



## Caversham GLOBE – Annual Report for January to December 2016

**1. INTRODUCTION.** Caversham GLOBE group is now more than 20 years old. We are an independent community-based group, originally set up by Reading Borough Council (RBC) with funding and support. We aim to improve and protect green and open spaces for the benefit of residents & wildlife by taking practical action on the ground and influencing policy & planning decisions. Caversham GLOBE works in all parts of Reading Borough north of the Thames as well as adjoining areas along the riverside and into South Oxfordshire. This 2016 report provides a summary of GLOBE supporters' work and the group's contributions during 2016 to a cleaner more pleasant locality. Our aims and activities include:

- meeting with RBC officers and lobbying councillors over parks and open spaces issues
- researching and responding on planning applications and consultations about development proposals
- practical projects in streets, parks & green spaces, planting and caring for trees, hedging and plant boxes
- clearing litter, removing graffiti, reporting infrastructure defects and issues affecting public areas.

2016 proved to be a period where cuts to RBC funding became more evident, with reduced involvement of RBC Officers, slower responses and not the same level of cooperation or standards of maintenance from RBC as in previous years, due to staffing reductions and the prioritising of issues. Many concerns raised by GLOBE with RBC were not resolved with the priority, goodwill or cooperation that might previously have been the case. Financial support of the group through an annual community grant to cover 2016 running costs was the last and has now been withdrawn for the future. Notably, there has also been a lack of communication from certain elected Councillors when GLOBE has raised issues with them. Unlike in many past years, no local ward Councillors attended any of the monthly GLOBE meetings where supporters meet for formal business.

Though the group continues to liaise and cooperate with RBC, this reduced level of practical support has led to more litter and falling standards of regular maintenance and upkeep in our streets, parks and other open space, as can be readily observed where various areas are deteriorating. Some of this deterioration could be prevented as it is caused by inaction of some residents and anti-social behaviour by litter louts/fly-tippers and a lack of care from some businesses. The need for more residents to join in the GLOBE group's activities is needed more than ever.

The following sections provide a brief summary of 2016 issues and activities. Further detail can be read in the monthly meeting minutes and from talking with the GLOBE activists who have given their time, energy and resolve for the benefit of our community

### **2. TREES AND GREEN MATTERS.**

**Central Caversham - twenty RBC wooden Planters** along Church Street and Church Road were planted with seasonal bedding plants then watered, tidied and maintained.

**RBC Tree Strategy/Tree Wardens** – GLOBE supports and participates in the Reading Tree Wardens group. During the summer GLOBE also helped water trees as required. There are a lot of trees and hedges planted by GLOBE over the past 20 years that continue to enhance various parks, public spaces and private land.

**3. RBC PARKS AND OPEN SPACES.** GLOBE liaised with RBC Councillors and Officers and worked with concerned residents on landscaping, litter and other issues concerning many green and open spaces in our area.

**Christchurch Meadows** – continued monitoring progress to ensure landscaping plans were fulfilled and re-instatement of the construction site for the new Christchurch Bridge and following 2 public events - the CAMRA beer festival and the Readipop/Caversham Festival. Questions were raised with RBC about non-compliance with the

terms of the Readipop licence not being adhered to because of excessive noise, generator pollution and intrusion of vehicles. Worked with **Thames21**, cleaning and clearing detritus and branches obstructing **the Danall**, investigating the cause of slow flow and reporting the silting up under Wolsey Road bridge to RBC. Ad hoc litter picks undertaken. Suggested the **planting of wild flower areas by GLOBE in Christchurch Meadow** but were told by Parks Manager that because past plantings elsewhere in Reading have resulted in vandalism, dog fouling and litter, RBC will not allow GLOBE to plant and care for any wild flower areas in Christchurch Meadows. GLOBE also raised issue of **insufficient RBC litter bins near the new Christchurch Bridge**.

**Hill's Meadow** – Worked with **Thames21**, cleaning and clearing detritus and branches obstructing **the Danall**.

**Hill's Meadow/Thames Parks** – Concerns raised that George Street entrance was looking like just an entry to a commercial car wash instead of a leisure site and car park, with 5 car wash signs and banners on or near the pavement that detract from the visual aspect of this area.

**Balmore Walk** – Planted additional hedging along bare metal fencing in 2 locations in southern end of Balmore Walk. Litter picking and reporting ineffective maintenance. Raised with RBC and Ward Councillor the matter of the broken National Cycle Route millennium milepost badly damaged by machinery used by RBC on 4 March 2016. (Photo available). Cutting of the conservation grassland on the Hemdean valley slope and top field was not done, though this was raised with RBC.

**Caversham old cemetery Hemdean Road**. raised concerns with RBC that this local wildlife site has had excessive work done to the mature trees and vegetation, causing much disturbance to habitats and ruining some natural areas. Site meeting held with RBC officers, though the outcome was not considered satisfactory. Also raised the fact that litter bins were not being emptied nor paths cleared of accumulated tree debris.

