



THE POST

LMEHA NEWSLETTER



LIFESTYLE - NEWS - FUN



March 2024

Welcome to the Spring edition of THE POST. This is the LMEHA newsletter that celebrates all that's good about LME and also gives news, tips and recommendations about local services and places to go etc.

We hope you enjoy reading it!



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Message from our LMEHA Chair

Welcome to our Spring 2024 Newsletter.

Welcome to the first edition of “The Post” in 2024.

I hope that in “The Post” members can see how LMEHA is trying to fulfil its mission:

“To represent the interests of homeowners at LME. To bring owners together for fun and frivolity while working together to enhance and preserve the value of our mutual investments.

The scope and breadth of LMEHA activities continues to grow as our membership expands.

In terms of representing homeowners, we now have sub committees representing homeowners with the Spa Rental and Rural managements. As well as representing homeowners to estate management and HFG we also have members who can represent us on the Parish Council and Cotswold District Council.

From the financial perspective the association is working tirelessly to ensure that the service charge is as realistic as possible and that the correct funding mechanisms are in place to ensure the estate infrastructure will be maintained and replaced where necessary. LME is in reality a village with full amenities and a nature reserve.

Community wise initiatives are moving forward, many homes now have solar panels following our Net Zero initiative and the HROC (rights and obligations) committee have completed their initial objectives.



Message from our LMEHA Chair

– cont'd

The Nature Club regularly meets to explore and understand the nature in our area. The LMEHA photographers continue to share their skills and experiences in the photography group.

Our next charity event is the Duck Race which will be held on May 5th.

Socially we have held two drinks evenings since the last newsletter which were clearly enjoyed by those who attended. They remain a great way to meet and get to know fellow homeowners.

Our next drinks evening will be on May 4th.

All the activities and initiatives rely on members willingly giving their time energy and expertise to make them a success. A big thank you to everyone who volunteers!

However, we always need new members and new ideas and suggestions. Therefore, if anyone knows a homeowner who is not a LMEHA please point them in our direction, similarly if there is an idea for a new initiative or activity, please do not be shy, the committee will be very pleased to hear from you.

The AGM will be on May 4th at 9.30 am in the Somerford Keynes Village Hall. I hope as many members as possible will attend.

