



MEET POSTMAN ANDY

Sometimes one friendly face is enough to brighten the day. For over ten years postman Andy has been delivering mail to residents around Campbell Park and nearby parts of CMK, and for many he has become part of their daily lives.

As Andy puts it, "I like to say hello to people and have a chat where I can. In some cases I'm the only person they have to talk to, and a little thing like that can really make all the difference."

So next time you see the postman doing his rounds, feel free to have a friendly word.



Controversy at Saxon Gate



CMK residents recently led a deputation to Milton Keynes Council about controversial proposals for Saxon Court. The Council wishes to sell the building as well as the empty development site to the rear, but its "preferred option" is for buyers to demolish the building and replace it with a much larger development which would take up most of the surrounding public infrastructure.

When your town councillors heard about this idea, they delivered urgent letters to hundreds of homes explaining the likely negative impact on residents through increased congestion, disruption to pedestrian and cycle routes, loss of trees and public parking bays.

Marc Carroll, who led the residents' deputation, told the assembly "This is over-development of the site. Removal of these roads would create

great hardship for residents. At busy periods, the extra congestion on Avebury Boulevard which is a major bus route could add 20 minutes to journey times."

Dr Rebecca Kurth, chair of the Town Council, says "It is totally unnecessary to build over footpaths and side-streets when there is plenty of land to build new homes and premises in CMK without losing vital links in the city's grid. Also, we need all of this infrastructure to support existing residents as well as the thousands more who will be moving to CMK in the next few years."

The Town Council has submitted a strong case for MKC to drop this approach and concentrate on sustainable options. As long as the height of any new building steps down to respect nearby homes, and stays within the typical footprint for buildings in CMK this would prevent more conflict and upset.

Please get in touch if you have any comments or check our website for updates.

CMK Trees Saved

It's not all bad news for CMK's trees! A recent planning application to cut down trees at Witan Gate, near Petersfield Green, to build private parking spaces was refused by Milton Keynes Council following objections made by CMK Town Council. The reasons for refusal echoed our concerns that this would have been an ugly intrusion into a well-planned landscape which would have harmed the character of the area. Also, it was contrary to the CMK Neighbourhood Plan which protects the extensive 'Green Frame' of open space and trees which surrounds CMK.



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MK at Centre of Growth Arc

Milton Keynes has been named as the heart of a new growth area reaching from Oxford to Cambridge. Announced by the National Infrastructure Commission, the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Arc will be home to a range of scientific and research organisations, technology companies and universities, putting the city at the centre of Britain's own Silicon Valley.

Recycling made clear

A new website explaining recycling in MK can now be found at www.getsortedmk.co.uk. The aim of the site is to inform, educate and inspire people to get involved more in recycling here in MK and to try and reuse, recycle or repurpose as much waste as possible. Another improvement is that the distinctive pink recycling bags will be replaced with transparent bags to help the recycling centre identify items that shouldn't be in them.

International Festival Dates

This year the International Festival returns to Campbell Park from 20-29 July. The popular event happens every two years at the height of summer and includes a wide variety of activities and attractions including music, dance and comedy performances. For more information see <http://www.ifmiltonkeynes.org>.

CMK Gets a Micro-Brewery

An independent micro-brewery will be opening soon in the theatre district, now known as "12th Street", bringing a little more variety to nightlife in CMK. The new 'Brewhouse and Kitchen' on Savoy Crescent will brew its own range of beers on site.



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Homeless "Bus Shelter" Gets Ready for Launch

The project to create safe accommodation for CMK's street homeless in a converted bus has moved forward after a site was agreed. The double decker coach is now in place in a secured site, off Silbury Boulevard in Campbell Park, where it is being connected to water and electricity supplies. The project's organisers, The Bus Shelter MK, hope to have a 'soft launch' around April, initially taking in between 5 and 7 people before going up to the full capacity of 16 at a later date.

Residents in the bus will acquire a postcode, allowing them to apply for jobs and benefits. Outreach officers will be on board the bus to help the people who are most in need find better access to the services they require.



