

WILMSLOW PARK ROAD USERS ASSOCIATION

Web Site: www.wilmslowparkroadusers.org.uk

September 2024

Dear Fellow Resident,

We are writing to you, as we do each year, seeking your support and contribution to the Wilmslow Park Road Maintenance Fund. The fund is necessary since Cheshire East Council does not maintain or repair the road or footpath through the Park because it is unadopted and private, and any costs have to be borne by those using the road. In order to keep the costs to an absolute minimum, all the work done by the Committee members is on a voluntary basis. Sharing the costs in this way is obviously the most equitable and last year over 90% of residents in the Park made the contribution. We remind the very few who did not that non-payment simply increases the burden on all other residents in the Park. The contributions directly benefit everyone in the Park. For example, if not for the work of the Association, the road would probably have been closed indefinitely at the bridge as a result of the subsidence there.

Cow Lane, which is not part of the Association's remit, but has been neglected for many years, has also been given running repairs by our volunteers, allowing continued access to Wilmslow Park Road for those residents.

As you will see in this Newsletter, the projected cost of redressing Wilmslow Park Road is at least doubling from our last outlay in 2018. This has major implications for the extent of the work we can fund and its timing. As indicated last year, it is unfortunately now necessary to increase contributions this year, for the first time in 7 years.

The contribution requested for the year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, is:-

FRONTAGERS: 48p per linear foot of frontage OR the Non-frontager contribution if this is a greater amount

NON-FRONTAGERS: £24 for the first car and £12 for each additional car

RESIDENCES WITHOUT A CAR: are requested to pay £24

It would be greatly appreciated, wherever possible, if residents would please make their contributions by direct bank transfer into the Association's account. The account details are as follows: -

Account name: Wilmslow Park Road Users Association Sort Code: 40-46-36 Account No: 11472046

When making your direct bank transfer, please enter your address in the reference field of your payment instruction. We ask residents who have set up a standing order to please adjust the amount to be paid. If you would still prefer to make your contribution by cheque, or this is your only option, please complete the payment slip below and forward your cheque payable to **Wilmslow Park Road Users Association** to the Association's Treasurer, John Cudlip, at 25 Overhill Road, Wilmslow, SK9 2BE.

We would like to thank all those residents in the attached list who contributed last year and would ask everyone to support the voluntary work of the Committee by making your contribution as soon as possible, so avoiding the costs of having to send out reminders.

We are also establishing a Whatsapp Group to provide more topical information throughout the year – once you have made your contribution and wish to join the group, please open this link to join the Group: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/Ey6nW9iWDit7XJG9opGTHM>

Neil Masom (Chairman)

Frontagers. Please pay the greater of £ _____ based on your frontage of _____ ft.

OR the non-frontage contribution shown below based on the number of cars.

Non-frontagers. Please pay £24 for your first car plus £12 for each extra car

Non-car owning residences. Please pay £24

Name _____ Address _____

Amount Enclosed £ _____

Date _____

WPRUA CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT (Neil Masom)

You will see in the rest of this Newsletter that the principal issue we face is that the cost of maintaining Wilmslow Park Road is now outstripping our ability to cover the costs, given inflation and Council expenditure constraints. Whilst the vast percentage of residents pay their contributions, some that don't point to the level of reserves that we have in the bank as a reason for not contributing. This money is however only accumulating to cover the redressing of the road, which has typically been done every six years as recommended by Council experts, whilst also keeping enough in reserve to cover emergencies.

One such emergency was fixing the drain near the junction with Overhill Road where it was causing significant flooding of the road. Fixing this issue consumed almost 2/3rds of our total income for the year, and it is apparent that there are a number of other areas in the Park where similar problems are likely to arise in the near future. We also received the Council contractor's estimate for redressing the road which was approximately twice that which we paid six years ago. We have benchmarked this estimate against commercial quotes which turned out to be almost twice as much again, so the Council contractor approach still remains the best one. But we simply cannot afford to do the redressing this time unless we increase contributions significantly, which we suspect would simply result in fewer residents contributing. The condition of the road is however good, with the area of greatest wear being by the bridge. We therefore believe the best approach is to adopt a more selective approach to road maintenance, focussing firstly on the middle section, and then looking at progressively maintaining the south and north as funds allow. Even with this approach we believe it is necessary to increase the contribution by a modest amount, the first time we will have done so in 7 years, and we hope that you will support this.

