

Spring 2024 VA News

New Ash Green Village Association Newsletter



Springcroft Wood—What's going on?

Springcroft Wood lies behind the neighbourhoods of Westfield, Bowes Wood and Redhill Wood. It is much valued for walking and as an attractive backdrop to New Ash Green.

The wood cannot be built on because much of it is protected by its designation as ancient woodland (as shown in green on the map overleaf) as well as being subject



An extract from the map of Kent produced by Andrew Dury and John Andrews in 1769 which shows a much larger wooded belt on the western side of Hartley Bottom, to the east of Ash Church.

Springcroft Wood is the remnant of the northernmost part of this wood.

to a Tree Preservation Order. However, many of the trees are currently of a similar age and this lack of variety is not good for biodiversity. It is now evident that work is needed to deal with trees that are too tall, overcrowded and becoming a safety risk. Some are affected by ash dieback. The protected status does not mean that the woodland cannot be touched but it does require careful planning before applying for permission and licences to carry out any management works.

New Ash Green Village Association has now

been granted a felling licence by the Forestry Commission to restart managing this protected woodland through coppicing. Coppicing is a traditional and environmentally friendly system of woodland management. Trees are cut close to the ground on a regular cycle. They regrow from dormant buds at the base of the stump to create dense stands of multi-stemmed trees. Though the work seems very destructive, coppicing the trees in a 15 metre band around Bowes Wood neighbourhood will give more space to the surrounding trees. The hope is to maintain the coppice on a 15-20 year rotation. Under the terms of the legal agreement with the Forestry Commission we want all the trees to grow back within this area. There is evidence that the woodland has been coppiced in the distant past since 1600 (see the photograph right) so our intention is to revive that former management method.

We are coppicing the trees at this time of the



Old coppicing in Springcroft Wood

In this issue

Springcroft Wood

Ticketing System

The Amenity Committee

The Village Centre



year to minimise the risk to protected wildlife and our native animals. We will work with the contractors, prior to the work starting, on steps to lessen the impact on wildflowers so that damaging factors can then be managed throughout. Some large ecologically important trees will be retained. The felled timber will be moved later in the year, when the ground is drier, to minimise impacts on the soils and wildflowers. The treetops will be retained on site and will be laid around the coppiced areas to protect the regrowing trees from damage. Regular surveys will be conducted following the works to assess the regrowth. Any damaged or killed trees will be replanted. Please respect our regenerating trees and woodlands to help us meet the agreements of the felling licence. Expect to see new growth from the trees as early as next year, with new trees being planted in year 2.

Coppicing of the woods is a beneficial management technique that promotes healthy woodland regrowth and is good for wildflowers, invertebrates, birds and mammals by creating a varied habitat. Expect more works to come in the woodlands as we aim to manage the areas by removing diseased trees and reinstating coppicing where appropriate; the agreed forestry plan



Most of the larger wooded parts of New Ash Green are designated as ancient woodland and Tree Preservation Orders protect the areas that are most vulnerable.

Ticketing system

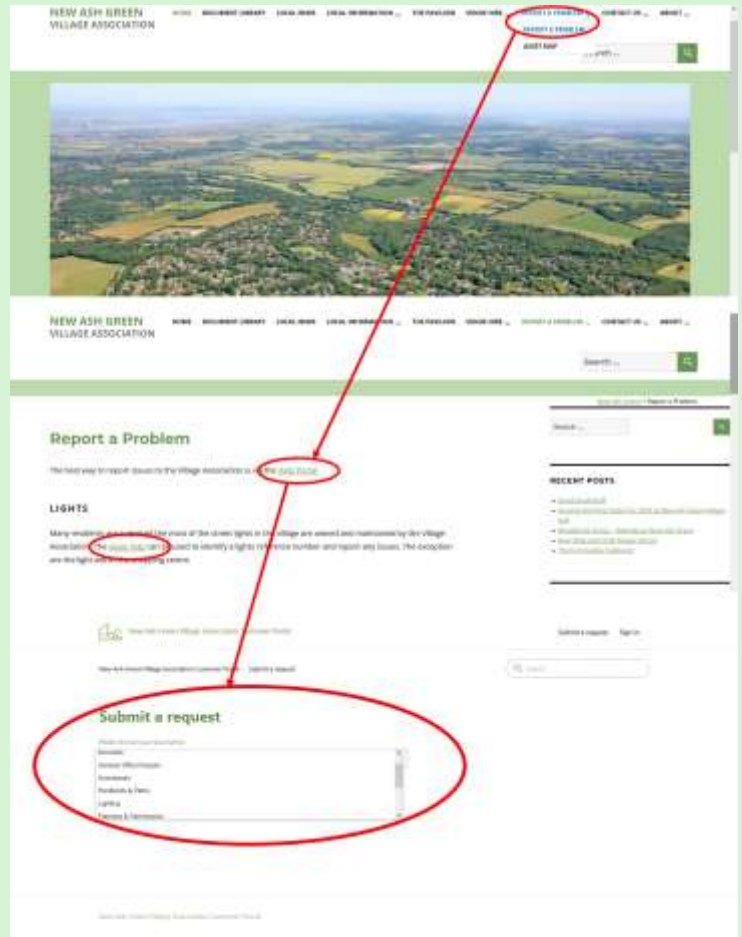
In response to comments about the way that requests for help and information have been handled, the Village Association has now introduced an automated ticketing system which ensures that all contacts are logged and passed to the right person for action. They can then be traced and the outcome will be reported.