Your New Precept

CMK Town Council is one of a number of parishes which have expressed an interest in taking on responsibility for some or all of the landscaping in the parish from 2020. Milton Keynes Council has seen its grants from central government reduced, which means that they need to look at ways to reduce expenditure. Reducing the number of times grass is cut, hedges trimmed etc is a way of achieving this.

However, CMK Town Council considers landscape maintenance a high priority and has assigned a budget to look into taking on landscaping from 2020, when the current contract expires. This would necessitate extra funding, and therefore the Town Council has agreed to increase its 2018-19 precept by 12.75% this year. The parish precept is a very small part of your overall tax bill, and this increase only amounts to £8.19 a year for the average household, but this could help prevent a further erosion of landscaping in your parish in future years.



CMK's New Police Forum

Do you have any concerns about safety and security in your area? In that case you are invited to attend the next Police Forum on Wednesday 11th April from 7 to 8pm at Margaret Powell House, Midsummer Boulevard. This new initiative by Thames Valley Police aims to identify the two most pressing issues for local residents and report progress every 3 months or so. There have been two meetings so far. The agenda for the next meeting is available on the Town Council's website.

The Police Forum will be followed by the Town Council's regular Residents' Forum. Residents who are interested in representing their neighbourhood are welcome to stay on or attend this separate event, where a wider range of local issues will be discussed.



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Marlborough Gate Closure

A busy link in CMK's grid road network will be closed for up to nine months for building works on the new multi-storey car park near John Lewis.

The closure affects the section of Marlborough Gate between Silbury Boulevard and Midsummer Boulevard. The works involve creating a new traffic light junction on Marlborough Gate to handle the

large number of cars which are likely to use the new car park when it opens.

The closure is scheduled to last until 22 September, during which time cars will be diverted over Secklow Gate Bridge, and bus services will be diverted along Avebury Boulevard and will not serve the stops along the north side of Campbell Park.

Have You Seen a Starship?

Have you noticed any small, white robots driving around CMK lately? American robotics firm Starship Technologies have chosen Central Milton Keynes to be the testing ground for their new autonomous delivery robots. The city's grid layout and step-free pavements make it ideal for testing the electric bots, which are designed to bring groceries and parcels direct to people's homes.

"Milton Keynes has earned a worldwide reputation as a city embracing autonomous vehicles and smart city technologies, in their early stage," says Henry Harris-Burland (VP Marketing, Starship Technologies). "Starship is interested in building it into a global showcase of autonomous local deliveries."

The company hopes that Milton Keynes residents will have access to the new technology before anywhere else in the country, with a new service launching shortly allowing any local business in MK to use the robots and start delivering to their customers at a low cost. Starship has also been working with local charities such as Willen Hospice, and is offering local charities and community organisations free use of the technology.



A new centre for young musicians and creative people to learn about the arts and develop hands-on skills is opening soon, bringing new life to the fringe of Station Square. New Money Recordings will open the facility soon on the upper floor of the former Central Bus Station, a great piece of Modernist architecture which Historic England listed in 2015.

Alex, one of the people helping to bring the new centre to life, says "we are in the process of building a new music academy for music and arts in Milton Keynes. We are building three recording studios, a rehearsal room, a photography studio and also a graphics room."

These attractive facilities are particularly intended for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, so they can express themselves more artistically, make friends and develop practical skills to improve their career prospects.

To Oxford!

Rail links between CMK, Oxford and beyond are set to see major improvements as the East West rail project gets underway. A new company has now been formed to construct and operate East West Rail, the major new railway line which will link Milton Keynes to major cities in the Oxford MK Cambridge growth corridor.

New services will provide convenient links to Bicester, Reading, High Wycombe and London Marylebone. Essentially, this will restore the old 'Varsity Line' which linked Oxford to Cambridge from the Victorian era until the 1960's. When the first phase is complete, in 2022, it will take about 40 minutes from Milton Keynes Central to Oxford.

More information on the project is at www.eastwestrail.org.uk/

▼ *The new Oxford Parkway station, pictured here on its opening day in October 2015, was the first step towards reopening the full line between Oxford and Milton Keynes.*



Offices to Homes

Live near an office? You might be getting new neighbours without even realising it. Over the past couple of years, several under-used office buildings in CMK have been converted into residential apartments. This has come about due to a Government policy called Permitted Development, which allows office building owners to convert them into residential use without needing to get planning permission.

