



Chairman's Report for AGM, February 25th 2025

Thanks and acknowledgements

I would like to thank the myriad of ERA member helpers that have kept the wheels turning this year. Area Reps and their local helpers make all our deliveries possible; volunteers enable us to use the ERA stall on occasions such as Magna Carta Day; others respond to calls for help for example to prepare the petition for an A30 pedestrian crossing, to fold leaflets or put posters up during elections ... and lots more. Particular thanks to the Committee, for bringing their talents and giving their time to engage 'under the bonnet'. Thanks to all.

We have one departure from the Committee: Sue Holloway is needing to step down in response to other needs. I'd like to thank Sue for her support and good advice since the time I took over as Chair. It has been invaluable, and we will miss her wise counsel.

The Committee and Area Reps

This year the Committee has numbered 8, and with Sue Holloway standing down we will soon be 7 unless others come forward. With this small number we're forced to double-up on responsibilities. We would do better if we could spread the load more widely. Most importantly we need a Membership Secretary and a Planning Officer, but we also need the strength that a bigger Committee would bring. **PLEASE CONSIDER STEPPING UP and offering your support as a Committee member.** Just ask any of the existing Committee.

At the same time, we have 7 Area Reps to cover our 8 areas across Egham. Two of these are also Committee members, and two live 'outside' the area they cover – not ideal. It's a good way to 'get under the skin' of the streets around where you live, and your local knowledge is valuable to ERA. **PLEASE CONSIDER STEPPING UP and offering your support as an Area Rep** or to help the Area Rep near you. It's not a great deal of work.

What's been new at Committee meetings

Since April we've had a regular Members 'Open Door' agenda item at our monthly committee meetings, and members have come along on a few occasions. DO COME ALONG IF YOU HAVE AN ISSUE TO RAISE. We occasionally invited Area Reps to meetings too, and we will be more consistent with this in the future. It would be of value to strengthen the links between the Areas and the Committee.

We invited SCC Councillor Robert King (Labour) to our October meeting and he brought insight to the issues and opportunities at County level. Plans for a Christmas Tree in Magna Square were germinated at that time (see below). Our other SCC Councillor, Marisa Heath (Conservative) had been unable to accept our invitation.

Membership

Our 2024 membership was 348, a country mile short of my 500 target. This is disappointing and despite our best efforts at a mid-year membership drive. This year we restructured the New Year membership process and the 2025 membership currently stands at ~220 (more come in daily so it's a moving target). Numbers always keep rising into the summer, but we mustn't leave membership to chance. There is activity behind the scene but PLEASE ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS to join ERA. They can go to the ERA web-page <https://www.eghamresidentsassociation.co.uk/membership/> OR contact any of the Committee directly.

Political things

In May, the ERA-supported candidate Geeta Moudgil was elected as an Independent RBC councillor for Egham Town. Also in May the Conservatives lost their majority at RBC. A 'Runnymede Alliance' was formed which included Egham's three Independent councillors as part of the Runnymede Independent Residents' Group along with two Independents from Englefield Green.

The national review of Local Government has been well-publicised in the Press. 'Two-tier' council areas such as ours (where we have Runnymede Borough and Surrey County as separate entities) are to be re-organised as Unitary Authorities. Sometime in 2026 RBC and SCC will cease to exist, and meanwhile the contours and structure of the new Unitary Authority in which Egham will find itself will begin to take shape. Meanwhile, the intended Surrey CC elections due in May 2025 have been cancelled. Pertinent to this, but prompted by unrelated administrative issues, we have been engaging in drafting a new constitution for the Runnymede Independent Residents' Group political

party. This is the party controlled by ERA and Thorpe Ward Residents' Associations solely in the interests of residents of these two wards. On completion we will give details in a future Newsletter.

Highlights in 2024

Gravel raising applications: In January we joined with Residents Against Gravel Extraction (RAGE) and made detailed objections to an application for gravel pits at Whitehall Farm.

Flooding: The New Year Newsletter details what we've been doing on the flooding front, so no more here.

Planning: We opposed egregious plans for a massive supermarket + student block on Church Road (The Axon Centre) and all is now quiet on that front. We opposed plans to develop a large-scale fast-food outlet (rumoured to be KFC) on the Eclipse roundabout at the bottom of Egham Hill – but we lost, so expect it before long. We have opposed applications for six pavement-level moving-image digital advertising screens across town, and wait to see the outcomes. On a positive note, we have been consulted on another potential central development site, advocating for family residential homes, and are engaging with RBC's Community Design Panel, intent on improving town-centre design.

Campaigns and Public Awareness: In June we organized a lively General Election Hustings with 6 of the 7 candidates at St. John's Church. Ben Spencer (Conservative) was elected MP for the Runnymede & Weybridge constituency which Egham is part of.

In July, 15 ERA members did a survey of Egham A30 by-pass crossings at Hummer Rd, to support a petition to SCC for better traffic management and an improved crossing. The outcome was disappointing – the 300+ signature petition was dismissed by the Conservative Cabinet Member for Highways. A set-back, but not the end of the story (see 'Looking ahead' below).

In November, we held our second 'Be A Councillor' workshop – sowing the seeds for future candidates in our local elections.

Consultations: We continued to participate in the RHUL & RBC consultative group, addressing ways to mitigate the housing issues, parking stress, and anti-social behaviour exacerbated by having RHUL on our doorstep. We benefit enormously from the presence of RHUL; it's one of the things that makes Egham special. But dis-benefits persist, and need to be addressed. Hence the need for these continuing consultations. In parallel, we expect to have feedback soon on the RHUL 2030s future plan.

Social and community: On a summer's evening in August we hosted a sell-out Barn Dance in the big marquee at the Egham Royal Show. In the autumn, we successfully advocated for a Christmas Tree to be installed in Magna Square, with special thanks to SCC Cllr Robert King. IF YOU HAVE IDEAS FOR A SOCIAL / COMMUNITY EVENT IN 2025, please bring your idea to us.

Looking ahead to 2025

We will be engaging with RBC on **priorities for infrastructure in Egham**, funded by a new Community Infrastructure Levy on developers;

We'll be inputting to the public consultation on **plans to redevelop the Precinct** in the High Street;

We will engage actively with RBC on the **review of the RBC Local Plan**, key to planning and development for years ahead;

We'll input to the consultation on **the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan** (to include a signalized pedestrian crossing for the A30 at Hummer Road);

In conclusion

Thank you for reading to the end! Thank you for being part of ERA. I hope you'll be able to come to the AGM and look forward to seeing you.

William Burgess, Chair

February 2025