Shinfield Parish Volunteer Group.

For the benefit of readers who live in the newly extended circulation area for this magazine, and indeed as a reminder to regular readers, it might be of interest to outline the activities of the Shinfield Parish Volunteer Group and to highlight some achievements to date.

Purpose

About two years ago, Shinfield Parish Community Plan was released and it set out a vision of how local people wanted their community to develop over the coming ten years. The plan included activities suitable for a voluntary organisation to undertake and this led to the formation of the Shinfield Parish Volunteer Group which has the objective of assisting the Parish Council in the realisation of appropriate aspects of the Parish Community Plan.

Good progress has been made with a number of successes in place.

Shinfield Voluntary Car Service.

The Shinfield Voluntary Car Service was inaugurated in May last year and is now an established part of our community.

The car service is for local people who have difficulty coping with public transport and provides an inexpensive voluntary driver service for trips to the doctor, hospitals, shopping trips and social journeys.

It has the support of local medical practices and Wokingham Borough Council who pay the cost of medical journeys for registered bus pass holders.

An application form to become a client is available on request by telephone on 07519 953783, by e-mail to shinvol@googlemail.com or by post to PO Box 7423, Reading, RG27 7GX.

The Link Visiting Scheme

The Link Visitation Scheme is for the over sixty's who live alone. It is a scheme run by an independent organisation called “The Link” with which SPVG has worked to bring this valuable service into our community. It is a befriending service where volunteers visit once a week or fortnight for an hour or so to have a chat and a cup of tea. For more information contact:

The Link Visiting Scheme
6 Shute End
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 1BJ Telephone:
0118 961 9876

Footpaths and Cycleways

(a) Until recently there was no pathway for pedestrians or cyclists along Hollow Lane between the junction with Church Lane and the bridge over the M4. Pressure applied by SPVG ensured that a suitable path was incorporated into the construction of the recently completed Church Lane roundabout and pedestrians and cyclists alike can now travel safely along Hollow Lane up to the M4 motorway.

(b) Hyde End Road running between Shinfield and Spencers Wood is busy at all times. It is narrow in places with bends that obscure oncoming traffic and is therefore hazardous for cyclists and pedestrians alike. An alternative safe route is needed and, after a considerable period of negotiation with landowners and planners, SPVG has been given approval to convert the public right of way known locally as Shinfield Footpath 13 into a combined footpath and cycleway. The work is due for completion in April and afterwards cyclists and pedestrians will be able to travel between Shinfield and Spencers Wood in safety and without touching a through road.

Walks and Rights of Way

Shinfield Parish, taking in Shinfield Park, Three Mile Cross, Ryeish Green, Spencers Wood and Grazeley, has many rights of way between villages that link various facilities and places of interest such as post offices, shops, pubs, schools, the river Loddon and historic buildings.

Large maps showing all of the footpaths are displayed on notice boards in village centres around the parish. Six walks have been devised which pass through villages, woodlands rich with wildlife and across open fields some of which offer extensive countryside views.

The Volunteer Drivers
Leaflets describing the walks are available from libraries, post offices, pubs, garages, etc. or can be downloaded from the Parish Council website www.shinfieldparish.gov.uk.

Guided circular walks of about three miles in length take place monthly and the next two walks are on March 6th at 2.00 pm starting opposite Spring Gardens in Spencers Wood and on April 3rd at 2.00 pm which will be one of the six walks mentioned earlier, details to be confirmed in next months magazine.

All walks have a back marker to ensure that no-one gets lost and take about one-and-a half hours to complete. Suitable foot wear is advised as it could be muddy underfoot.

Separately, work is done by volunteers to ensure that the rights of way are kept free of obstruction and there is liaison with local authorities to ensure that furniture such as gates and stiles is maintained in good condition.

**The Future**

Other projects are under review by SPVG that provide opportunities to do something that is both satisfying and of benefit to the community. If you too would like to help make a difference and have a little time to share as a volunteer please come and join in our friendly meetings which take place about once a month. For more information contact our chairman Phil Green by email pgreen571@btinternet.com

**The Community Council for Berkshire**

CCB fund local projects “which make a difference” and have our gratitude for funding the car service start up costs and for funding the notice boards and footpath maps.

**Website**

The Parish Community Plan can be found on the parish council website www.shinfieldparish.gov.uk together with information about the Shinfield Parish Volunteer Group and other parish groups and activities.

**Eddie Brown**