ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held at the Village Club (small hall) on
Tuesday, 19th May 2026 at 7.00pm

MINUTES

PRESENT

CHAIR: Amanda Foister CLERK: Jo Pugh

The meeting was also attended by the following Parish Councillors: Geoff Bond, Andy Bryan, Stuart Mackie, Conway Shaw

and 29 members of the public

Cllr. Amanda Foister welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Approve the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 20th May 2025**
   The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) held on 20th May 2025 were approved as a true record.

2. **Introduction and Welcome** – Cllr Amanda Foister welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting and introduced herself as Vice Chair of Nettlebed Parish Council, chairing the meeting in the absence of Cllr Dennis Rocks, Chair of the Parish Council, who sent his apologies for being unable to attend. She thanked everyone for coming and for their continued interest and involvement in the village community.

3. **Reports from Parish Council & any reports from village groups.**
   Where reports were presented in their entirety during the meeting, the following notes summarise the key points discussed. Full copies of all submitted reports can be found at the end of the minutes.

Cllr. Ben Higgins, OCC - verbal report

The County Councillor provided an update on current issues affecting Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), covering the budget, local government reorganisation, service provision, highways, the Fire Service and the Household Waste Recycling Centres.

County Council Budget
The Council has a challenging financial position, with an operating budget of approximately £752 million covering a wide range of essential services. A £1.5 million

budget shortfall had needed to be addressed, and officers are now working on the budget for the next financial year, which is expected to have a substantial funding gap. The Council must prioritise services it is legally required to provide, alongside other services where there is greater flexibility over spending.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government has decided that local government will be reorganised. The existing district and county council structure in Oxfordshire is expected to be replaced by unitary authorities.

Three potential options were outlined:

- **One county-wide unitary authority** covering Oxfordshire.
- **Two unitary authorities**, with South Oxfordshire, the Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire forming part of a proposed Ridgeway Council, and Oxford City and Cherwell forming the other authority.
- **An expanded Oxford City Council**, with the remaining areas reorganised separately.

A decision from central Government was expected by the summer, with elections anticipated the following May. The Councillor undertook to keep residents updated as further information became available.

In response to a question about the cost of reorganisation, BH explained that central Government would provide some funding. Although the changes would incur significant costs, the intention is that the new arrangements would be more cost-effective in the longer term. The period needed to recover the initial costs would depend on the option selected and could be several years.

Adult Social Care and SEND

The largest proportion of Council spending goes towards social care. Adult Social Care has received a good rating.

Support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) had previously been identified as requiring significant improvement following an inspection a couple of years ago. The Council has since made improvements, and the improvement notice has recently been lifted.

Highways and Road Maintenance

The condition of local roads remains a significant concern. It was explained that the Council receives approximately £33 million annually for road maintenance but is spending around £49 million, with borrowing being used to help cover the shortfall. Years of reduced funding have contributed to the deterioration of the road network.

The Council is undertaking its largest road maintenance and surface-dressing programme in 20 years. The A4130 has been patched and resurfaced, although concerns about potholes near the junction were raised.

Highways prioritisation: In response to questions about how maintenance decisions are made, it was explained that highways officers use a scoring system to assess defects,

including their severity and the number of defects per mile. The discussion also covered the balance between road repairs and active travel infrastructure, including cycle routes. It was noted that spending on conventional highways maintenance is substantially greater than spending on active travel, although political priorities also influence decisions.
A question was raised about whether those making prioritisation decisions were keen cyclists.

Pothole repairs: GB reported that the end of Watlington Street had been patched. It was explained that potholes must meet certain size and depth thresholds to qualify for repair, and that officers are encouraged to address other local potholes where possible.
BH acknowledged residents' frustration and explained that the unusually wet conditions earlier in the year had contributed to the problem. The usual response times were stated as approximately 24 days for minor potholes and 24–48 hours for major potholes. BH confirmed that efforts would continue to be made to get the outstanding issues resolved.

Fire Service
The Council had been considering changes to support the Fire Service. One option involved closing Henley Fire Station; however, it was confirmed that this closure would no longer be pursued.

Household Waste Recycling Centres
A question was raised about the requirement to book time slots at Household Waste Recycling Centres.
It was explained that the booking system had been introduced the previous year partly because Redbridge was closed for maintenance, creating concerns that other centres would become overcrowded. It was also noted that neighbouring counties charge for access to their recycling centres.
Oxfordshire County Council intends to review the booking arrangements once Redbridge reopens and then decide whether the system should continue.
In response to concerns about vulnerable residents who may struggle to use the booking system, it was advised that the Council's Customer Services Centre should be able to provide assistance.

Actions and Follow-up

- The County Councillor will continue to provide updates on local government reorganisation.
- Highways concerns, including potholes near the A4130 junction and in Watlington Street, were noted.
- Oxfordshire County Council will review the Household Waste Recycling Centre booking arrangements following the reopening of Redbridge.

Cllr. Jo Robb, SODC – (report attached) apologies received.

Nettlebed Parish Council – Introductions and reports

Allotment – **Conway Shaw**
Conway Shaw joined Nettlebed Parish Council in October 2025 and currently manages the allotments alongside Rosemary Passmore. CS has also recently been appointed to the Finance Committee.

There has been considerable progress on the allotments over recent months. The installation of deer fencing and deer gates has been particularly successful in deterring deer and other animals from entering the plots.

