



THE Newsletter

DORRIDGE & DISTRICT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

FOR THE RESIDENTS OF DORRIDGE, BENTLEY HEATH AND FOUR ASHES

• Editor: JESSICA BRYAN •

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**This will be held at 7:30pm on Wednesday 18th March 2026
at Ye Olde Knowle Bowling Club, Grange Road, Dorridge B93 8QA.**

(next to The Railway Inn, Dorridge. Approached from the main road through the entrance to Dorridge Village Hall but on the right before the hall car park)

AGENDA

Apologies
Minutes of AGM 2025
Chair's report
Election of committee
2025 Accounts and Treasurer's report
Report on local planning issues

Bentley Heath Primary School's Kindness Project

This half term, pupils across all year groups of Bentley Heath C of E Primary School have been busy living out their core value of compassion through a wonderful range of kindness projects. From their youngest learners to their oldest, each year group found a meaningful way to make a difference to others.

In Early Years, children supported Children's Storehouse by collecting pre-loved and brand-new items for families in need. They also spent time spotting acts of kindness in one another, proudly adding links to their 'growing kindness' paperchain. Their generosity and thoughtfulness shone through every part of the project.

Year 1 focused on how small actions can brighten someone's day. They created beautifully decorated flower cones and delivered them to staff across the school, spreading smiles and joy wherever they went. Year 2 turned their kindness towards nature, learning about winter wildlife and helping to restock feeders and water in their conservation area before taking bird food home to continue caring for local birds.

Inspired by their class text, Year 3 visited the local Co-op to buy items for the community food bank. Working together, they thoughtfully selected essentials for families in need, applying real life maths skills along the

way. Year 4 used their strengths in multiplication to help younger pupils in Year 2 with their times tables, showing patience, encouragement and a real sense of teamwork.

The Year 5 classes extended their kindness into the community. Class 12 completed a litter-pick at Bentley Heath Park, taking pride in caring for a shared local space. Class 11 created "Get Well Soon" cards and collected comforting treats for poorly pets at 608 Vets; the photos sent in by grateful pet owners showed just how appreciated their efforts were.

Year 6 chose to support Birmingham Dogs Home, gathering around £250 worth of food, blankets, toys and cleaning supplies, alongside a donation cheque. Their contributions will make a real difference to dogs in need of warmth, care and new homes.

Across the school, these projects have shown how powerful compassion can be. Whether helping people, animals, the environment or each other, the children have demonstrated that kindness - big or small - truly makes the world a better place.

'Love Gate Lane' Update

February marks one year of litter picking in Gate Lane, so now is a good time to reflect on the work carried out! Since we've started...

71 full bags of rubbish have been collected, containing plastics, cans,

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wine and spirit glass bottles, wipes, medication, food containers, fast food items, food packaging, vapes and cigarette boxes.

19 Nitrous Oxide canisters have been recovered: all this was intentionally thrown or dropped from vehicles.

We've seen and discarded human waste (as Gate Lane is frequently being used as a toilet).

We've spotted **16** incidents of fly tipping - consisting of the dumping of two huge settee and chair sets with mattresses, further bedding, cat scratching post, pallets, tyres, garden waste, shelving units, cabinets, saucepans, chairs, clothing, household china, bags of household rubbish, remains of cannabis plants and growing material, registration plates, bundles of cardboard boxes, polystyrene and a metallic electric clothes rail.

All of the above discarded items have a cost to us as SMBC have had to react to 20 + call outs to clear the rubbish. Reports have also been made to appropriate authorities concerning items that could be linked to criminal activity.

On a positive note, a great number of wild native bulbs and primroses have been planted along the length of Gate Lane. We are hopeful that we will see a splash of colour in the months of March/April/May as well as supporting wildlife and bee populations.

A big thank you goes to you, our local community, for your continued support of this project. From the volunteers who were willing to help with planting the bulbs to the continued support of everyone in the community who toots, waves, gives a thumbs up, stops or writes kind words on the B93 Facebook group - it is all greatly appreciated!

FastAid: Our local lifesaving charity

FastAid is a charity composed of volunteer Community First Responders (CFRs). We support our community and West Midland Ambulance Service, offering local, rapid response when 999 medical emergencies occur in our neighbourhood.

CFRs come from different backgrounds (medical & non-medical) and are intensively trained to a nationally recognised standard with regular mandatory updates, and are often first on scene to start lifesaving treatment, provide reassurance, and begin the assessment process to aid ongoing clinical care. The first few minutes before an ambulance arrives can provide crucial support and significantly impact outcomes for casualty, family, bystanders.

