



MAY REPORT TO COWES TOWN COUNCIL

As you will know, the period for consultation has been extended to 27 May. I am pleased to see that the document has provoked discussion in the community and it will be interesting to see the final level of interest.

THE PARK

After lengthy consultation with IWC and a professional tree surgeon, work has begun to deal with trees which have been deemed to be a risk either to people or to property. Due attention is paid to animal welfare legislation, and some ropeways have been inserted for the benefit of the red squirrel population. Any trees in the Park requiring attention were identified in the Scott Wilson survey commissioned by IWC some years ago when no action followed. (Survey is on our website) The survey was the basis of the Trust's application for action on up to 38 trees. Urgent remedial action has been agreed on 12 trees. All work is being supervised by a qualified tree surgeon as well as the IWC Tree Officer. Letters were delivered to over 155 surrounding properties explaining the activity about to begin. In spite of the letters there was concern, but the cases I heard of were satisfied when they saw the situation and state of the trees involved. This good management is the beginning of plans to improve people's enjoyment of the Park, and may include a suitable tree planting scheme in the future.

The loos were reopened for the season once they had received some repair, paint and thorough cleaning. Open during the day until the end of September and they will be cleaned daily.

Two tennis courts are in use. We are seeking expressions of interest from any tennis clubs or potential tennis clubs looking for a venue because we would like to be able to open up more courts. Any interested groups please write to us via our website, www.northwoodhouse.org. Costs of repairing damage to the surface, nets or netting are a concern, so we are hoping that users will take care of the playing area. Currently we have no means of collecting payment for using the courts and ask that users put £2 per hour into any of the car park machines which will automatically come to the Trust.

Unfortunately one of the park litter bins has been smashed and replacement must be considered. According to the police vandalism and bad behaviour is not a serious problem in the Park, but I am glad that we have security patrols, not to mention eyes and ears of other park users. We ask people always to report anything untoward.

I was pleased to be able to officially launch the new bowling season, the first with the bowlers in charge. A thriving group of bowling clubs uses the green with a very full fixture list including visiting Mainland teams. There are some outstanding players and the age range is wide. More lady players are needed. We wish them a successful season.

Trustees Janet Allan with Ginnie Gledhill operate our Park maintenance plan and very much appreciate the time and energy given by people in the community who have assisted especially with the flower beds notably the herbaceous border and planters. The Friends of Northwood House & Park have a monthly working bee on the first Sunday morning each month which is very welcome,

working in the Park mostly but sometimes in the House. The grass has just been cut in line with the maintenance contract. The empty beds are due either to be filled in or planted shortly, according to the agreed plan.

THE HOUSE

Maintenance work on the outside of the House is now under way, mostly with volunteers. On the woodwork the older oak needs preparation and painting but the newer, soft wood has rotted in places and must be repaired. Simple maintenance work on plasterwork is designed to improve the appearance of the house. Some areas have been power-washed. Just general if overdue maintenance. The Morning Room refurbishment is now complete, the Library has been thoroughly refreshed and kitchen improvements are nearly complete.

The Trustees will be holding an OPEN AFTERNOON on 22 May when we hope people will enjoy looking around the house and share their hopes and ideas for the House and Park.

GENERAL

Trustees continue to prioritise areas of action. Enquiries for events in the House are sought and systematically followed up and bookings are being made. I have asked for clarification from IWC why Northwood House is omitted from its list of approved wedding venues in a recently republished events information brochure. Consideration is constantly given to potential activities which will bring the House and Park to life and also generate worthwhile income. We were very interested in a commercial enquiry to run a Royal wedding day event on 29 April in the Park, but they withdrew once they knew the costs they would incur in setting up the big screens etc. We checked out hosting Gardeners' Question Time and if an invitation from one or more local garden societies were accepted by the BBC we would do our level best to accommodate them, but the invitation cannot come from the venue.

The Carnival Committee is organising a Picnic in the Park FUN DAY on 29 May which the Trustees are pleased to support.

In Cowes Week we are planning to join in Aberdeen Asset Management's FAMILY FUN DAY on the first Sunday, 7 August.

I note the agenda item to consider alternative venues for Council meetings. CTC will be welcome at the House, but we cannot prejudice security and must cover costs. The Community Hall has been successfully used for meetings and is much easier and cheaper to operate; and of course it will continue to be open for Council bookings when available.

The role of the Trustees is to look after the best interests of the House and Park according to the original gift and later Scheme. Support from the community is very important as we work for a sustainable future and your interest is very welcome.

Ann Thwaites

4 May 2011