It is easy to access the system, by clicking on the 'CONTACT US' tab on the home page of the VA website (www.nagval.com) and following the link to the Help Portal. Then choose the issue and enter the details of your request.

If you see something on village land that needs to be fixed you can easily report it by going to <https://nagval.com/report-a-problem/> or following the 'REPORT A PROBLEM' link from the website home page. All the assets in the village that are maintained by the VA are now shown on the Asset Map which can be found on the 'Report a Problem' page of the website. Each has a unique reference number which will help to locate the problem and ensure it is dealt with as quickly as possible. So please use this if possible to identify the issue about which you have a concern.

This graphic will guide you through the process.

You will receive an acknowledgment and reference number by email with updates on progress.



The Village Association Amenity Committee

Who are they?

They are a group of architects and other specialists who live in the village and volunteer their time to advice and help safeguard the concept of New Ash Green as a planned 'Village in the Countryside'.

What do they do?

All property owners need the Village Association's approval for alterations to the external appearance of their property. The Amenity Committee achieves this, wherever possible, without stopping essential improvements which were unheard of when the village was designed, like solar power, composite materials and electric vehicles. To help people to make informed choices they run Design Guidance surgeries on the first Saturday of each month at the VA office, from 10.30am—12.00 noon or you can ask for a copy of the Design Guidance booklet. The surgeries are open to all residents looking for advice on their ideas for any alterations to houses, fencing, garages, or even permanent structures in gardens before submitting their planning application to the VA Amenity Committee.

Cladding

A large number of New Ash Green's houses are timber clad and need regular maintenance, painting, and board replacements. The Amenity Committee are aware that new products are coming to the market which might be acceptable as an alternative. Some of these products suggest that they are an environmentally friendly modified wood, offering a range of beneficial properties i.e. strength, exceptional stability, longevity and fire-resistance. There is a sample of such a product at the VA office for residents to inspect if they are considering replacing their timber cladding. As with any modification, replacement, or change of materials, an application must be approved by the Amenity Committee before any work begins to ensure what is planned and the materials used are in line with the village's Design Guidance, especially the finish, profile and measurements.

Can you help?

New members of the Committee who have relevant experience are always welcome so if you would like to offer your help please contact the VA office.



The Village Centre—Progress

The Village Association does not own any of the village centre, nor the car parks, but last year the VA contacted the new owner's appointed management company and met with them at the VA office in September to present residents' ongoing concerns and lobby them for improvements. This was well received and it is refreshing to see proactive maintenance of the shopping centre beginning. The VA also offered to act as a conduit for wider residents' concerns which was warmly accepted by management company and the office is now in regular contact with the management company making them aware of reported issues which are being dealt with in a more timely manner. As we are all painfully aware, the previous owners failed abysmally to maintain the buildings and surrounds so there is a lot of catching up and it will not all happen overnight.

The residential properties on Upper Street South have already been renovated, repairs have taken place in the car park, and the management company have provided an update on the work they are currently carrying out to make improvements to the centre:

- Upper Street South apartment roofs are being fixed as majority have experienced leaks
- The walkway above 2-18 The Row that is causing ingress is to undergo major works in the coming weeks to prevent the roof leaks
- Pot holes have been repaired in the studio car park
- Public benches have been installed in the centre
- A new site index and signage to promote the retail units is to be installed in the coming weeks
- Floral hanging baskets are to be fitted around the centre in the coming weeks



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