Dear Standish Voice member,

Here is the newsletter for April.

**STANDISH CHRISTMAS MARKET**

This weekend we have announced that Standish Christmas Market will return again in December.

Over the last couple of weeks we have received the go-head from both Wigan Council and St Wilfrid’s Church for the Market date to be Saturday, December 1.

Last year’s Market was a great success with as many people attending as the first event, despite the inclement weather. Thousands of pounds were raised for good causes, the traders told us they appreciated a well-organised event, Standish’s businesses did a roaring trade and, most importantly, judging by the feedback from the public which was overwhelmingly positive and supportive, everyone attending had a great time.

As ever, our aim for the Market is to make it better than the previous year and to raise enough money to stage it in the future. Standish Christmas Market committee has been meeting since February and we would like to thank committee members old and new who are giving their free time to organise this fantastic community event.

The Market does cost a large amount of money to stage and, as it is not a commercial venture, we rely on grants and sponsorship to pay for the bulk of the outlay. Standish’s Councillor Ray Whittingham has already pledged to give a donation to the Market from his Brighter Borough funding, as he has done in the past, and we would like to thank him for that.

**STANDISH CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS COMMITTEE**

Railings around Standish's living Christmas tree are on their way to being installed after a successful fundraising campaign.

The living tree was planted and decorated for last Christmas by Standish Christmas Decorations Group, which includes representatives from organisations across the village, set up last year by Standish Voice and now chaired by Standish Voice committee member Diane Gore.

Now, money raised is being used to install decorative railings around the tree - necessary to meet council safety requirements - which will be much better than the unsightly metal fencing which has been used in previous years. The 1.2metre-high railings and their gate will match the ones which currently surround the nearby historic well.

The money raised included £600 Brighter Borough money funding from Standish’s Councillor Ray Whittingham, and £1,250 from Standish Voice's online crowdfunding campaign, matched by a £1,000 contribution from Wigan Council. Another £180 was collected in fundraising tins across the village last Christmas. Thanks to everyone who donated.

The living tree was donated by Holts Brewery, which began operating The Lychgate pub last year, and a plaque thanking the company will be put on the railings.
The tree decorations cost £440 and the rest of the money will be spent on the railings and flagging with a remainder set aside for future care of the tree. As it is a living tree, it will grow over the next few years to a maximum height of 8 metres – a height decided by St Wilfrid’s Church.

Estimates for the railings and flagging are being sought by Councillor Whittingham - who will oversee the project - and they will be installed in time for the next festive season.

Standish Christmas Decorations Group includes representatives from Standish Royal British Legion, Standish Community Forum, Standish Community Centre and Standish In Bloom/Incredible Edible.

Thanks to everyone involved, especially committee member Ron Wade who successfully chaired the group last year.

**WIGAN COUNCIL PLAYING FIELD STRATEGY**

A new strategy concerning playing fields has been adopted by Wigan Council.

It details ways to improve sports pitch provision across the borough. It suggests nine pitches could be sold off for development to fund improvements to other more viable pitches.

The report says that in Standish, The Rec, on Southlands Avenue, would have been on that list for possible sale, but it is protected.

Standish Voice foresaw this possibility a couple of years ago and protected The Rec with an Asset of Community Value order, adopted in December 2015. We protected other important sites and buildings across the village with these orders too.

The AVC has given The Rec limited protection against development until December 2020 and the report also details that plans for new uses for it are being considered. However, the suggestion of a small car park there has now been discounted.

If Standish Voice had not protected The Rec with the AVC, the report says it would be on the list of potential sites for being sold off for development, which is exactly what we said when we originally consulted about this under-used facility this time last year.

This must not happen. We want to see The Rec improved and used by all sections of the community so that there is no excuse for it being sold off for housing and the draft Standish Neighbourhood Plan strengthens that.

For clarity, there is no plan for a car park on any part of The Rec in the draft Neighbourhood Plan. That proposal was consulted upon but, taking into consideration the views of nearby residents, this was discounted as not being sufficiently popular. A new group has formed to look at the future of The Rec and we wish them well in their work.

You can read a news article on the report here:

<https://www.wigantoday.net/news/environment/nine-wigan-football-fields-may-be-sold-off-in-sports-shake-up-1-9072548>

And read about the strategy and report on the council’s website here:

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Playing-pitch-strategy.aspx>

**THE LINE**

Work will finally begin on upgrading The Line into a multi-use path in May. The upgrade, which will turn the muddy former railway track into a path for cyclists, walkers and horse riders, will take 14 weeks to complete.

