



OPM warning!

Some planned tree work in late July could not be completed because the contractor found oak processionary moth (OPM) in the protected oak tree by the public footpath between Carlisle Way and Rectory Lane.

We reported this to the Council tree officer, highways team and TreeAlert, put up warning signs, informed contractors working on site and issued warnings to owners and residents.

ATS Trees cleared the OPM on 11 August, then tree contractor E Payne completed safety work to reduce pavement overhang on 1 September.

Unfortunately, OPM is now across London because of failed biosecurity and clearance policies of the Labour Government 20 years ago. The Council tree officer advises we cannot now prevent it, so we will have to remove it when needed to carry out tree work safely.

Do not touch oak trees, caterpillars or moths and keep children and pets away. Its hairs can cause severe skin irritation, breathing difficulties and sometimes allergic reactions. Seek medical advice if affected. There are warning signs in areas that may be affected.



Fibre broadband

Community Fibre and BT Openreach have both now surveyed flat blocks on the Estate. Fibre cabling has been run to telecommunications conduits in local streets, so houses should already be able to obtain full fibre broadband.

We await dates for installation in flat blocks. BT Openreach delayed for months for spurious reasons then admitted it was overloaded. It has now advised that low-rise developments are lower priority, so installation may be delayed.

→ Flat communal areas

Items must not be left flat communal areas as this is a fire risk and obstructs emergency exits. Notes are left and items may be removed. If items remain or fire doors are open / obstructed, solicitors will contact flat owners at their cost.

→ Annual meeting 2023

The previous two annual meetings online were successful, with more attending than if they had to travel to a hired hall. The 2023 annual meeting will therefore be online in November. Papers will be sent electronically to those on RRO otherwise by post, with online registration, advance voting and voting on the evening as last year.

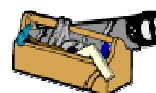


Sewer work

Thames Water had to delay repairs to the publicly adopted sewer serving 17-27 Carlisle Way and even numbers in Limetree Walk because an inspection chamber was buried on our land and could not easily be found.

Unbloc won the competitive tender, excavated the inspection chamber and cover by the path between Limetree Walk and Carlisle Way and replaced the damaged sewer cover behind flat block 17-27 Carlisle Way for safety.

Thames Water will now be able to clear and repair the damaged sewer. **Do not enter any areas with barriers or where there is work for safety, there may be open deep holes.**



Maintenance

Work is updated monthly on the Estate website at <https://www.stbentooting.co.uk/maintenance>.

CSCS rectified a minor fault with one emergency light at 13-23 Limetree Walk so all are now working properly. These are tested each month to check operation without power. There will be an annual test in October that the emergency lighting lasts 3 hours as required. Hallway bulkhead lights will have mains power turned off and will remain lit at a lower level by battery.

Rafal Wiatek started touching up decoration where new lighting was fitted, carried out minor repairs in flat blocks and repaired Estate fencing. On return from his holiday, he will continue minor repairs including an area of rotten wood on the clock tower and relay an uneven area of paving.

A resident discarded a loose communal stair tread, so we had to buy a new one. **Please do not throw away communal area fittings!**



→ Electricity overbilling

There has been little progress with Ecotricity, bulk supplier to Rendall and Rittner's portfolio including St Benedicts, resolving overbilling compared to meter readings, out of line with contracted prices, failing to use smart meter readings and using readings incorrectly on bills.

It suspended the accounts, so we do not have to make payment, but it has not responded to our offer of the amount properly due in full and final settlement and repeatedly cancelled visits to check the meters (which are not the issue).

We are now pursuing a formal complaint to the electricity regulator to resolve the issues, which were first raised over 16 months ago.



Work this year

Work carried out and arranged by the Directors and Managing Agent this year includes:

- Completing the upgrade of flats communal area electrics, including fitting detector lights on for 90 seconds when passed instead of all night before huge electricity price rises.
- Resolving issues left by Laing Homes when built by re-wiring communal lighting circuits to enable emergency lighting in all flat blocks.
- Replacing flats communal staircase wooden windows with uPVC ones to save costs, paying back by the next decoration in 2027.
- Improving fire safety in flat block risers by fitting thresholds, fitting all metal locks to doors and loose flaps and clearing rubbish.
- Repeated repairs to the vandalised flat block front door at 29-43 St Benedicts Close.
- Tendering and carrying out major repairs needing scaffolding to the roof at 18-28 St Benedicts Close to stop water entering.
- Unblocking and surveying the sewer serving 17-27 Carlisle Way, which found that the public sewer adopted by Thames Water is blocked, damaged and needs repair.
- Ground works in Carlisle Way to excavate a sewer inspection chamber and cover to allow repairs to the public sewer, also replacing the damaged sewer cover behind the flat block.

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- Repairing a leaking flats communal roof window and a gutter with one hoist hire.
- Surveys preparing for installation of fibre broadband to flat blocks by *Community Fibre* and *BT Openreach* (see separate article).
- Routine repairs to flat block entry and fire doors, locks, closers and stair treads.
- Annual inspection of Estate trees, regular tree work on a cycle and additional work for safety to reduce overhang of public areas.
- Ultrasound survey of a lime tree with decay near its base and the ailing ash tree with forked trunk, which showed the trunk cores remain sound so planned work is suitable.
- Pursuing Ecotricity electricity overbilling.
- Repairs to Estate fences and the clock tower.
- Issuing 999-year flat leases to owners who wanted them before fees increased.
- Upgrading the Estate website to modern web standards for better viewing on small devices like phones.



Li-ion battery warning!

Lithium-ion (li-ion) batteries are highly flammable and can explode, particularly high-capacity ones in e-bikes and e-scooters. **No batteries may be disposed of in waste nor may any items be left in communal areas including bikes and scooters.** Immediate action will be taken at the owner's expense for such dangerous items.

Use only chargers in good condition approved by manufacturers, do not leave devices (including phones, pads and laptops) unattended while charging, particularly while sleeping or out, and unplug them as soon as they are fully charged.

Make sure you have a working smoke alarm (required by law in rented properties) and test it.

→ Sustainable grass mowing

This year, grass areas on the Estate have been mown every two weeks rather than weekly. This allows wild flowers to grow, which support wildlife like bees and butterflies. This approach proved successful so will continue next year. It also allows more work on hedging and bushes.