I hope the weather will improve and we can all enjoy a wonderful spring at LME

Graham

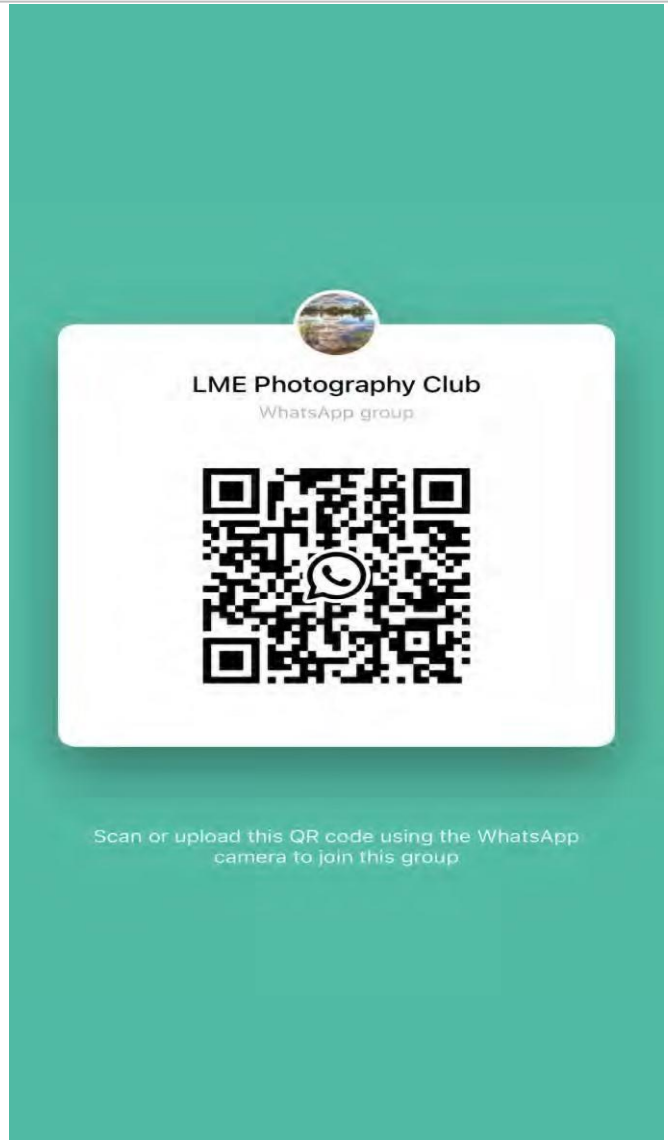


LMEHA – Clubs & info

Photography Club

The club is meeting monthly for a combination of going out and taking photographs and learning new skills around taking and editing photos. It is suitable for all skill levels.

If you'd like to join, please join our WhatsApp group by scanning this QR code with your mobile phone camera, or email mikesmckeown@gmail.com



SPA UPDATE – March 2024

(Please see LMEHA committee meeting minutes for more details)

SPA CHANGING ROOM SHOWER TEMPERATURE ISSUES

One of the two 15 year old gas boilers that service the showers and heat the pools has failed completely and is uneconomic to repair. It has been replaced with 3 new gas boilers which should now have been commissioned, planned for mid-March. A more eco-friendly solution to replace the second old gas boiler is under review.

These new boilers will not solve the shower water temperature problem completely, as the pipework feeding the showers, located under the SPA, is fractured and leaking. This needs replacing/fixing in order for the shower to work correctly. Unfortunately, this may necessitate the complete closure of the SPA that will need careful planning in order to notify all parties well in advance.

SPA MAIN OUTSIDE POOL REFURBISHMENT - SIGNIFICANT WATER LEAKAGE

The outside pool needs to be constantly “topped up”, i.e. water is leaking from the pool and energy is wasted in bringing the pool back up to temperature. One major leak has been identified which is in the pool’s canopy pit. There could be others, e.g. leaking pipework, porous tiles, failed “tanking”.

At a recent meeting with Rio Pools, the LME's surveyor and LME representatives, it was agreed that Rio pools would issue quotes based on 2 options; a short term fix (5 years) and a longer term (20-25 years) solution. These should be available in the next 2-3 weeks.

Any works are significant and not envisaged to start before 2025.

SPA TREATMENTS – DISCOUNTS AND SPECIAL OFFERS – see below

These only apply during low season and only available mid-week (Monday to Thursday).

- A homeowner discount of 10% applies on any treatment
- A massage and tea for any 2 people with SPA access - £130.
(NB Only people with SPA access can take advantage of this offer.)

GYM EQUIPMENT LEASE HAS EXPIRED

The intention is for LME to purchase the existing strength/resistance equipment and lease new cardio equipment to include: 2 x Cross trainers, 2 x Bikes, 2 x Treadmills and 1 x Rowing machine. A new agreement and lease will need to be signed, but in the interim, the existing equipment is being rented.

GYM OUT OF HOURS USAGE WHEN SPA IS CLOSED NOW AVAILABLE – Homeowners only

The GYM is now available for use outside normal SPA opening hours, i.e. 06:30 to 08:00 and in the evening until 23:00. Out of hours entry is gained via the card controlled gate to the rear of Ballihoo. Access at other times must be via the main SPA entrance. Individuals need to complete a registration form (available from reception) prior to using this facility.



LMEHA – Rural Sub-Committee

Do you want to know more about the ecology of LME and how it is managed?

At www.lmeha.com, members can find many resources, including:

- i. LMEHA rural subcommittee meeting notes that document regular discussions with estate management. Topics include grounds team activities, grazing, signage, safety, homeowners' questions, special projects, etc.
- ii. The Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) 2022 - 2027. Prepared by Habitat First Group (HFG) and the Landmark Practice, it details the ecological management actions required to meet the estate's on-going legal obligations under its Section 106 planning agreement. It covers the eight LME villages and the wider estate, along with Swillbrook Lakes Nature Reserve, which is outside the service charge area, but part of the estate for ecological planning purposes. The LEMP can also be viewed at the HFG Hub.
- iii. Annual ecological monitoring reports, required to measure the success of the implementation of nature conservation control and mitigation measures. These reports document numerous surveys of wintering waterbirds, breeding waterbirds, breeding terrestrial birds, bats, nightingales, reed buntings, reed warblers, house martins, tern rafts, the brown hairstreak butterfly, amphibians (frogs, toads, newts) and odonata (damselflies and dragonflies)).

iv. Other LME planning documents particularly related to the Minety Lake phase of development.

v. The Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan
As you can see we are building an LMEHA on-line library!