CFR schemes emerged in the 1990s, often in rural areas where ambulance response times could be delayed. The concept spread, becoming a vital component of emergency medical services in urban and inner city areas too.

West Midlands Ambulance Service has a long-standing relationship with volunteer CFRs in the region, forming a vital network of public support. FastAid has been doing this since 2005 and relies upon fundraising and the generosity of the public to keep going. The ambulance service provides training and single use items such as oxygen masks and cylinders. FastAid funds its own lifesaving equipment, uniforms, scheme cars and running costs.

FastAid also engages with local communities by providing free Basic Life Support Awareness courses. Dorridge Village Hall has been a regular venue for these, supported by Dorridge District and Residents' Association. These are interesting, informative and provide an opportunity to practise skills such as recovery position, CPR, familiarity with public access defibrillators (we are fortunate to have a number of these in our neighbourhood). Knowing some First Aid will make you feel more confident and increase the chance of family and bystanders stepping forward to potentially help save someone's life. To donate, please go

to <https://givealittle.co/c/fastaid-web-general> and for more information, please contact Alison Routledge at fastaid.org.uk.

Knowle celebrates 750 years

Before 1276, the settlement of Knowle (known as Cnolle in Saxon times) was part of the Manor of Hampton-in-Arden, owned by the de Arden family. In 1276, the village of Knowle officially became a Manor in its own right, entering historical records. While ownership initially remained with the de Arden family until 1285, ownership was transferred when Knowle was purchased by King Edward I and Queen Eleanor.

To mark 750 years of history, 2026 will be a year of celebration, reflection, and community spirit. Through the year, there will be a series of events taking place across the village, showcasing Knowle's vibrant community and its unique heritage.

Make a note in your diary for **Sunday 21st June 2026**, when the village High Street will be closed to traffic for a day of fun, food, entertainment, and activities for all ages. Led by Visit Knowle, the day promises something for everyone, from live music and performances to delicious local food and family-friendly activities. Knowle Society's Local History team will be leading the way with exploring Knowle's history - look out for events, exhibitions and stories.

Knowle's 750th anniversary is a celebration for the whole community, and we want as many people as possible to take part. If you have an idea for an event, exhibition, or activity, or if you'd like to volunteer your time, we'd love to hear from you. Whether it's a pop-up performance, book reading, craft activity, historical walk, or festive celebration, your contribution will help make 2026 a year to remember. Get in touch by emailing hello@visitknowle.co.uk.

Knowle Party in the Park

Knowle Party in the Park returns on Saturday 27th June 2026 providing a vibrant celebration of music and community spirit and located in the beautiful Knowle Park. This revitalised event, brought to you by Solihull Summer Fest, is a gloriously vibrant day celebrating music and community spirit. This year will feature a diverse line-up of renowned and emerging artists along with a selection of local food and drink vendors. For more information, and to purchase tickets, visit Knowle Party in the Park at <https://knowlepartyinthepark.co.uk/>.

New Explorer trains now serving Dorridge

Chiltern Railways has introduced its new Explorer trains on the Birmingham to London Marylebone route, with Dorridge among the stations now served by the upgraded service.

The first Explorer train entered service in January, operating the 8.15am departure from Birmingham Moor Street to London. The new trains use modern Mk 5A coaches hauled by Class 68 locomotives and represent a major investment in replacing Chiltern's older carriages.

Passengers using the Explorer trains can expect improved comfort and facilities, including power sockets and USB ports at every seat, air conditioning, digital information screens, better luggage and bike storage, and enhanced first-class accommodation. The locomotives are fuelled using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), supporting Chiltern's decarbonisation plans.

Explorer services currently stop at Dorridge southbound at 8.32am and 1.59pm, with northbound arrivals at 12.54pm and 6.18pm.

More Explorer trains will be introduced over the coming months, with a full fleet expected to be in service by the end of the year. This will support a new half-hourly Birmingham to London service and significantly increase seat availability during the week.

Solihull: plans for new “affordable, low-carbon” homes

Solihull could see 228 new “affordable, low-carbon and low-energy homes” as part of a major development programme over the next 12 years. Muse has announced plans for a site of 228 new Habiko homes in collaboration with Pension Insurance Corporation and Homes England. The proposal is expected to sit within the wider Holbeche Place plans, which were approved by Solihull Council earlier this month.

