

S & A/Kings Caple Parish Council Liaison Group

Annual Pre-season Meeting 12 April 2023

Present: Jim White, S & A Operations Director; Adrian Harvey, Chair Kings Caple Parish Council

JW

Site Activity Overview, 2023-24

It is currently anticipated S & A will operate the asparagus field until the end of their lease next year. This year's season has begun very late because of adverse weather conditions and will probably not run beyond eight weeks (to week ending 24 June). Next year it is likely there will be a reduction in the area of the fields cultivated. After the picking season is finished in June next year, S & A will conclude their activities by removing the systems set in place at the beginning of their lease, notably the underground irrigation system. The site is likely to be returned to the occupation of the landowner by the end of August.

Pattern of Operation this Year

This is likely closely to resemble the patterns of last year's activity. Picking will usually commence first thing in the morning with fields farthest away from residential properties being picked first; crops will probably be lighter than in previous years. Crops will be sent to Cobrey Farm Walford, for packing, rather than being sent to Marden, and this will involve the use of a relatively large but standard agricultural size tractor and trailer unit. The single decker coach bringing pickers from Marden will continue to operate, dropping off and collecting pickers at the side of the barn. The area to the north of the barn has been cleared of junk and the site levelled, allowing better concealment from general view of some equipment. Every effort will be made to ensure field gates are opened promptly at the beginning of the morning, so residents are not awakened by the noise of vehicles waiting with their engines running.

Ongoing Liaison Contacts

Advance warning of specific activities other than picking (eg spraying, fern cutting etc.) will be notified via email (BCC) by Mark Whitehead, S & A Farm Manager, to all residents whose properties immediately adjoin the asparagus fields. This will usually be on the day preceding the activity. Any resident not receiving these notifications should alert AH so that their name can be included in the residents' database. As Jude Norcott has left the employment of S & A, immediate problems should now be addressed to Mark Vernon, the S & A Field Supervisor (mobile phone 07772 112553).

AH

Last year's operations had been relatively free of problems from residents' points of view. Two problems notified were:

- Litter being thrown into or over the hedge dividing the Forty Acres and Pennoxstone Field from the river-side meadows to the south.

- Pickers taking short cut and clambering over and damaging the hedge between New Houses Field and the U71005, rather than going to the field gate adjacent to the sewage treatment plant.

JW was advised that the relaying of the hedge dividing the Forty Acres and the U71005 appeared to have left gaps at the field gates opposite the sewage treatment plant and Shieldbrook.

Finally, it was noted that email communications to the residential frontagers' mailing list should be sent BCC.

AH
May2023