Work took place earlier this year - before the bird nesting season - to cut back vegetation ahead of the work on the route, which will run from School Lane to Brookfield Road, off Old Pepper Lane.

The project, which will cost around £400,000, is being paid for by money contributed by the housing developers in Standish, through 106 agreement contributions.

Standish Voice announced this with the Council a couple of years ago and the delay in beginning the project has been frustrating. It was down to legal problems involving landowners along the route but this has now been resolved and the route has now been designated as a bridleway.

The School Lane end of the route is still problematic and the ‘dog leg’ there will remain due to landownership restrictions. However, there will be exits to existing roads on the Woodhurst Drive estate and there may be the possibility of future links to Preston Road.
You can read more about the project here: [https://www.wigan.gov.uk/…/Par…/Travel/Standish-Cycling.aspx](https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Parking-Roads-Travel/Travel/Standish-Cycling.aspx)

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Two significant planning applications have been lodged recently.

**The Beeches:** Albert’s restaurant and bar chain plans to construct a new restaurant at The Beeches, on School Lane. The main house would be retained and refurbished, though some outbuildings and extensions would be demolished to make way for the single storey restaurant. A car park of 150 spaces would be created.

Standish Voice is supportive of the application but asks the council to look at some objections which have been voiced by nearby residents. Albert’s is a high quality operator of restaurants with venues in Manchester city centre, Didsbury and Worsley and we are relieved a hospitality operator has stepped in to take on the site, which we wanted retained and not cleared for housing, which could have been an option. The draft Standish Neighbourhood Plan clearly asks for The Beeches to be protected and retained as a hospitality venue.

Our comment to the press about The Beeches plan is below and our submission to the Council regarding the planning application is attached to this email.

 “These look like ambitious plans to transform and protect one of Standish’s most-loved buildings and also bring a quality restaurant to the village. The quality of Albert’s restaurants is well known and the whole community is looking forward to one opening here. We hope this can kick-start major investment in the village centre, only adding to making Standish a great place to live in.”

Read more at: <https://www.wigantoday.net/news/environment/restaurant-and-bar-plans-for-the-beeches-1-9089223>

**Chinese Delight:** Fresh plans have been submitted for homes on site of Standish's former Chinese Delight restaurant.

A planning application was put in last September for flats and semi-detached houses on the Preston Road plot, but there were a number of objections. Standish Voice itself said the plans were far too overbearing for the site.

Now the builder has put in new proposals for 21 flats, in two blocks, with 21 car parking spaces. Five flats would be classed as 'affordable'. The application states that the "council had a number of issues with the proposal" but the new scheme "overcomes their concerns". In the plans, the existing entrance will be closed and an entrance would be off James Court instead.
There would be one three-storey flat, three of 2.5 storeys and the rest two-storey on the brownfield land site.

Standish Voice has objected to the plans, saying that the three-storey building is not in keeping with the area and, in line with the draft Standish Neighbourhood Plan, this site should be earmarked for homes that at 100% affordable or specifically for older people, of which there is a shortage in Standish. Our objection is attached to this email.

**STANDISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

We are putting the finishing touches to the final version of Standish Neighbourhood Plan. We received around 200 submissions at the draft stage and we have had to address each when altering the plan to create the final version.

Reports and other information have also needed to be compiled and maps altered ahead of the next stage of the plan process.

The next stage will be an Extraordinary General Meeting of Standish Voice members where we will ask you to vote for the plan to send it to Wigan Council for the next stage of the neighbourhood planning process.

We will publish the plan online at least two weeks before the EGM so all members can see the final version and the reports relating to the submissions.

**PLANT SALE**

We have been asked to draw your attention to the Standish Community Allotment Society’s very popular plant sale on Saturday (May 12). And if you go along, you can sign up to the membership waiting list and discuss getting your very own plot!

The plant sale is held every May at St Marie’s RC Church, on Almond Brook Road.

The society's Carol Emerton said: "We have for sale a fantastic range of bedding plants and perennial plants of which many have come from the gardens of members of the society. The members are also on hand to offer advice on customers gardening questions. We have hanging baskets and also offer a service to refill customers own hanging baskets.

“All plants are good quality and really well priced. The plant sale starts from 8.30am and we keep going until it is sold out so it’s best to come as soon as you can!"

Carole added: "We have opened the waiting list again for potential new members. So if anyone is interested please could they email me at carolemerton@btinternet.com"

Best wishes,

**Standish Voice Committee**