Allotment holders can access the site by vehicle from either end by requesting the padlock code. Sheds are now permitted, subject to prior agreement from the Parish Council and Rosemary Passmore.

A grant has been received from South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) to support the regeneration of the allotments, and the associated work has recently been completed. There is currently a high uptake of allotment plots, and the aim is to achieve full occupancy in the near future.

Signage will be installed at the top and bottom gates to address ongoing issues with cyclists riding at speed through the allotments, despite the route being a footpath rather than a cycle path. There have also been continued problems with gates being left open or deliberately wedged open, undermining the effectiveness of the deer fencing.

Any suggestions, queries or concerns regarding the allotments should be raised with Cllr Conway Shaw, Rosemary Passmore or Jo Pugh, Clerk, Nettlebed Parish Council.

Sport and Facilities Working Group – **Stuart Mackie**, Jack Shaylor, Tom Edwards, Simon Thorpe, Amanda Foister

Simon joined Nettlebed Parish Council (NPC) in October 2025 and is Chair of the Finance Committee, working alongside Cllrs Conway Shaw and Emeilia Henderson.

The Finance Committee is responsible for overseeing the Council's finances, preparing the budget and reporting back to NPC on financial matters requiring decisions.
SM also invited suggestions for potential projects or initiatives that could be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

In addition, Simon leads the Sport and Play Facilities Working Group, working alongside Jack Shaylor, Tom Edwards, Simon Thorpe and Amanda Foister (leading on grants and funding).

The group currently has five members and is at an early stage of identifying potential projects and exploring what these might look like. The group generally meets between Parish Council meetings. Simon described the work as an exciting opportunity to develop sport and play facilities for the community.

Transport – **Geoff Bond**

Geoff joined Nettlebed Parish Council (NPC) in 2015 and is currently a member of the Crocker End Green Management Committee. The role of NPC in overseeing Crocker End Green Common was noted.

Geoff has recently been appointed Transport Representative, following Norman Gibson's decision to step down. As a regular bus user, GB was pleased to report some positive developments.

Bus Information Signage

Electronic real-time bus information displays have been installed at the northbound bus shelter. Installation at the southbound shelter is also planned, if it has not already been completed.

New Bus Stops on Watlington Street

It was reported that two pairs of bus stops are to be installed on Watlington Street, serving the route between Watlington and Reading:

- Near Watbourne Lane: A stop will be installed on the large verge just beyond the lane. The stop in the opposite direction will operate as a flag-down stop.
- Between Elms Way and Priest Close: A further stop will be installed, with a flag-down stop in the opposite direction.

These improvements are intended to enhance local bus access and provide better information for passengers.

Traffic Management Report – **Emilia Henderson**

Emelia was not present at the meeting; the report was read by Cllr Amanda Foister.

Emilia joined Nettlebed Parish Council (NPC) in October 2025, is a member of the Finance Committee and leads on traffic-calming measures.

The report highlighted the Parish Council's responsibility to support the safety and wellbeing of residents and all road users.

Following the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in the village in 2023, the Council commissioned a week-long speed survey at three key locations. The results showed that a significant number of vehicles were exceeding the speed limit, and residents have continued to raise concerns about speeding.

Working with Highways officers, the Council identified locations where a Speed Indicator Device (SID) could help encourage drivers to observe the speed limit. It was agreed that

one device would be purchased and rotated between two fixed locations every six to eight weeks:

- A4130: Facing incoming traffic, opposite the Cheeseshed.
- Near Wanbourne Lane: Facing outgoing traffic, close to the playground.

The Council hopes this measure will improve road safety and encourage compliance with the 20mph speed limit - it had made the village much safer for children.

Crocker End Green Common Report – **Andy Bryan**
Andy has lived in Crocker End for three years and joined Nettlebed Parish Council in November 2024. AB is currently Chair of the Crocker End Green Common (CEGC) Management Committee, which comprises two Parish Councillors and three parishioners.
The Parish Council has a remit to oversee Crocker End Green Common, and AB will submit a report on the Common's management and activities to SODC in January.

Neighbourhood Plan – **Amanda Foister**
Amanda Foister joined Nettlebed Parish Council (NPC) in May 2019 and is currently Vice-Chair of the Parish Council. She is also the Local Authority Representative at Nettlebed Community School and will lead on grant funding for the Sport and Play Facilities Working Group.

Amanda introduced the idea of developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Nettlebed and sought to gauge the community's interest in taking the project forward.

She explained that changes to the planning landscape, including proposed local government reorganisation and devolution, could affect how planning decisions are made in the future. She said that a Neighbourhood Plan would give the community a formal opportunity to shape the future development of the village, including where housing should be located, which green spaces should be protected and how Nettlebed's character should be preserved.

Once adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory planning framework and must be taken into account when planning applications are determined. Amanda emphasised that having a plan in place would help ensure that the community's views and priorities continue to inform planning decisions, regardless of future changes to local government structures.

The process typically takes two - three years and requires significant community involvement. However, national guidance, grant funding and specialist support are available to help communities develop their plans.

Amanda highlighted the importance of recruiting volunteers to lead and contribute to the project, encouraging anyone interested in helping to come forward. Tim Eggar offered to volunteer.

The Parish Council will consider the level of community interest and the availability of volunteers before deciding how to proceed.

