

STANDISH VOICE NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2023

Former Standish hotel Kilhey Court has stopped housing asylum seekers and is not expected to do so again – after the Government decided it was not appropriate to put them there.

A huge campaign from many people, including Standish Voice, our councillors, the council, our MP and individuals, was successful in overturning the Home Office decision, made in August, to house migrants at the hotel on Chorley Road.

Serco, which organises asylum seeker accommodation, confirmed the last migrants were leaving the former hotel just before Christmas and there were no plans to house more there – although it still has a contract with Macdonald Hotels until the beginning of March for emergency use.

Standish Voice and Standish councillors have been in constant contact with Wigan Council over the issue and discussions are underway about the future of Kilhey Court, a historic building which was once one of the best hotel and country clubs in the Wigan area.

Wigan Council is in discussions with the hotel owners about the future of the site, with an announcement from Macdonald Hotels expected over the coming weeks, although unconfirmed information has reached us that none of the money earned from the Serco contract will be used to refurbish the hotel.

Standish Voice will continue to urge the council to act if planning rules over the use of Kilhey Court are breached. We employed a planning consultant to look into the planning applications granted at the hotel over the past 40 years and passed his findings to the council for consideration. No breaches of the planning permissions were found but there are questions to answer about the planning status of the site and Wigan Council is looking into this, along with other planning issues at Kilhey Court.

The Home Office is continuing to use the Britannia Hotel in Standish to house asylum seekers through a national agreement with that hotel chain, though the Government has repeatedly said hotels are unsuitable for this activity and claims it is working to reduce reliance on them for this.

Standish Voice gave this statement to the media: “We are pleased that this very sad saga has come to end. The use of Kilhey Court as asylum seeker accommodation was always wrong, inappropriate and ill thought out. It created anger in the community and allowed self-seeking elements to sow division in our village.

“We would like to thank Wigan Council for working with us and our councillors to keep up the pressure on Serco, Macdonald Hotels and the Home Office. Both while the spotlight was on Kilhey Court and also over the past few months when coverage of the issue died down.

“Hopefully, Macdonald Hotels will now do the right thing on behalf of the community it badly let down and refurbish the hotel to bring it back to its former glory.”

<https://www.wigantoday.net/news/politics/council/controversial-wigan-migrant-hotel-closes-several-months-ahead-of-schedule-4455001?#ht9b8exhy16>

NEW PARK NEEDS VOLUNTEERS TO PLANT TREES

Standish Voice has been working with Wigan Council and City of Trees to improve the biodiversity and preserve one of the last green areas within north of the village.

The triangular field opposite Standish High School, next to The Line, will be improved with wildflowers and trees, continuing to keep the open aspect of the field but giving it more the feel of a park of which Standish can be proud.

The project is being led by Standish Voice committee member Ron Wade who was with a team that sowed wildflower seed on one part of the field – and now we are looking for around 20 volunteers to help to plant the trees in February.

The field is owned by Wigan Council and was once leased to the school as a playing field. Because of this, for a set period of time, the playing field area needs to be preserved so it can be quickly used again if required. Wildflowers were sowed in this area on Thursday by Ron, Councillor Terry Mugan, volunteers Pete Djali and Janice Thompson and Wigan Council's Kieran Sayer.

The other half of the field is due to have native tree planting in copses in a plan (below) created by City of Trees, an organisation which plants trees across Greater Manchester.

They will be leading the planting of the trees on Wednesday, February 14th from 10am to 3pm. City of Trees will supply all equipment, including gloves and spades and all the planting materials.

If you can join in, please email us at standishneighbourhoodforum@gmail.com and we will put your name down. And please wear sturdy boots and old clothes that you don't mind getting muddy!

Please come to support this project – we want to make sure this land, which was protected as Local Green Space in Standish Neighbourhood Plan, is kept for the community and not sold off.

We asked for suggestions for names for the improved area and had lots of feedback. We will organise a vote to find out the most popular name, which will have the word 'park' at the end, and send this out later this month.

Thanks to everyone who has taken an interest in this exciting project!

Pictured is the field, the tree planting plan, the volunteers who sowed the wildflower seed this week.

FANTASTIC STANDISH CHRISTMAS MARKET WAS A FESTIVE TRIUMPH

Standish Christmas Market was a huge success this year – thank-you to everyone who came.

It was bigger and better again this year – and more expensive to stage so thanks very much to our business sponsors, donations from Standish councillors and everyone who bought a milled wine, prosecco and a commemorative cup from our bar. All the money raised goes towards the next Christmas Market and other Standish Voice activities.

We have specific people and organisations to thank for making the event happen again. We apologise if we have missed you off – but you know who you are!

Standish Christmas Market Committee: Kathy Robertson, Ian Trafford, Paul Ogden, Emma Perry, Claire Callaghan, Christine Crossan Diane Gore, Judith Atherton, Debbie Parkinson, Sarah Djali, Heidi Lipscombe, Jackie Houghton, Richard Perry, Eloise Singleton and Cat Muir.