Earlier in February, wider plans to transform Mell Square were also put forward, including 1,600 homes, retail space and two new public squares, and were approved by the council's planning committee.

The first part of the wider development is expected to involve demolition of a multi-storey car park and a petrol station, followed by a first phase incorporating 346 homes and two commercial units across four apartment buildings with ground-floor commercial space.

The Habiko homes are part of the later programme. Public engagement is earmarked to begin on 18 February, ahead of a planning submission later in the spring.

An update from our local police service

Anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood safety:

Police have taken action following a series of incidents between neighbours that escalated into criminal offences and caused fear for a victim's safety. A suspect was arrested and charged, bail conditions were imposed, and a Community Protection Notice issued to prevent further nuisance behaviour.

Speeding concerns in Balsall Common, Chadwick End and Dorridge:

Local officers have carried out targeted operations to address speeding and uninsured vehicles. Officers have received training in new speed detection equipment, supported by regular speed camera van deployments in key areas. A recent speed watch on School Road, Hockley Heath recorded 37 vehicles exceeding the speed limit in one hour, including one vehicle travelling at 46mph in a 20mph zone! Residents interested in getting involved are encouraged to get in touch.

Fly-tipping:

Police have responded to several fly-tipping incidents across the area and are working closely with the local authority to support investigations. This has already resulted in one fixed penalty notice being issued, with further enquiries under way. Joint patrols are also being discussed for known hotspot locations.

Crime prevention advice (key points):

- Use steering wheel locks and always double-check your vehicle is locked
- Do not leave valuables, including loose change, on display in vehicles
- Consider anti-snap locks, burglar alarms and motion-activated lighting at home
- CCTV and doorbell cameras act as strong deterrents and help investigations
- Anti-tamper number plate screws can help prevent vehicle crime

CCTV registry reminder. Your CCTV helps us to solve real crimes:

Register your CCTV and doorbell cameras with the WMP to receive alerts when your footage may help them catch criminals operating in your area. It takes just 60 seconds to add your details to their secure police system and within minutes, you could be helping them solve serious crimes. You'll just add your name, address, email and the number of cameras you control. For more information search West

Midlands Police CCTV Registry, or to register your CCTV go to <https://westmidlands.fususregistry.co.uk/>.

Padel courts approved at Four Ashes Golf Centre

Four Ashes Golf Centre in Dorridge has been granted planning permission to add three outdoor padel courts, introducing one of the UK's fastest-growing sports to the area.

The centre applied last year to install the courts on land between its southern boundary and the existing adventure golf area. The proposal includes floodlighting, with opening hours set out as 8am to 10pm, seven days a week.

Padel, a doubles sport combining elements of tennis and squash, is played on a smaller enclosed court using solid rackets and a low-pressure ball. The courts will be available on a pay-and-play basis and open to all ages and abilities.

The application was approved on 24 October, with planning permission granted subject to conditions by Solihull Council's head of planning, design and engagement services.

Four Ashes Golf Centre currently offers a driving range, adventure golf, café/bar and golf shop.

Pothole repairs update

Solihull Council has reported that recent weeks of prolonged heavy rain have led to an increase in potholes and road defects across the borough, with damage appearing more quickly than usual.

The council says additional resources have been committed to pothole repairs and teams are working to complete repairs as quickly as possible. They know it's frustrating and appreciate the patience of everyone affected. Please continue reporting potholes via the council's website: <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/report-it>

Dorridge U3A: meetings and activities

Dorridge U3A, founded in 1990, now has around 550 members and continues to welcome new joiners. The group offers a wide range of interest and activity groups, providing opportunities for learning, socialising and staying active.

General Meetings are usually held at 2.00pm on the first and third Thursdays of each month at Dorridge Village Hall, unless otherwise advised. The 2026 programme includes talks on history, music, gardens, film, magic, Birmingham Airport, Agatha Christie and more, as well as the AGM on 5 March 2026.

In addition to the main meetings, members can choose from nearly 40 activity and interest groups. These range from arts, crafts, music, literature and history, to walking, racquet sports, table tennis, dancing, science, computing, photography and travel. Many groups meet regularly, with some split into smaller groups to meet demand.

Most activities are informal, friendly and suitable for a wide range of abilities, with new members warmly encouraged to get involved.

For full details of meetings, talks and group coordinators, please visit the Dorridge U3A website: <https://www.dorridgeu3a.co.uk/welcome.htm>

Dorridge Village Hall: a centre for village life

Dorridge Village Hall is at the heart of village life, offering large, comfortable facilities for private and public functions for residents of Dorridge and the surrounding area.

