

## **Copythorne Parish Meeting – November 25<sup>th</sup> 2021**

### **Item 7 – Parish Pickers Presentation**

The Parish Pickers team of litter pickers are still working our way around Copythorne Parish collecting litter where we find it.

Since we first started in February 2019 we have collected over 1500 bin liners full of litter. Over time we have developed an understanding of which areas require the most attention and can direct our efforts according to need. Residential roads with housing on both sides generally suffer the least from litter casually dropped, although there can be problems here with litter spilled from domestic rubbish bags awaiting collection. Whilst it is hard to understand why anyone would litter the forest at all, the roads within the cattle grids are generally less littered than those outside. The worst areas we deal with are lay-bys, motorway roundabouts and approach roads, the Ower area with its McDonald's Drive Thru, and any major road.

Whilst we first thought that Lockdown might curtail our activities, in the end it proved to be a blessing in more ways than one. Parish Pickers had been meeting as a group at the Parish Hall every Sunday at 9.30 and going out to pick from there. When covid came along we had to change our way of working and in place of group picks, our pickers were going out and picking where and when they wanted and reporting back so that our efforts could be coordinated and a record kept of bags collected. This proved to be a more effective way of working with larger areas covered and more bags collected, so out of the pandemic we discovered a better way of operating. Also, there weren't many things that people could do in their permitted hour of outdoor exercise, but litter picking was one of them. This was taken up by the media nationally and for a time in the spring of this year picking up other peoples discarded rubbish became the trendy thing to do.

We had many new volunteers. During one week in March we had pickers out every day of the week and we collected an amazing 43 bags of litter. When covid restrictions were lifted all our pickers found there were other things to do with their lives like visiting relatives they hadn't been able to see for some time. So we will probably never pick 43 bags in a week again but we still have enough loyal pickers to keep the Parish pretty clean, collecting about 12 bags each week.

Many of you in the Parish will be aware that one of our most dedicated litter pickers, Evelyn Warren, was hit by a car on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April and was taken to hospital with serious injuries, a broken pelvis, wrist and ribs. Whilst the dangers of traffic are obvious and are something that all Parish Pickers are very aware of, this incident was quite shocking because litter picking is statistically a very safe activity. Together with our insurers we have carried out a review of our method of working as this unfortunate accident has brought home to all of us how careful we need to be in the presence of traffic. I'm pleased to report that Evelyn although not fully recovered is well enough to start litter picking again. That is true devotion to the cause, well done Evelyn.

Although all Parish Pickers are unpaid volunteers we do have some expenses. Insurance cover, hosting our website, renewing equipment and supplying bin liners. This all amounts to about £500 per year. We were pleased to attract sponsorship from Paulton's Park to cover our expenses and they in turn seem pleased with the efforts we are making. In January 2020 Paulton's Park also gave us some of their old litter bins. These have been installed at Copythorne Infants and Bartley Schools, and here at the Parish Hall where they have really helped us keep on top of the litter problem we had at the Hall. In September all the Parish Pickers were invited to have a day out at Paulton's Park

and a grand time was had by all. Some of our pickers tried a rollercoaster for the first time and were surprised by what fun it was.

On a national scale Parish Pickers have been in contact through our MP with Rebecca Pow, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DEFRA with responsibility for tackling the litter problem nationally. We were asking for government support for making litter that comes from drive thru takeaways traceable by compelling the vendor to print the vehicle registration on all packaging. Whilst we can't claim any success with that one, we have also been in contact with McDonalds head office and they now have a policy of sending out their own staff to litter pick within half a mile of their outlet. McDonalds Drive Thru is still the largest single source of litter in the Parish, but this effort of theirs does seem to have reduced the load on our pickers in the Ower area so let's give them credit for clearing some of the mess they generate.

Parish Pickers is a success story and if you feel you would like to help this noble cause we are always ready to welcome new volunteers. We can supply you with equipment, Hi-Viz, bin liners, health and safety advice and you would be covered by our insurance. Whilst some of our stalwart pickers collect throughout the Parish there are others who do no more than litter pick their own road. All help is welcome, and there is no requirement to turn out every week. If everyone is prepared to do just a bit, then no one has to do too much, and you would be helping to keep the Parish as clean as it is now.

Please see our website <https://parishpickers.co.uk>