If you have any similar reports or information to add to our collection, please Whatsapp Hilary Collins at 07592 914075.

LMEHA - Nature Club

"Being members of the Nature Club has given us so much joy, plus a whole group of like-minded new friends. We learn and share knowledge, we have had some amazing walks and spotted some incredible wildlife, and we've also had some really fun social events. A group of eyes is always better to spot things and going on our nature club walks is our favourite thing to do at Lower Mill. We are surrounded by incredible wildlife and nature, and to spend time studying it in a slow appreciation is such an awesome experience, and a privilege."

Kerry and Ben Curtis

Started in 2022, the LMEHA Nature Club is a group of homeowners who get together to appreciate and learn about nature, while exploring our wonderful estate and beyond. The club is friendly and very informal. Our walks are leisurely, taking time to stop, look and listen, and are usually from two to three hours in duration. Membership involves joining our nature club WhatsApp group, participating in walks, and, if inclined, organizing or leading walks.





LMEHA -Nature Club - Continued

During the past twelve months, the nature club has enjoyed:

- a spectacular early autumn walk at Westonbirt Arboretum
- a fun Christmas party
- a walk through the wildflower meadows at nearby Clattinger Farm with a break for coffee at Dragonfly Cafe.
- a dawn chorus and orchid walk around the wider estate
- two summer walks on the estate, focused on butterflies, dragonflies, and house martins, expertly guided by homeowner, Tony Spooner Thanks Tony
- a guided tour of Somerford Keynes Village Lake
- a walk to view nightingale habitat impacted by the otter fence installation around Lakes 43 and 65
- an informal/social walk around the wider estate
- a "hidden gardens and vistas" walk showcasing six LME properties, with onroute refreshments, followed by dinner Big thanks to all homeowners involved
- a walk north on the Thames Path trail, followed by a chat over coffee at Ballihoo.

During this time, nature club members have also participated in several excellent nature walks and events hosted by LME's Assistant Ecologist, James Ponting.

Between walks and events, club members have fun sharing about the wildlife they have seen during their visits to LME and other travels. Recent highlights at LME include videos of huge starling murmurations, osprey, stoat, and baby frog sightings, and spectacular sunset and moon rises over our lakes. From further

afield, members shared about the avian riches of Slimbridge, tigers at Port Lympne in Kent, and manatees in Florida.

To join the nature club?

Please WhatsApp Hilary Collins at 07592 914075.

LMEHA – Energy Initiatives update

Community Energy News – March 2024

Thames Head Energy, the local community energy not-for-profit founded by LME homeowners and local residents, has made significant strides. With £18,000 raised, through Crowdfund Cotswolds from LME homeowners, local residents, business, Somerford Keynes parish council and CDC, the first 14 homes are now equipped with solar panels and batteries, that will slash annual CO2 emissions by 17 tonnes and bills by around £19,000. They will generate enough electricity per year to drive an EV around the world 11 times!

Discussions are ongoing for a community solar farm. We are in early stage talks with a local landowner and are putting together a bid to the Southwest NetZero hub to fund expanding the search for solar farm locations across the Cotswolds. We've recently secured funding, with second application pending, to install EV charging in the local community.

We've obtained quotes for the installation of solar power at both the Spa and Mill Village pool. This will significantly diminish our running costs and markedly reduce our CO2 emissions. However, we face a temporary challenge as Rob, the estate manager, has left. His departure may introduce a delay in the progression of this green initiative.

