see the map on the website below). One aspect of this is that Sgt Strong and his team will be holding a series of public meetings in 2009, to establish with local residents what issues they most want addressed by the SNT.

As well as the targeting of known crime hot-spots and the criminals associated with them, **Neighbourhood Watch** schemes are being set up around the beat. To date eight schemes have been started, with two more beginning soon. Sgt Strong and his team have also produced a diary sheet, to help residents record evidence of anti-social behaviour, which can then be used by the police in targeting lower-level, but still criminal behaviour.

To fill in the diary, the SNT ask that you record the following information:

- time and date
- description of person(s) involved
- location
- anti-social activities, (e.g. street drinking, public urination)

The SNT has an excellent website which you can visit for more information on the team, its members, and the latest news, including public meetings with the SNT during 2009, and a crime map of London:

<http://www.met.police.uk/teams/lewisham/blackheath/index.php>

If you would like to contact the Safer Neighbourhood Team about any specific issues in the Blackheath area, you can email them on Blackheath.SNT@met.police.uk or phone them on 020 8721 2741.

Sgt Strong also reminded us that any activity which is threatening, dangerous, or serious in your opinion should ALWAYS be reported to the police immediately using the emergency services 999 number, and that you should never put yourself in danger or at risk if such situations occur. There is more information on "Reporting Crime in Your Area" on the SNT's website.

Paths on the Heath

On 12th Feb BVRG attended a meeting of the **Blackheath Joint Working Party**, the body which advises on Heath-related matters. One of the key matters was **Green Flag status for the Heath**. Green Flag status is awarded by the Civic Trust <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/award/> and is described as "a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas". Lewisham Council is keen to have this status.

At the meeting, BVRG representatives raised the question of the paths on the Heath, which are in very poor condition. It would be surprising if paths in this condition meet the requirements of Green Flag status. Subsequent enquiries via councillors reveal that to put the paths back into acceptable condition would cost an estimated £320,000 but only £20,000 has been made available to date by Lewisham Council.

BVRG is considering whether to make the condition of the paths a campaigning issue. Your thoughts would be appreciated, and in particular we would welcome anyone who would be interested in helping in such a campaign, should it go ahead.

Local Assembly

The next Local Assembly date is Tuesday 9th June. The following meeting dates for your diaries are Monday 7th September, Saturday 21st November and Wednesday 10th March 2010.

Traffic and parking

The Council will be conducting a review of the **20mph zone in Blackheath Village** during June and July. They will be writing to all households and businesses in the zone. We expect to receive an update on the results at the Blackheath Assembly to be held on Monday 7th September.

A review of the **BHA Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ)** was carried out some time ago. The main outcome was that some extra parking spaces were identified. Work on this should be completed over the summer.

Street Furniture

There is a general concern within Lewisham Council about the **volume of street furniture and signs in the village**. The Mayor considered a report last week regarding the **removal of surplus pedestrian railings in the village centre and along Southvale Road**. The reasons given for this change of policy is that there are now questions whether they contribute to road safety, they also feel their removal can improve the visual amenity and may also assist in promoting the economic and social wellbeing of areas. Railings will be removed as and when there is a budget to do so. Budget issues seem to be a main concern since it is costly to keep replacing damaged railings.

The BVRG Steering Group discussed this at our monthly meeting in April. Several people pointed out that the very fact that the railings in Southvale Road are damaged show that they, or a similar form of protection, are needed, not only to prevent cars running into houses, but also for the protection of the many children who walk that way to and from school. Other concerns raised included the potential removal of the railings outside Blacks the jeweller where the pavement for pedestrians is extremely narrow. Regarding the village as a whole, clutter is obviously not attractive, but we would need to have more information about safety implications and specific proposals before reaching a considered view.

We'd be very interested in hearing your views about this issue so please do contact us with your thoughts. You can also email our local councillor Chris Maines about this issue on CllrChris.Maines@lewisham.gov.uk

Olympics in Greenwich Park

The campaign against the use of Greenwich Park for the 2012 Olympic equestrian events has released a report about the cost of using the park. The report produced by **No to Greenwich Olympic Equestrian Events (NOGOE)** can be found on their website www.nogoe2012.com.

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (**LOCOG**) are **holding public consultations about the plans for the park on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th May 2009** at the Pavillion Tea Rooms in the park between 10am and 6pm.

Steering Group Change

Frank Smith has stepped down from the BVRG Steering Group this year and we would like to take this opportunity to thank him hugely for all his hard work for BVRG since the group was formed in 2004. Frank has made a tremendous contribution to BVRG over the last five years and will be much missed although he assures us that he will still be an interested and active BVRG member!