Finances – **Stuart Mackie**
2025-26 accounts closed with internal audit completed. Council holds healthy reserves for contingencies, repairs, and planned projects including traffic calming measures and play area upgrade. Finance Report available from Cllr. Stuart Mackie or Jo Pugh, Parish Clerk.

REPORTS FROM CITIZENS ADVICE AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Nettlebed Royal British Legion (NRBL) – David Challis Report attached

The Nettlebed & District Royal British Legion Branch was founded on 6 May 1925 and continues to meet on the first Thursday of the month at 8.00pm at The Village Club.

The 2026 Poppy Appeal launches on 29 October. Remembrance Sunday will be observed on 8 November with a parade, wreath-laying and church service, followed by a schoolchildren's remembrance service at the village war memorial on Armistice Day, 11 November.

The Branch will also support a commemorative event organised by the Friends of Checkendon, Nettlebed and Kingwood Common Camps on 30 May 2026, remembering the former army camps and Polish resettlement hostels. The event will include a two-minute silence, military and historical displays, Polish folk dancing and musical performances.

Bell Ringers – Susan Byers Report attached

Three tail-end ropes required repair, and the work was completed in a single day - an invoice of £720 was received. The clock is generally keeping good time, although maintaining its operation requires considerable effort.
Discussion included the practical challenges of getting the ropes back up to the bells, involving a ladder and six holes.

Nettlebed Senior Citizens Christmas Party - Clare Harwood

The Senior Citizens Christmas Party takes place every December on the second Wednesday in Nettlebed Village Club.

It was a great success again this year - around 60 + guests enjoyed a wonderful meal. They were entertained by the school children and everyone left with a gift bag handed out by our volunteer Father Christmas.

This is a non-profit event and is free to all Nettlebed Senior Citizens. It is run entirely by volunteers. We are always looking for contributions, whether support on the lead up to the

day, the day itself, or donations for gift bags. We'd love to hear from you if you would like to join us.

Quiz Team – Susan Byers (report attached)

Ten villages take part in the South Oxfordshire Quiz League during autumn, winter and spring. Teams now consist of five members, reduced from six, with a minimum of four.

Nettlebed is top of the league for the third consecutive year and welcomes new participants. Matches take place Monday to Thursday, depending on village hall availability, and cover a wide range of subjects. The new season starts in September.

Citizens Advice Oxfordshire – Candy Evans (full report attached)

Citizens Advice Henley provides free, confidential advice on issues including benefits, debt, housing, employment, relationships and consumer matters. Last year, 40 volunteer advisers helped over 820 local people with more than 4,250 issues. Demand continues to grow, and new volunteer advisers are needed.
A shameless plug: Bassett Manor is presenting *The 3 Mustkateers* on 21 August, with all profits going to Citizens Advice Henley. The service is grateful for the support of local councils and charities, including Nettlebed Parish Council.

Nettlebed Community School and Community Facilities – Bethany Greenwood, Headteacher – read by Amanda Foister (full report attached)

The school has 166 pupils aged 3–11 and has maintained a waiting list for the fifth consecutive year. Last year's SATs results were the best in Oxfordshire. Community facilities remain well used, providing valuable income for the school and serving the village.

Later this year, the school will join the River Learning Trust, aiming to strengthen long-term stability while maintaining local partnerships. Key challenges include rising costs and meeting pupils' diverse academic, social and emotional needs. The school remains focused on high educational standards, pupil and staff wellbeing, and strong community links.

Friends of Nettlebed School (FONS) – Vanessa Hoare (full report attached)

FONS is a registered charity run by volunteer parents and carers, raising funds for the school and bringing the community together. Events this year have included a Halloween Disco, Wreath Making, Pre-Loved Sale, Quiz Night and the largest-ever Nettlebed Stinger, with 511 runners raising over £12,000 profit.

Funds have supported a new Key Stage 2 playground (£20,000), SEND resources, school trips, workshops, Forest School, music and other learning resources.

Nettlefest will take place on 27 June, offering music, family activities, food and entertainment. FONS is grateful for the continued support of the village community.

Nettlebed Art Society (NAS) – Jane Williams / Kirsten Jones

The Nettlebed Art Society will hold its 72nd annual Art and Craft Show on 1–2 August at the school's Community Hall, featuring original artwork and crafts by local artists. Last year's show attracted nearly 700 visitors. Profits from refreshments support the Senior Citizens' Christmas Lunch, while show proceeds and donations are distributed to local charities and community organisations.

The Society welcomed Christine Gibbs back onto its committee and continues to seek volunteers to help organise and run the show. Thanks were expressed to the committee, volunteers, artists and sponsors for their ongoing support.

St Bartholomews Church – Hugh Balfour (Associate Vicar)

St Bartholomew's is part of the Nettlebed, Nuffield, Bix and Rotherfield Greys group, with Mark Answorth as Rector. Hugh has been here for a couple of years and took part in the Stinger 5K, wearing his clerical clothing!
There is currently one service a month, on the third Sunday, but Hugh would love to move towards weekly services. The Christmas Nativity Service was very popular, so people were advised to arrive early.

Hugh explained that the purpose of the church is to share the message of Jesus with everyone in Highmoor and Nettlebed. He and his wife are loving living in the Chilterns.

The Nettlebed Sports Association (NSA) – Eira Parry

NSA is a charity responsible for maintaining and managing Nettlebed Recreation Ground and the Sports Pavilion. It also organises the Village Fete and Christmas Fair.

