

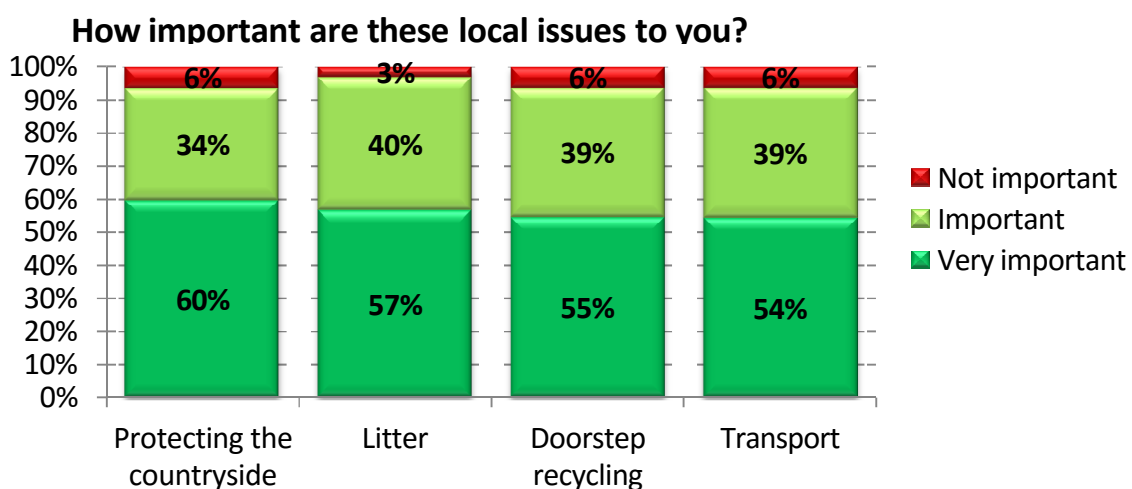
# Green View

Hitchin Walsworth  
Spring 2016



## Listening to your views – our survey results

Since last year, **Richard Cano** and his Green Party team have been asking Walsworth residents to give their views on local issues by filling out our 60-second survey. Thank you to those who gave their views. The responses highlight a number of issues that are important to local residents. The top four issues are:



Various aspects of the transport issue came up in responses. It seems **cycle safety** is clearly something that people are concerned about, with 57% of respondents saying they didn't feel safe cycling on the road in Hitchin. Many people are in favour of more cycle lanes and other measures to improve cycle safety. There was clear and strong support for **better access to Hitchin Station for pedestrians and cyclists** – 86% of respondents were in favour of this. The comments also showed that residents feel the current access route to the station from the Walsworth side is unworkable for the volume of people using it.

A number of people highlighted **the need for housing to be affordable for local people**. Some were concerned that recent housing developments have been overpriced for local people. Also, there have been greater pressures on local infrastructure. Respondents felt our green spaces should be protected.

As a result of the survey, we are looking into some of the key issues highlighted and working with other groups to try to find solutions. We are liaising with Network Rail to try to improve access to Hitchin Station. Richard is working with local campaigners to find practical solutions to the problem of **litter** on our streets. Further details of the survey results are on our website: [www.northherts.greenparty.org.uk](http://www.northherts.greenparty.org.uk)

Should Richard be elected in May, he will ensure that these concerns are addressed at Council level.

## Are you registered to vote?

Register online: <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/elections-and-voting/register-vote>. Alternatively, please call the Electoral Services Helpline on 01462 474503 - they will send you an Individual Registration Form.



Police and Crime Commissioner and district elections will be held on Thursday 5 May, with polling stations open from 7am until 10pm. The deadline to register to vote is 18 April.

## Water voles in Walsworth, Hitchin



Diana Newson, Green Party member, recently visited **Purwell Ninesprings**. It is one of two nature reserves in Walsworth, reached via a footpath, **Gypsy Lane**, from the junction of **Kingswood Avenue** and **Purwell Lane**. The River Purwell links it to **Purwell Meadows Nature Reserve** and **Walsworth Common**. The Purwell arises from chalky bedrock as St Ippolytes brook, becoming the Purwell downstream, and passing through the two nature reserves and the common. It joins the Hiz (pronounced "Hitch") at Walsworth, and then flows on to join the Ivel in Bedfordshire.

### We have water voles!

Water voles are a native UK species that has suffered a calamitous decline of over 95% in recent years. They are chubby furry animals (similar in size to guinea pigs) that live near water, making their homes in burrows in the riverbank. They've been made famous by Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows", in which Ratty is a water vole. They were made a protected species in 2008, and have been the subject of several artificial breeding and re-introduction programmes.

### Why the decline?

The steep losses in this native species are for two reasons – loss of habitat and predation by the American mink. The mink was introduced to Britain, in the 20s and 30s by fur farms. The female is smaller than the male, and can invade water vole burrows. It's thought that a single breeding female mink can kill an entire colony of water voles over a period of time. Another problem is that breaks in habitat have fragmented the population and isolated them.

### On-going work

The reeds can continuously encroach on the ponds and streams and have to be routinely cut back. The warden and a team of regular volunteers do this and other tasks, such as clearing brambles from the reed beds, or mowing the grass to a height of about 8 inches. The patch of open grassland is important because it allows more light and low-level growth, which leads to greater biodiversity. The area provides nest sites for birds, and vital habitat for the Speckled Wood butterfly (which feeds on grass) and the rare Small Teasel. Mink are continuously monitored. For the future it would be great if water vole habitat could be extended both upstream and downstream facilitating contact with other colonies.

### Contacting Richard

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