

26th April 2009

Dear Friend,

Update on Blackhorse Road Cemetery and Chapel

I am writing to provide an update on the old Wesleyan Methodist cemetery and Chapel on Blackhorse Road, Kingswood.

Unfortunately there does not appear to have been any progress with the burnt-out chapel since I last wrote in July last year. The owner has withdrawn his planning application to turn the chapel into 14 apartments after Council officials who deal with Listed Buildings had concerns about a proposed canopy along the front of the building and the introduction of 2 new entrances.

With regards to the large cemetery on Waters Road and the small section of cemetery by the vets, the last time I wrote, I told you that the Council was preparing a case to prosecute the owner for failing to comply with 3 legal notices (called section 215 notices). These legal notices required the owner to repair collapsed walls, remove fly-tipped material and clear scrub vegetation and restore all pathways to provide pedestrian access through the site. Because the owner did not comply with any of these, the Council put together a case to prosecute.

I am pleased to be able to say that the Council succeeded with its case in January (albeit at the 3rd attempt as two earlier attempts were called-off). However, the disappointing news is that the owner was only fined £350 plus £455 costs and a "victim surcharge" of £15. The owner did not appear in Court.

Since the Court case at the end of January, I have continued to press Council officials as to what their next steps will be. I have been told that the Council intends to re-prosecute for the same offence of non-compliance with the section 215 notices with the prospect of a much bigger fine and costs. Officials within the Council's Building Control section will also commence proceedings to recover the costs that they have incurred in repairing the wall. In addition to this, Council lawyers will attempt to make direct contact with the owner to find out what his intentions are for the cemetery – particularly as it has little, if any, financial value.

So, I hope this is some good news. Again it is slow progress, but progress in the right direction.

Those of you who live in the area may have seen that a large section of wall has collapsed at the corner of Waters Road and Blackhorse Road. I have managed to persuade the Council to tidy this up, although to date they have not repaired it and stones and earth continue to fall onto the pavement.

For those of you who live in the Woodstock ward of South Gloucestershire Council, we (your local councillors) are due to launch an e-newsletter in the near future. This will be in addition to our *Woodstock Rose* newsletters that we deliver through residents' doors. However, as we will be able to e-mail the e-newsletter, we are hoping to be able to bring residents up-to-date more often with news from around the ward. If you would like to receive a copy of the e-newsletter, please email me with your email address and I will add you to our distribution list.

With best wishes,

Andy Perkins (Councillor for Woodstock)

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PS. I am more than happy for you for copy or forward this letter to anyone you wish.