The main priority is fundraising to improve the Sports Pavilion. Over the past two years, funds have been raised for essential maintenance. However, removing the external timber cladding revealed more extensive rot in the frame than anticipated, requiring structural repairs. The cladding and windows have since been repaired or replaced, with the darker finish receiving positive feedback. The terrace has also been relaid and doubled in size, with new balustrading on order. These works have significantly improved the pavilion's condition and appearance.

Further work is needed internally, including flooring, the kitchen, showers, changing rooms, decoration and woodwork. The toilet facilities are particularly urgent. Existing funds have been exhausted, and the current estimate for further work is £26,000. The fundraising team has submitted 26 applications, including to SODC and OCC grant schemes. A £2,000 grant has been received from the Mulberry Trust, and the NSA is grateful to Simon Williams, Nettlebed Commons Conservation (NCC) and local residents for their donations and support. The NSA also hopes its grant application to Nettlebed Parish Council will be successful again this year.

The Village Fete on 20 June is expected to raise £2,000 - £4,000. Preparations are underway, with new ideas and a special guest to be announced; posters will provide further details. Volunteers are needed, and the NSA is also considering other fundraising events over the summer. Planning for the Christmas Fair is underway.
Eira thanked everyone for their continued support and hopes to make the pavilion as welcoming and enjoyable as possible for the whole community

Nettlebed Cricket Club – Stuart Mackie

The club had a very successful season last year, with a good mix of Sunday cricket involving players of all ages. The club welcomes new players, and the bar is open on Sundays.

Nettlebed & District Good Neighbour Scheme – Conway Shaw & Jane Rigby & Wendy Ayre-Tilbury (full report attached).

Sue Abbott sent her apologies. The scheme organises monthly lunches (£5 for two courses), coffee mornings, a shopping bus and volunteer drivers. Numbers at lunches and coffee mornings have declined, and new attendees are warmly welcomed.
More volunteer drivers are needed; volunteers must be registered with Nettlebed Surgery. For lunch bookings or further information, contact Sue Abbott on 07968 870408 or susan@theabbotts.co.uk.

Nettlebed Village Club – Clive Goodall

The Village Club is holding its own despite rising electricity and heating oil costs and the closure of many pubs. It is open every evening and hosts darts, pool and quiz nights, providing an important social hub for the village. The club is run by a volunteer committee, with annual membership costing £35. New members are encouraged to come along and support the club. Replacement lighting is planned.
– do try and make the effort to come down!

Oil Buyers Group – Nick Mead

I currently coordinate the Nettlebed Oil Group, which was established several years ago and which I took over last year.

The group supports local residents by organising collective heating oil purchases across the surrounding villages. I coordinate regular buying rounds - approximately every three weeks in winter and every five weeks in summer - contacting members, collecting orders, and liaising with suppliers to secure efficient deliveries and competitive prices for around 160 members.

Through collective purchasing, we are often able to achieve savings of between 3% and 8% compared with individual orders. As heating oil prices can vary by at least 10% between suppliers, the group also helps protect residents who might otherwise rely on pricing from a single supplier.

New members are always welcome to join by emailing me at nick.mead@nettlebedoilgroup.co.uk"

Nettlebed District Commons Conservators

The Conservators are seeking more volunteers to help maintain the commons and protect their environmental character. They also gave a shout-out to local hidden heroes for their contributions.

4. **To invite the public to raise any matters of interest**

The Nettlebed Estate publicised an event at Merrioles Farm, Bix, on 7 June, from 11am to 4pm, offering an opportunity to learn how the dairy operates.

The Chair gave thanks on behalf of the village and thanked everyone who contributes to village life, including all those attending and contributing to the meeting, and encouraged residents to attend future Parish Council meetings at the village hall.

Particular thanks were given to David Byers for litter-picking, defibrillator checks and, with Susan, wider community support; everyone involved in the Annual Litter Pick; Jodi Butler and her team for organising the Annual Fete and Party on the Rec and the Christmas Fair, supporting local groups and the Sports Association, and managing the village Facebook page; those running the Nettlebed District Good Neighbour Scheme and Seniors' Christmas Party; Rosemary Passmore for overseeing the allotments; Barry Lambden for caring for the play area; and Nick Mead for managing the Nettlebed Oil Buying Group.

The Chair apologised to anyone she had missed and expressed appreciation for all contributions to the village and thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Meeting Closed

Oxfordshire County Council - Cllr Ben Higgins

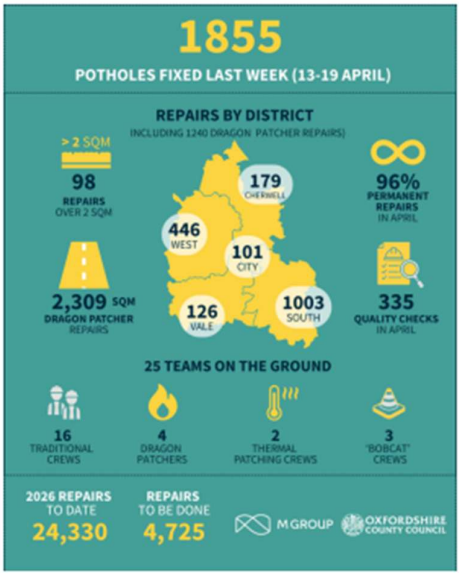


Focus on Parish Councils – Monthly Update May 2026

County Council – ben.higgins@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Dear parish councillors and residents, Please find below a range of updates. I am planning to attend as many of the upcoming annual parish meetings as possible and happy as always to answer questions on the work of both councils that I sit on. OCC News

1. Highways



Highway repairs have now "turned the corner", with 4 consecutive weeks where the overall number of outstanding defects has reduced, with more being completed than reported. Whilst there is still a significant backlog to be tacked to return to the normal planned response times, considerable resource continues to be deployed.