The alternatives are to let the road progressively deteriorate or to significantly increase contributions. I would really appreciate receiving views on the differing approaches on my email at chairman@wilmslowparkroadusers.org.uk

Other than this you will see the ongoing amount of work that our volunteers have undertaken to make running repairs to the road surface, keep the drains and gullies clear, cut back overhanging hedges, and regularly clear the verges of litter. It is only through this voluntary effort that we are able keep Wilmslow Park Road to such a high standard, and I am sure we all appreciate their efforts. I mention the work of our volunteers, and I have previously reached out to potential volunteers to contribute to the work of the Association. Our volunteers are not getting any younger and finding fresh blood to help would really be appreciated, otherwise in future years it will become another major issue. If anyone is prepared to offer assistance in any capacity, please email or call on my mobile 07801 716433.

As always, I also need to mention parking, which continues to be an issue especially when cars are parked on the pavement showing little consideration for pedestrians, people with pushchairs and the visually impaired. Residents are reminded that the footpath is a public right of way and blocking it is an offence that the authorities have in the past shown they have been prepared to act on. We will continue to encourage them to do so in the case of persistent offenders.

The other topic I get most comment about is overgrowing border shrubs, whether it be over the footpath or the road itself. As an Association we try and keep the common areas trimmed. UU have not been as diligent as usual in trimming the holly bushes by their land at the southern end, so it is becoming an increasing issue. Roger Hill has been specifically speaking to people, but I would again ask residents to be considerate in keeping their borders away from the path and road.

Some of us have also received a crime alert notice from Cheshire Constabulary advising of burglary on Wilmslow Park South on the evening of 6th September, believed to have been carried out by 3 young males. The police have asked that if anyone witnessed anything could they get in touch with our PC Ben Dickinson on benjamin.dickinson@cheshire.police.uk. It also goes without saying that this is a timely reminder to take appropriate security measures and to remain vigilant.

Finally and as also mentioned on the previous page we are establishing a Whatsapp Group to provide and allow residents to share more topical information throughout the year – once you have made your contribution and wish to join the group, please open this link to join the Group <https://chat.whatsapp.com/Ey6nW9iWDit7XJG9opGTHM>

With warmest regards,

Neil Masom

WPRUA TREASURER'S REPORT (John Cudlip)

A copy of the Association's audited accounts for 2023/24 is attached. My grateful thanks once again to Ian Findlay, our Association's auditor.

As reported elsewhere in this Newsletter, the Association's Finances are now under fundamental review by your Committee in view of the road redressing quote of **£54,232** we have recently received from our normal provider, which has effectively doubled from the previous cost in 2018. Other estimates were substantially higher still. Our normal cycle is to redress Wilmslow Park Road every 6 years or so, hence a further redressing was in theory due in 2024. The estimated cost of this work now exceeds the Association's total assets, which is clearly a totally untenable situation. We are therefore carrying out a complete rethink.

Unfortunately, we must now increase the road fund contributions, which have remained at the same level for several years. However, the 20% increase we are introducing for 2024/25 will only generate approximately £1400 additional income per year, against a much more substantial revised requirement were we to maintain the same full redressing cycle. For the first time, we are therefore forced to consider redressing only parts of the road on each occasion, based on the greatest need for treatment. This is a major departure from the strategy adopted over the past 50 years. It must also remain our policy to maintain a prudent cash buffer for any unforeseen expenditure going forward. For example, during 2023/24, we have incurred the substantial cost of a major drain repair in Wilmslow Park North.

The number of contributions from Wilmslow Park residents and landlords of rented properties for financial year 2023/24 totalled 234 out of 261 possible contributions (90%). We were also in receipt of two additional contributions for the current Association year, 2024/25, itemised on a separate line in the accounts. We would like to thank those many residents and landlords who kindly contributed to the Road Fund during this past year.

The analysis of contributions for the year by individual road can be seen as an attachment to this Newsletter. This attachment includes a second list of addresses for which we have no record to date of a contribution for 2023/24.