Chris Boyle and all our live musical artists; residents and businesses of Cross St, Market Place and Church St for their co-operation; our Gold Sponsors: Top Grades Education – Gerrards carpet and upholstery cleaning – Holts brewery, owners of the Lychgate – Ainscough Industrial Services – Asylum bar – Inglenorth Contracting Ltd; our Silver Sponsors: NR Barton Chartered Accountants – RJT

Solicitors – Fox Group – Self Storage Standish – One Vision Studios; our Bronze sponsors: Vincent & Co Solicitors – The Globe pub – Albert’s Standish – Standish Styling Opticians – Circ Dental – Tracy Phillips Estates – Potter’s Bar – Fifteens Standish – La Mama – Tim’s Pizza. And all who gave a raffle prize (see below), including Copper Vines, which donated the top prize. All those who joined in hosting a penguin on the Christmas Trail.

Gilmore Veterinary Surgery, Wood Fold School and St Marie’s Church for use of the car parks; Rev Andrew Holliday and St Wilfrid’s Church, Standish Community Centre and Standish Methodist Church; Chris and Michael Djali for their design; Standish Self Storage, Wigan Council, Standish Aldi, St Wilfrid’s bellringers, The Globe, Neil Robertson and Stubborn Rhino, Paul Wilson, Neil Dunlop for the karaoke.

Our councillors Debbie Parkinson, Ray Whittingham and Terry Mugan. Standish Library and the Friends of Standish Library and their helpers, Kiwi Nurseries, Prospect Brass Band, Dave Stanley, James Mercer and Ellie Wreight for their photography, and Stephen at Standish Cards for the Trail printing.

All our fantastic, dedicated volunteers who helped out on the day, and the day before and after: Cecilia Ashcroft, Judith Atherton, Andrea Barrow, Karen Bliss, Philip Bliss, Ian Brown, Joanne Byers, Claire Callaghan, Kevin Callaghan, Michelle Chalkley, Kay Clarke, Paul Clarke, Chris Crossan, Hugh Crossan, Chris Djali, Michael Djali, Peter Djali, Sarah Djali, Allan Foster, Gill Foster, Jennifer Garner, John Geohghan, Kate Hall, Jackie Houghton, Philip Housley, Sheila Lucas, Jane Molloy, Bernie Molloy, Erik Newman, Viv Newman, Miles Ogden, Nicky Ogden, Paul Ogden, Debbie Parkinson, Amelia Perry, Charlotte Perry, Emma Perry, Richard Perry, Norma Pruden, Steve Pruden, Andrea Roberts, Kathy Robertson, Jayne Shenton, Jean Sinclair, Gary Taylor, Ian Trafford, Ron Wade, Julie Webster, Harrison Whitfield.

Photos by James Mercer - Jamesmercer1191@gmail.com

YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As a Standish Voice member, you are invited to our AGM which will be held on Tuesday, January 16th at 7.45pm at Albert's Standish.

There will be reports from officers, election of committee members and election of officers.

For more information on Standish Voice and its constitution, visit our website [here](#).

DID YOU GO TO STANDISH HIGH SCHOOL?

The school wants to hear from you. They would like you to fill in their alumni form and tell them what you have been up to since you left.

See the link:

https://www.standishchs.wigan.sch.uk/alumni/249.html?fbclid=IwAR07VIZn6Dc4han2EpFkQ7U4VY6qgy_PUMdnKBgpuQcNSaTTcwsKw8SZ0Y

Work is underway on improving Standish’s Almond Brook ponds to increase biodiversity and make a new picnic area for the local community.

A stream and the ponds will be reconfigured to improve flow, drainage and increase the amount of wildlife able to thrive there.

The woods behind the pond are being thinned out and managed to encourage more native trees and shrubs to enhance the diversity of birds and other creatures which live there.

Work is being done by a contractor assigned by Wigan Council after working through the nature project with Standish Voice, Standish councillors and Lancashire Wildlife Trust.

Standish Voice commissioned Lancashire Wildlife Trust to produce a report on this area, as well as other green areas in Standish, to create ideas of how to improve them.

You can read that report here:

SWEET PUBLICITY FOR HARWOOD'S

Standish's Harwood's Patisserie are on the front cover of Wigan council's borough wide magazine.

Owner Andy and his TV Bake Off colleague Raf were special guests at Standish Christmas Market, answering questions from the stage, and the patisserie also features in a festive edition of the magazine.

See it here: <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Council/Borough-Life/Borough-Life-Winter-2023.pdf>

NEW PRIVATE HEALTH CENTRES FOR VILLAGE CENTRE

Two new private health facilities are due to open in Standish in separate developments.

The former travel agents opposite Standish Methodist Church – which some will remember as Hayward's paper shop back in the day – will be turned into a private health centre if a change of use planning application is passed. Services on offer at the High Street building would be mental health therapy, physiotherapy and podiatry.

And a new dental surgery is due to open in Standish in the new year – run by two dentist brothers returning to the village to set up home and a family business. Circ Dental will be housed in The Standish Centre, on Cross Street, in a unit being renovated and is set to open in the coming weeks.

It is being launched by Dr Matthew Jones and his brother Dr Nick Jones, pictured, who were both raised in Standish and attended Wood Fold Primary School, Standish Community High School and Winstanley College before going on to university to study dentistry. The practice will not take NHS patients but has pricing plans involving monthly subscriptions to include checks ups, hygiene visits and discounts on treatment.