The 2026 surface dressing programme started on 7 April and will run until 20 June. It will eventually treat 1,031,331 sqm of road to prolong its life by 8- 10 years and prevent pothole formation.

I am now trained as a "super user" which allows me to escalate FixMyStreet reports for repair where they are in 20mph or 30mph areas, rather than having to wait for them to be centrally reviewed. I can do this for existing defects as well as ones I add to the system myself, so if you have any reports that you would like progressing, please do get in touch.

2. Government lifts SEND improvement notice for Oxfordshire

The government has removed the improvement notice for services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Oxfordshire, recognising ongoing improvements following the 2023 Ofsted and Care Quality Commission local area partnership inspection.

In a letter dated 15 April, the Secretary of State for Education acknowledged improvements across the local area partnership, including better use of the views of children, young people, parents and carers in planning services. Progress was also noted in partnership working, information sharing, the timeliness of education, health and care plans, joint commissioning and reductions in waiting times for key support.

The council and NHS Thames Valley Integrated Care Board have emphasised while this is an important milestone, further work is needed to deliver consistently timely, joined-up and responsive services, and to rebuild confidence with families.

3. 1500 new public EV charge points to be installed across Oxfordshire

The new public EV chargers are part of Oxfordshire's Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) programme which has received over £4 million of funding from Department for Transport. Its purpose is to accelerate the transition to clean, green electric vehicles by providing charging options for the estimated 30 per cent of Oxfordshire residents who don't have a private driveway. Contracts have now been awarded to two charge point operators, Connected Kerb and EZ-Charge, who will be responsible for installing, operating and maintaining the chargers on a concession basis.

The aim is to make a highly accessible and equitable network of charging points across the county. Data mapping and consultation, with both internal and external stakeholders, has already fed into decision making about the proposed site locations within the programme. These decisions are also very much influenced by a range of practical factors, the most crucial being the availability of suitable electrical connections. Local demand is also a key, which is why residents (and elected members and other community stakeholders) are invited to continue to use the Oxfordshire electric vehicle charger and car club demand tracker tool to indicate where public chargers will be welcomed.

As an alternative option to public chargers, residents who can park on the street outside their home can also now apply for an EV charging cable channel at a heavily subsidised upfront cost of £300. Full details are available online.

4. National award for our partnership with trade unions

Our work with trade unions has been recognised nationally with an award win at the PPMA Excellence in People Management Awards 2026.

Judges praised our partnership with UNISON as a strong example of effective trade union collaboration, describing it as a "blueprint" for how organisations can work together positively. They highlighted the focus on open working, shared problem-solving and joint decision-making, and the real impact this is having on workforce outcomes.

This recognition reflects the day-to-day work colleagues across services are doing to build constructive, proactive relationships with UNISON and our other recognised trade unions. We are now building on this further through a new trade union and management strategy.

***5.* Fire Service Consultation**

Following a public consultation that asked communities to help shape how Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service operates, no fire station closures are now being recommended.

As a result of feedback received by Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service between late October 2025 and January 2026, a proposal is being made to continue focusing on recruitment and community engagement at Eynsham, Henley and Woodstock fire stations.

The three fire stations had been considered for closure due to persistent low availability of on-call crews. However, residents' feedback made it clear how important local fire stations are with communities showing strong support for retaining them. Newly shaped proposals were considered by Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet on 21 April 2026.

The main proposal in the public consultation was to address ongoing challenges with fire engine availability during the daytime, when demand and risk are highest. As part of this,

the consultation explored proposals to improve daytime fire and emergency response cover across Oxfordshire.

Work will continue to identify how Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service can deliver its key objectives of improved first response times, increased daytime cover, stronger service resilience, and an increased amount of fire prevention work. Further engagement with employees and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) will take place to help shape how proposals could work in practice.

Rob MacDougall, Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service's Chief Fire Officer, said: "I'd like to thank everyone who shared their views on our proposals during the public consultation. We received over a thousand responses, and it was important that we listened carefully to what people told us. "It's important that we regularly review our resources and work closely with our local communities and colleagues to gain consensus on how best to shape the service to meet current and future needs. "It's apparent, having read and listened to those who gave us their feedback, that local people are keen to support existing fire stations in their towns and villages."

Cabinet were also asked to agree to withdrawing the proposal presented in the public consultation to remove the second fire engine at Thame fire station. This was put forward based on low availability of crews and because the vehicle had been attending less than 20 incidents a year.

This will allow time to consider consultation feedback alongside similar proposals recently consulted on by Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, particularly given the proximity of Thame and Haddenham fire stations.

6. Consultations

There are a range of consultations open on https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/,

East West Rail consultation

East West Rail (EWR) is running a route-wide public consultation from 14 April to 9 June 2026 on updated proposals. The consultation focuses on changes since winter 2024/25, with particular relevance to Oxfordshire at London Road, Bicester, and Oxford Parkway.