Three properties within the Park were either empty or in passing occupation during the year. This does however still mean that 24 residents or landlords within Wilmslow Park decided, for whatever reason, not to contribute to the Fund. It remains our practice to request contributions for the current Association year (April to March) in our annual Newsletter in September. We then deliver reminder letters in November to those properties from which we have yet to receive a contribution. In many cases, this has simply slipped people's minds. We then deliver a further and much smaller number of reminder letters to continuing non-contributing addresses in January. All this clearly continues to take time and effort, especially preparing and posting letters through doors around the Park.

Despite contributions being largely voluntary, the huge majority of Wilmslow Park residents agree that there is a strong obligation on us all to make what is generally considered to be a very modest contribution to the Road Fund. As you will notice, yet again, there is sadly a small 'hard core' of regularly non-contributing households, which is a big shame and very frustrating for their fellow residents who kindly contribute every year. We must all use the through road, and in this respect, non-contributors are no different from the rest of us.

86% of contributing residents chose to make their contributions by direct bank transfer this past year, the same percentage as last year. Bank charges are detailed in the annual accounts. As well as a standing monthly bank charge, every cheque or cash transaction incurs a small additional charge, so it is important that residents use their on-line banking facility provided if they have this. My grateful thanks.

John Cudlip

OPERATIONS OFFICER'S REPORT (Roger Hill)

The activities carried out over the last 12 months are as follows :

- Carried out weekly inspections of the road, clearing gutters and drains. Responded in real time to heavy rain incidents and residents' notification of flooding issues etc.
- Regularly cleared leaf and soil litter from the sides of the road, pavements and around the speed limiter to ensure road and pedestrian space does not narrow.
- Carried out hedge-cutting where foliage was encroaching onto the road and footpath.
- Sprayed weeds along the roadside and pavements throughout Spring and Summer.
- Cut down and sprayed the invasive species Himalayan Balsam around the bridge before it started to smother indigenous plants and potentially damage the bridge structure.
- Laid Tarmac around speed limiters where wear and potholes were evident.
- Reported the non-operating streetlight outside High Halden to the Council.
- Liaised with Cheshire East Council regarding road sweeping, endeavouring to move as many parked cars off the road to ensure an effective sweep.
- Cleared the blocked drain at the brook between Cow Lane and Garth Heights after Storm Babet to avoid further damage to the road.
- Liaised with private commercial drainage companies, obtaining quotations and working with the company on the day to clear selected gullies to aid drainage in readiness for the Autumn and Winter.
- Also liaised with specialist drainage companies to resolve the flooding issues on Wilmslow Park North caused by the pipes blocked by tree roots and the broken Victorian pipes connected to the sewers, keeping concerned residents informed as the pipes and drain chamber were replaced and/or re-constructed. **Total cost: £4,628.**
- Reported mains leak running from Garth Heights onto WPRN and liaised with United Utilities on site visits.
- Liaised with Cheshire Highways, arranging site visits to enable quotations to be issued for the required road re-dressing, including rectifying the worn areas of road surface around the speed bollards.
- Liaised with utility and other companies working on Wilmslow Park Road, sought clarification where unannounced works occurred and ensured proper signage was in place as well as acceptable access for residents.
- Monitored planning applications and progress, reporting to the committee as and when appropriate.
- Collected historical photographs and maps of Wilmslow Park to enable us to build a history archive on our website. **IF ANYONE HAS OLD PHOTOGRAPHS AND/OR HISTORICAL INFORMATION ABOUT WILMSLOW PARK, I WOULD BE VERY GRATEFUL TO RECEIVE THEM (rogerhill894@gmail.com 07491 819655).**
- Our thanks go once again to our regular litter pickers who help to keep the road so well presented, including Barbara Rosenthal, and Celia and Rachel Tinsley.

Roger Hill

This newsletter is sent with warmest regards from:

Mr Neil Masom OBE (Chairman), Southfields, Wilmslow Park Road South (07801716433)
chairman@wilmslowparkroadusers.org.uk

Mr John Cudlip (Treasurer), 25 Overhill Road (07768688687) john@cudlip.co.uk

Ms Anne Quilligan (Secretary), 2A York Crescent (07799625198) aquilligan@aol.com

Mr Roger Hill (Operations Officer), 6 Blenheim Close (07491819655) rogerhill894@gmail.com