**Stream/ditch near Richfield Avenue and through the Rivermead site**. Reported to RBC the litter, pollution and clogging along this watercourse, which has shared responsibility between RBC and GLL who run the leisure centre.

**Westfield Road Rec** – litter picking, reporting overgrown hedges and potholes on footpath.

Funded and installed some tree guards in **Emmer Green Rec**. to protect trees which have been suffering from animals damaging their bark.

**4. PLANNING MATTERS** GLOBE monitors development proposals and planning applications, including applications for work on protected trees. Site meetings and consultations are attended, comments and objections are submitted, as time permits, particularly with regard to environmental issues, for example:

**Former Arthur Clark Care Home site Albert Road**. **RBC Revised Local Plan**. **Mapledurham Playing Fields – Proposed school site**. **Clearwater Court by the Thames** – objected to the removal of 13 trees on the Thames Water riverside building and the installation of many big signs and flagpoles instead. **St Martins Precinct** revised plans for phased development. **Farmland north of Emmer Green between Peppard Rd & Kiln Rd**. **Gladman Land is promoting a scheme** on behalf of the Phillimore Estate to build 270 houses on this open farmland immediately adjacent to Emmer Green. **58 dwellings along Henley Road behind numbers 199 – 203**.

**Rivermead Leisure Complex**, to acquire an area of Thames Prom land north of the existing Rivermead structures for a new permanent building which would initially house a 25m demountable swimming pool.

## **5. CLEANER CAVERSHAM**

During 2016, GLOBE supporters collected the following from public spaces: more than **73 sacks of rubbish (including 25 sacks of cans and plastic bottles for recycling), more than 150 glass bottles for recycling, plus many fly tipped items**. GLOBE supporters achieved this by taking part in the RBC spring “**Clean for the Queen**” campaign and the much reduced RBC autumn **RESCUE 2016** (Rivers & Environmental Spaces Clean-up Events) and periodic litter picks of green verges, pavements and footpaths to make Caversham cleaner. **Thanks to those people who invested their time to pick up other people's rubbish and make Caversham a lot cleaner**.

GLOBE participated in the RBC Neighbourhood monthly **Environment Visual Audits (Discontinued in early 2017 due to RBC jobs cuts)** and we report issues such as fly tipping, graffiti, abandoned shopping trolleys, potholes, defective street lights, overgrown vegetation obstructing paths etc, either direct to RBC or through the **Love Clean Reading** IT app, though some issues are not resolved. GLOBE supporters also take personal direct action (with RBC tacit agreement) to clean or paint over graffiti, clear litter & fly tipping as well as cut back obstructing vegetation.

**Reading Festival August B/H and related litter issues** – after various email exchanges on this matter a site meeting took place with RBC and others to plan and agree locations of additional temporary bins and street cleaning by RBC to help reduce the amount of litter around Caversham and the riverside during this period. GLOBE activists also carried out several ad hoc litter picks around Central Caversham during and after the Festival and followed up some litter issues to reduce littering in subsequent years.

## 6. OTHER MATTERS

**Finances** We received a Community Grant of £500 from Reading Borough Council to cover the costs of our meeting room hire (£156) and public liability insurance (£293). A separate financial report for 2016 is available.

**GLOBE Communicated with four local primary schools** to encourage use of the old Caversham Cemetery and other places locally for any wildlife or social history studies; also to encourage them to include eco-friendly activities in their educational projects with young people.

**GLOBE discussed issues about the new LED street lighting** and the resultant light levels. This had been raised by a concerned campaigner who contacted GLOBE about a growing national campaign against the potentially harmful effects of cool-white/blue-rich LED lighting. It was agreed that LED lighting was an improvement on the sodium street lamp yellow lights.

### **Liaison with other local community organisations:**

Caversham & District Residents Association (CADRA),	Caversham Park Village Association.
Emmer Green Residents' Association (EGRA),	Caversham Traders Association
Friends of Caversham Court Gardens (FCCG)	Eye & Dunsden parish
Warren & Dist. Residents Assn. (WADRA)	Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG)

GLOBE supporters attend meetings of **Econet**, the **Reading Globe Alliance (Trega)**, and local **Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG)**. We are also part of **GREN**, the Greater Reading Environmental Network and are members of the **Reading Neighbourhood Network**

**Local publicity:** GLOBE has a website and Facebook pages where events are publicised and details of meetings are available. Our **web site** and **Facebook** pages are kept updated [www.cavershamglobe.org.uk](http://www.cavershamglobe.org.uk) and <https://www.facebook.com/cavershamglobe>

**Volunteers:** The GLOBE group relies on the active support, time and expertise of a dedicated small group of supporters and residents. New people are always welcome, there is no financial subscription or formality to joining in our activities, which are currently covered by public liability insurance.

-----End-----