During this consultation period EWR is holding several events:

• Three online webinars on 20 April, 6 May and 2 June.

• An in-person event at the King's Centre, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES on 12 May, 11am-6pm.

This is likely the final public consultation before EWR submits its development consent application in summer/autumn 2027, making it an important opportunity for the public to share views while the proposals are still being developed. We will be submitting a response to this consultation.

For more information, visit EWR's website.

7. Funding

I have made my allocations under the SODC councillor grant scheme, which are in the process of being awarded.

There is an OCC councillor priority fund scheme open – the link is below. Any applications need to be discussed with me before submission under the scheme rules.
https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/communities/councillor-priority-fund

Parish Round-Up

I hope to attend Parish Councils in person as regularly as I can. Below are some notes on issues raised at recent meetings:

• Watlington – relief road continued planning delays, CIL funding, Church St/Chapel St/New Road.

• Britwell Salome – expansion of the 20mph area raised in parish meeting, road conditions. • Checkendon – review of application for extension of 20mph limit; flooding issue by pub • Stoke Row – road conditions, lotting.

• Pishhill with Stonor – mobile phone coverage with retirement of analogue phonelines, road condition.

• Cuxham – Chalgrove New Town and removal of bypass proposal, HGV traffic (including construction traffic), condition of roads.

• Nuffield – Speeding enforcement, speed limits on the A4130, condition of Ewelme junction next to May's farm cottages, Fred's field.

• Shirburn – 20mph limit request, chicane (alternatives after recent trial). • Swyncombe – issue with unpermitted development on lotted land.

• Nettlebed – community sports facilities, cycle path from Nettlebed to Bix.

• Rotherfield Peppard – repeated issue with drain cover, road conditions, junction of Stoke Row Road/Gallowstree Road.

• Highmoor – flooding issue on Holly close

South Oxfordshire District Council

Cllrs Jo Robb and James Norman

Leadership Changes at the District Council

In May 2025 the majority Liberal Democrat group voted to dissolve the partnership with the Green Group and took over running the Council. The Green Group became the official opposition and took over the Chairing of the Scrutiny and Joint Scutiny Committees. Jo was co-chair of Joint Scrutiny, while James continued his work on the Planning Committee.

Cllr David Rouane continued as Leader until stepping down at the December 2025 Full Council meeting; at the same meeting Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers was elected as Leader. Cllr Filipova-Rivers appointed a new Cabinet shortly afterwards.

The Council also appointed a new Chief Executive Officer (jointly with Vale of White Horse Council) following the departure of Mark Stone. One of the two previous Deputy Chief Executives was then appointed as his successor after a competitive process and Adrianna Partridge took up her new role in January 2026.

We still expect that elections for the new Unitary Authority will be held next year. This new Council is expected to come into existence in April 2028. We do not know what the geography of the new Council will be and the government's decision is expected this summer.

The 2026/27 municipal year will therefore be the last for SODC, other than as a "holding" body while the new Statutory Authority takes shape. This means that we are only able to agree contract extensions with key suppliers rather than entering into major new procurements and are unable to initiate major new programmes that would incur expenditure beyond the life of the Council.

The most obvious example of this is the shelving of the plans to build new Council offices at the Gateway regeneration site in Didcot, although planning permission has been granted and can be inherited by the successor authority.

Proposed "Greater Oxford Development Corporation"

On 17th March all Oxfordshire Leaders received a letter from Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook signalling the Government's intent to create a "centrally-driven Urban Development Corporation" for "Greater Oxford". They will consult fully on this proposal later this year, with the key consultation questions being:

- The case for establishing a centrally-led Urban Development Corporation;
- The proposed objectives and activities of the Development Corporation;
- The proposed geographical boundary in which the Development Corporation would operate;
- The proposed approach to powers that the Development Corporation would be granted;
- The proposed approach to governance of the Development Corporation, including the role of local democratic representation.

The letter stresses that this is separate from the process of Local Government Reorganisation. Needless to say, we would be very concerned about the erosion of local decision-making when it comes to major planning and development, since any new Development Corporation would assume responsibility for such matters. It would not be led by democratically elected local politicians but by centrally appointed bureaucrats. A similar proposal has already been the subject of consultation in Cambridge (covering Cambridge City and South Cambs) and has been met with strong opposition from locally elected representatives.

Thames Valley Devolution

Alongside all of the work on Local Government Reorganisation, there are also proposals under way to create a strategic authority in the Thames Valley, which would sit above the new Unitary Authorities. Local Authorities in Berkshire and Oxfordshire have sent an expression of interest letter to government. This sets out a shared ambition to create a foundation strategic authority (FSA), which is a step along the path towards a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). It is understood that the government has accepted the economic case for the region and we expect to receive feedback by May 2026.

Delivering the Council's Priorities in 2025/26

In February 2025 the Council adopted its current strategic plan, called "The Way Ahead", which has five key priorities:

- Action on climate change and nature recovery
- Financial stability and innovative transformation
- Participation, accessibility and accountability
- Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs
- Thriving, healthy and inclusive communities

Despite the pending changes to local government structure, this past year has been focused on working through the annual delivery plan which supports these objectives; this can be found on the SODC website here

Some good examples of how the plan is being delivered include bringing 163 empty homes back into use across both Councils, creating new grant schemes to support nature recovery and community resilience (i.e. adapting to climate change), creating Neighbourhood Planning guidance and templates following the withdrawal of funding from national government, upgrading facilities at arts and leisure centres, launching a new Visit Southern Oxfordshire website to promote local small and independent businesses, working with the Community Safety Partnership to reduce anti-social behaviour and reducing homelessness and rough sleeping in our district.

