

# GREAT ABINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs. PM Harper

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Dear Parishioners

## **Public access to Granta Park**

The Parish Councillors share your concerns and are unhappy about the removal of access to Granta Park for village residents.

I attended a meeting at TWI as Chairman of Great Abington Parish Council with Peter Brunning, Chairman of Little Abington Parish Council. The meeting was on May 18<sup>th</sup> and had been fixed for several weeks. As far as we knew we were going to discuss two main issues. Firstly, the clarifying and issuing of a map that would clearly identify where the Granta Park permissive footpaths run. Secondly our request for a new riverside walk to go from the Millennium Bridge to Abington Hall for which we had negotiated agreement with the landowner and needed agreement of TWI for it to go into the site. We had not expected the meeting to develop as it did.

The TWI representatives at the meeting were the Public Relations Officer and a Senior Manager. We were informed that, due to the nature of some of the work which takes place at TWI and recognising the current UK national security situation, they were strongly advised to restrict public access to the site. TWI will also be implementing other improvements to their security arrangements.

Whilst we understood their position we did express our concern that this would be extremely unpopular with villagers but we were told that they had no option. It was quite a long meeting and we emphasised repeatedly the damage that this would do to Granta Park/TWI relations with the village. We were told that TWI had no wish to restrict access to legitimate village residents but we were all caught up in the unintended consequences of the necessary action.

I suggested at the meeting that a way forward would be to make it possible for village residents to make an application for an access card that would allow them to pass through the security gates and use the permissive paths. Peter and I have continued to pursue this option as it would still give the restrictions that are required whilst allowing access to those who wish to enjoy the facilities. We don't believe that the numbers of people who would bother to apply for a pass would be unmanageable and it would address most of the concerns that villagers have.

In the interest of clarity, the restriction is necessitated by TWI and it is not a Granta Park initiative however it does impact on the whole Granta Park campus. Clearly it is not possible to press TWI further on the necessity for the restriction as they are not in a position to discuss the details, especially at this time when national security is so prominent on everyone's agenda.

We agree that as Granta Park has developed it has always been on the understanding that villagers would be able to enjoy the facilities, however this has always been on a permissive basis and as such the landowner has the right to withdraw the permission. TWI's decision has shocked and saddened us all and I can confirm that the joint parishes of Great and Little Abington are working towards a common resolution that will enable access to the grounds to continue.

TWI have informed us that they are exploring the possibility of offering badged access to the park. They have also confirmed that they are currently considering how to accommodate specific visits to the park such as the fun run.

We will endeavour to keep you informed as things progress.

Regards

Bernie Talbot  
Chairman  
Great Abington Parish Council