Set in parkland and ideally located for Dorridge, Knowle and Bentley Heath, the hall provides a welcoming space with a kitchen, stage and, by arrangement, a fully staffed bar. A smaller meeting room is also available and can be booked separately.

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The hall is a popular venue for one-off events such as anniversaries, weddings, charity events, birthday celebrations, children's parties and religious gatherings. It is also home to many local groups who meet regularly for classes, activities and indoor sports, and new users are always welcome.

The hall is located on the B4101 (Grange Road), just after Dorridge Park heading towards Hockley Heath. Around four miles from Solihull town centre and close to the M42, the building is set back from the road on the edge of the park, making it an attractive setting for photographs.

Anyone interested in setting up a new group, whether a drama, craft or exercise class, or looking for a training space for a sport, is encouraged to check the online calendar and contact the hall's volunteer administrators to discuss availability, however regular weekend bookings are not usually taken. The trustees also want to welcome suggestions for activities or services that could benefit the wider community.

Arden Academy recognised among the Midlands' best

A local secondary school has been named among the top comprehensive schools in the West Midlands in the Sunday Times Parent Power Guide 2026.

Arden Academy was ranked second in the region, with only St Paul's School for Girls in Edgbaston placed higher. The guide highlights comprehensive schools that consistently achieve strong results despite increasing pressures on budgets, student wellbeing and special educational needs.

Helen Davies, editor of the guide, said the rankings reflect the dedication of teachers who continue to find innovative ways to support and enrich students and give them the best possible start in life.

Keep up-to-date with KDBH Forum

To receive the latest news from the KDBH Forum about important issues of local interest, join for free at <https://www.kdbh-np.org>

Their online February newsletter contains information on the following subjects:

- Neighbourhood Plan policy update
- New timetable for the local plan
- Results of their parking survey
- Solihull Council's 'Issues and Options' consultation
- Government consultation on reforms to the National Policy Planning Framework
- Developer's consulting on housing proposals

Spotlight on History: Bentley Heath Old School

On Widney Road, Bentley Heath, opposite the Community Centre, stands one of the area's most attractive buildings, once the old primary school and now private dwellings. Part of its distinction lies in its brickwork, a type popular in the Victorian Gothic Revival architecture of the later 19th century, called polychrome brickwork. This involved the use of different coloured bricks to create symmetrical patterns or to highlight architectural features in the walls of buildings. In the case of Bentley Heath Old School, beige and occasional black bricks highlight window arches, the roof line and corners, creating contrast and interest in the overall orange brick walls. The pattern in the roof tiles likewise adds to the interest, another feature of Gothic Revival.

The school was built in 1870, coinciding with the first Elementary Education Act for primary aged children. It came about due to the vision of George Homer (hence Homer Rd) of the parish of St Alphege, Solihull, who wanted to provide education for children of families in Bentley Heath, then a small hamlet of scattered farms and dwellings. After his death this was fulfilled by the rector and trustees of St. Alphege with money he had bequeathed for the purpose, on inherited land donated by a vicar of Temple Balsall. An architect was appointed who chose the Butterfield Polychromatic Style, described above. A small 2 bedroomed schoolhouse was provided for its first headmistress, and the school opened on April 25th, 1870, with capacity for 50 pupils. One of the subsequent headmistresses was key in the expansion of the school numerically, so an extension was proposed, although not built until 1902, taking the capacity to 80, then another in 1912 to accommodate 96 pupils. The school continued to flourish under the leadership of several long-serving heads.

The Old School's history is intertwined with that of the church in Bentley Heath. It was licensed for worship in the 1870s as a mission church of St Alphege, transferred to the parish of Dorridge in 1940 and renamed St James' Church in 1955. Worship in The Old School continued until 1975, shortly before a new, modern primary school was opened nearby in 1978. Bentley Heath Old School was then used by the Education Department as a Special Unit, finally closing in 1990. In due course it was sold to a developer and over 20 years ago was converted into the 6 residential units we see today, its character and significance in the 'village' of Bentley Heath secured for the foreseeable future.

A more detailed history can be found in the book 'Bentley Heath and Widney Manor' by Edna G. Handley ISBN 0-9519897-0-7

If you have any stories or announcements you'd like featured, please contact us at dorridgeresidents@gmail.com. Thank you.


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