Joint Local Plan 2041

The long-running story of the Joint Local Plan has continued over the past year, with interventions from the Planning Inspectorate and the Housing Minister, first pausing progress on the examination and then restarting it in February 2026. This has been taking

place with the backdrop of new national Planning legislation, a new NPPF (December 2024) and a consultation on a completely new NPPF which closed on 10th March 2026.

We await a timetable for the examination in public, but we expect this to happen over the summer of 2026, which would enable us to adopt the JLP early in 2027. As soon as we do this, however, work will have to start on a new plan which uses the revised Standard Method to calculate housing numbers – this will necessarily involve many more houses than have already been planned and which still aren't being built.

Following a key Planning Committee decision to refuse an application for 70 houses on the old Reading Golf Course, chiefly because the proposal conflicted with the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan, James has been active in supporting our villages to make Neighbourhood Plans as a means of providing additional protection against unplanned development.

SODC Grant Schemes

As in previous years, SODC has continued to provide financial support to local non-profit and community-based organisations. We were pleased to be able to increase the revenue grant funding available this past year due to a budget underspend in the previous year; this meant that vital local organisations received their full "ask" rather than only 40% of what they had requested. The Councillor Grant scheme was increased from £5k per Member to £7.5k in 2025/26, so that we were able to make more awards than previously. In the past year, we have provided Councillor Grant funding to:

- Cycling Without Age
- Young Climate Warriors
- Wallingford Rowing Club
- Shedquarters
- Nettlebed Parish Council (for restoration of the allotments)
- Maharaja's Well Trust

Another round of Community Grants opens in August. We encourage our community groups to apply: it is unlikely that community grants (at this scale at least) will survive local government reorganisation.

Budget

With Greens in opposition, amendments to the Budget were proposed for the first time in many years. Green councillors proposed several amendments to the budget whilst ensuring a balanced budget for the council.

The budget was broadly welcomed but Greens suggested some amendments to put some of the budget surplus back in to our communities.

Among the amendments, Greens proposed a £55,000 Direct Action Work Fund to help protect South Oxfordshire's built heritage by acting on powers the council has to protect listed buildings that are falling into disrepair and to take enforcement action against landowners, a Community Housing Grant to cover start-up costs and legal fees for small-

scale housing charities and Community Land Trusts to develop their plans, a Community Asset Fund to support local groups wanting to acquire assets for their communities and a Community Nature Fund to support local nature groups and projects that improve access to blue and green nature spaces.

Of these, the proposal for a new fund to support Community Housing Trusts and the proposal for a new Community Nature Fund were both accepted and are being implemented.

Planning Reforms

The government's ambition to build a million homes by the end of this parliamentary period has entailed a raft of reforms to the planning system, aimed at "streamlining" the process by removing local decision-making in planning. Under new rules outlined in March, more decisions will be made by officers under delegated powers with ward member or parish council call-ins to be abolished. Call-ins to Committee are to be permitted in limited circumstances. Householder schemes, minor commercial development and minor residential development of up to 9 dwellings will be decided by officers, not by Committees. Where councils intend to refuse schemes for 150 houses or more, the council must inform the Secretary of State before issuing a refusal, to give the SoS the opportunity to review the decision.

At the same time, the ability of councils to make their own policies when it comes to Local Plans is being eroded. Councils are no longer permitted to exceed government guidance on matters like carbon reduction, dark skies or biodiversity net gain. This means that the Joint Local Plan will be superseded by a new Plan which will necessarily row back on many of the ambitious policies in the Joint Local Plan in order to comply with the government's new guidance.

Taken together, these proposals represent a major attack on local decision making in planning and, we believe, are misguided. Good policy does not deter development but ensures that the development that does happen is the best it can be.

Your Councillors

James continues on the Planning Committee where he has been instrumental in persuading the Committee to refuse some egregious applications, including at the Old Reading Golf Course, in the parish of Kidmore End.

Jo has co-chaired the Joint Scrutiny Committee, leading scrutiny of the proposal for the Two Councils as part of Local Government Reorganisation and the procurement of new waste vehicles.

With a new head of planning and a new cabinet member for planning, Article 4 directives are back on the table, and Green councillors, led by James, Peter Dragonetti and Jo, have been pushing for Article 4 to add extra protection for ancient woodland in our ward.

Jo has asked questions of the cabinet member regarding the council tax collection service to ensure the work of outsourced debt collection agencies is properly monitored and that families and the vulnerable are not being harmed by unscrupulous practices.

Green councillors are also leading on the scrutiny of the Disabled Facilities Grants, to ensure these are administered in the simplest, fairest and most effective way for the residents who need them.

The Royal British Legion - brings society together to recognise, remember, and support the Armed Forces community.

Founded in 1921, to ensure that the **Armed Forces community** unique contribution is not forgotten. We are the country's largest Armed Forces charity, with 180,000 members, 110,000 volunteers and a network of partners and charities; helping us give support, whatever the need, whenever it's needed.

We provide lifelong support to serving and ex-serving personnel and their families.