LME encountered an urgent situation with the heating system at the Spa. LME, unfortunately, addressed the issue of the aging gas boilers very late, leaving us in a precarious position as they neared the end of their operational life with little time left to explore alternative solutions. We did receive an outline proposal to replace these old gas boilers with more sustainable and efficient

LMEHA – Energy Initiatives update

Community Energy News – March 2024

heat pumps. This solution, especially when combined solar power, promised not only to reduce our running costs but also to significantly curtail our CO2 emissions. However, constrained by time to plan, apply for necessary grants, and ensure installation before the boilers' failure, LME was compelled to opt for new gas boilers—a decision we find deeply disappointing. Nonetheless, we hold onto the hope that the design of the new system incorporates the flexibility for a future upgrade. This would allow us to transition to a hybrid solution of heat pumps and gas in the interim, with a vision for a long-term, fully renewable energy source, thus keeping our commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility alive.

For updates and more information on these initiatives, including how to get a quote for home solar, battery and EV chargers, visit

www.thamesheadenergy.org





WILDLIFE NEWS

Spring is a busy time of year for wildlife at Lower Mill Estate, as the days get longer and (hopefully) warmer, we start to see new life beginning to emerge around us. Bird breeding season is in full swing with surveys taking place to find out which species we have breeding on site. Already this year we have seen Great crested grebes performing their famous courtship dances, kingfishers fighting it out for prime territories along the Thames and a pair of Mute swans starting a nest on Mill Lake, so we look forward to seeing what else there will be.

One of the recent wildlife highlights from the estate is Water voles. Numerous signs of these fascinating little creatures have recently been spotted along the Thames, often regarded as the fastest declining UK species, the Water vole has seen a decline of almost 90% of its population across the UK. Although we have known Water voles are in this portion of the Thames for a while, we are now seeing increased signs of them this year which is a huge positive. Our resident wildlife photographer Bob Iles was able to capture some brilliant pictures of one which can be seen below. If you very quietly walk along the Thames up from the main entrance, you might get lucky and see one for yourself.



WILDLIFE NEWS

Spring also sparks the arrival of some of our summer visitors, and we can soon look forward to seeing House martins zipping above our heads and the distinctive call of the cuckoo echoing across the woodlands. House martins are one of the great success stories here at Lower Mill, going from 0 pairs in 2005 to welcoming over 100 pairs in 2023. One of the best ways you can help ensure house martins continue to thrive at Lower Mill is by retaining nests throughout the year, ready for them to use again during breeding season. Studies have shown that having a prebuilt nest, either artificial or an unbroken one from last year, significantly increases breeding success as the birds don't have to waste time building a new nest each year, saving them around 10 days of nest building time. This means they can have two (very rarely three) broods in a season rather than one, so if you have an old nest don't break it!

Amphibian surveys will soon begin too, these are done annually to monitor how many amphibians we have on site and where they are breeding. This information is incredibly useful as it allows us to identify which are our most successful ponds and informs us where habitat management works are needed. Great crested newts will be congregating within the breeding ponds so now is an ideal time for surveying. Last year a total of 29 Great crested



WILDLIFE NEWS

newts were found across four surveys, all within the ponds in Swillbrook, with a further 106 smooth newts found across the estate. Reptile and Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies)

surveys will also start soon, again these surveys allow us to monitor population densities across the estate.

I hope everyone will be able to find the time and explore the estate on those upcoming bright sunny days, it really is amazing what you can find. I also have a range of events and walks planned for this year so please keep your eye out for those and I hope to see you there.

James Ponting
Assistant Ecologist



LMEHA – Member Reviews

Lola & Co Tetbury

Wine Bar & Tapas

Highly recommended

22a Long Street Tetbury

01665 500077



The Falcon Inn - Poulton

4 Miles from Cirencester

Highly Recommended

01285 850878



The Fleece - Cirencester

Highly Recommended

Dog Friendly

Market Place

01285 658507





LOCAL INFO & EVENTS

St John Baptist Church Cirencester

Easter Services

Good Friday 10 a.m. Family Eucharist

Easter Sunday 10am Family Eucharist





Local Markets

Located in Cirencester Market Place are the weekly Monday & Friday Charter Markets, the monthly Arts & Crafts Markets and the Farmers' Market held on the 2nd & 4th Saturday of the Month.

There is an events calendar if you search Cirencester Markets for exact dates.

Barn Theatre – Cirencester 01285 648255



29 MARCH – 18 MAY 2024

Nick Payne's dazzling Olivier award winning play is a beautiful rich exploration into human connections with a plot that keeps us guessing until the end.

[BOOK NOW](#) [MORE INFO >](#)

Constellations – 29th March to 18th May