Although intended to ease the housing problem and help struggling town centres, this can also lead to problems for nearby residents. A few months ago some residents living near Grant Thornton House, one such office building, contacted the Town Council with concerns about how the plans would lead to parking congestion, noise disturbance and refuse disposal issues in their area. Unfortunately, the automatic nature of Permitted Development means that the Town Council is unable to object to most 'office to resi' conversions. However, these conversions often come with physical changes to the buildings which do require planning permission, so the Town Council can object to these where it is appropriate, as we did in the case of the Grant Thornton House proposals. However, in the six months since that objection Milton Keynes Council has not yet reached a decision on the plans.

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Thursday 8 March

Women's Day at MK Rose

Join MK Community Foundation for the annual celebration of International Women's Day. 10am at the MK Rose in Campbell Park, near the footbridge to Midsummer Boulevard.

Saturday 10 March MK Handmade Fair

Middleton Hall is transformed as 128 indoor market stalls offer a variety of antiques and crafts. Entry is free and the market is open 9am-6pm Saturday and 10.30am-5pm Sunday.

Sunday 11 March Life Drawing MK

Relaxed, untutored sessions where participants are provided with materials to practise life-drawing from models. At Arts Central in Norfolk House, 10am-4pm. Costs £10 per session or you can book 5 sessions for £45.

Thursday 15 March Family History Consultations

Free 30-minute consultations to help you research your Family History at MK Central Library. Runs from 4.15-7.30pm. Book in advance via 01908 254051.

Saturday 24 March MK Lightning vs. Fife

The city's Ice Hockey team go up against the Fife Flyers at the Planet Ice Arena on Avebury Boulevard. Tickets are £18 for adults or £5 for children. For details call 01908 540020.

Saturday 31 March Live Music at MK Gallery

An evening of psychedelic music with multi-instrumentalist Joshua Abrams and the Natural Information Society. Doors open at 8pm. Tickets are £7 in advance or £8 on the door.

Sunday 29 April Workers Memorial Day

Remembrance service for International Workers Memorial Day, taking place at the MK Rose in Campbell Park at 12 noon.

For more details of these events and others, please see our website at www.cmktowncouncil.gov.uk



Live Music at MK Gallery

MK Gallery's weekly Saturday Live Music events showcase a wide variety of artists and styles each weekend, from experimental electronic to pop and rock and various blends in between.

On 31 March, psychedelic band *Natural Information Society* will present their unique blend of jazz, rock and minimalist electronic music, including tracks from their album *Magnetoception*, ranked #3 album of the year by Wire Magazine.

On 7 April, self-taught artist and musician Graham Dunning's band *Structured Disasters* will present their live work *The Majesty of Errors*, supported by multi-instrumental band *CRUSH!*

On 28 April, French group *A Hawk and A Hacksaw* will present a DJ set with support from London-based gospel/folk group *Death Is Not The End*. For other concerts and more information including prices for each show, visit www.mkgallery.org/events

Life Drawing MK

Looking for a chance to flex your artistic muscles? Practise drawing from life at this



relaxed untutored session at Arts Central in Norfolk House.

A range of models will be posing at the sessions, which also provide basic materials including

paper, drawing boards, pencils, charcoal and some pastels. You are welcome to bring your own materials if you have something special you want to try. There will even be tea and biscuits to keep you going.

The session starts at 10am, but this is the drawing time so attendees are advised to arrive a little earlier to set up and get settled. Attendance costs £10 per person. Sessions also take place every Thursday at 7pm, and five sessions can be booked for £45. To book, send an email to oneart.stu@gmail.com.

Family History Consultations

Curious about your family history? Milton Keynes Central Library is offering free 30-minute consultations with genealogy expert John Hanson to help you with research into your heritage.

The Library is home to a large archive of historical documents and data, including local census data from as far back as 1841.

The session will start at 4:15 on March 15 and needs to be booked in advance by phoning 01908 254051 or emailing mklocal@milton-keynes.gov.uk.



These sessions are extremely popular and sell out fast, so booking well in advance is advised. Further sessions will also take place on 17 May and 28 June.

www.cmktowncouncil.gov.uk



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