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From providing **expert advice and guidance**, to **recovery and rehabilitation**, through to transitioning to civilian life – we can be by their side every step of the way. And it's not just members of the Armed Forces but their families too.

If there is ever a reason we can't help, our vast network will mean that we know someone who can.

RBL works with politicians and officials at all levels to represent the interests of the Armed Forces community.

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Every year we lead the nation in commemorating and honouring those who have served and sacrificed.

We remember those who lost their lives on active service in all conflicts; from the beginning of the First World War right up to the present day, as well as all those who have served and their families.

Every year in November, we distribute our paper poppies to raise vital funds to help today's Armed Forces community. And it wouldn't be possible without our incredible supporters.

Our red poppy is a national symbol of Remembrance and hope.

Wearing a poppy is a way of showing appreciation for the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces, veterans and their families, both past and present.

To find out more about the support the RBL could offer you, contact us via

Telephone: 0808 802 8080
Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks
Email: info@britishlegion.org.uk

The Nettlebed & District Branch RBL was founded on 6th May 1925 101 years ago.

The committee meet officially on the First Thursday of the month at 8.00pm at The Village Club, where the Branch has held its meetings since August 1978.

The 2026 Poppy Appeal launches on 29 October 2026. The 2025 appeal raised £56m nationally.

Remembrance Sunday 8th November Parade 10.30 to The Village War Memorial (Church Lytch Gate). with the laying of Wreaths followed by a Church Service.

Armistice day Wednesday 11th November. The Year 6 School children attend a short Remembrance service at the Village War Memorial (Lytch Gate). The Children lay Wooden Poppy Crosses on the two marked Graves. We have a Third unmarked grave which we hope to place a Marker in the coming months.

There is a new group in the area "Friends of Checkendon, Nettlebed and Kingwood Common camps"

They are trying to keep alive the memory of these 3 army camps and the subsequent Polish resettlement hostels.

They plan to hold commemorative events in the area and their first event will be at the Black Horse Pub, Checkendon 12pm Saturday 30 May 2026,

Our Branch will lead a 2-minute silence etc. Attended by the Nettlebed and Henley Branch Standards.

Others attending will be, 100-year-old Polish veteran, Ches Black, who was stationed at Highmoor. British Army 7th Regiment Royal Logistics Corps and Redline WW2 home guard re-enactors.

There will be performances from Mlody las Polish folk-dance group. Katy Carr, singing and playing Polish and English songs. May Blossom will sing English 1940s melodies and well-known WW2 songs.

There will be displays by the WW2 re-enactment soldiers, including WW2 jeeps and other 1940s vehicles.

More details can be found at the below link.

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1940s-polish-heritage-fete-commemorating-80-years-of-checkendon-army-camp-tickets-1986761801029

Bell Ringers – Susan Byers

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We still rely on extra help from ringers from other towers, some not so local such as High Wycombe and Marlow

Without them, we aren't viable on our own. It would be lovely to have a few more ringers. Anyone from age 10 upwards is very welcome to come and see what we do but children must be accompanied by a parent or carer.

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For any more information contact:

Susan Byers 01491 641138

susan.byers1980@gmail.com

Nettlebed Senior Citizen's Christmas Party – Claire Harwood

The Senior Citizens Christmas Party takes place every December on the second Wednesday in Nettlebed Village Club.

It was a great success again this year – around 60 + guests enjoyed a wonderful meal. They were entertained by the school children and everyone left with a gift bag handed out by our volunteer Father Christmas.

This is a non-profit event and is free to all Nettlebed Senior Citizens. It is run entirely by volunteers. We are always looking for contributions, whether support on the lead up to the day, the day itself, or donations for gift bags. We'd love to hear from you if you would like to join us.

Nettlebed Quiz Team – Susan Byers

The South Oxfordshire Quiz League exists to keep a group of moderately well-informed villager-dwellers off the streets. This season 10 villages took part. Each village hosts half of their matches whilst the rest are played away. Matches take place during Autumn, Winter and Spring.

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There is an organiser for each village who arranges the home team fixtures, contacts the question master and organises a scorer.

Each quiz consists of nine rounds plus one 'quick question' round.

Questions are answered alternately by each team, except for the quick question round.

The team in Nettlebed are always looking to recruit more participants. Matches could be any day of the week between Mondays and Thursdays, depending when village halls are available. We try to give those interested a fair turn.

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This is a fun thing to do with questions from all fields of knowledge: sport, television, music, geography, gardening, literature etc., in fact anything the question master thinks suitable. Therefore, it helps to have team members with a variety of knowledge.

The new season will restart in September.

More information can be found at www.soquiz.co.uk

If you would be interested in joining us, please contact Susan Byers at susan.byers1980@gmail.com , who does the organising for the Nettlebed team.

Citizens Advice Oxfordshire

Citizens Advice Henley provides free and confidential advice to all members of the local community. Last year, we helped over **820 local** people with more than **4,250** different issues. This work was carried out by **40** skilled local volunteer advisers supported by just over 1 FTE Advice Supervisors.

We're based in Market Square Henley, right next to the Town Hall, and we're here to help people get to grips with problems they might have and can't resolve on their own. Our skilled advisers are trained to provide expert advice on issues such as debt, benefits, employment, housing, family relationships and consumer issues. Nearly three quarters of those who come to us have their problems mostly or completely resolved. We help nearly everyone to find a way forward. The quality of our advice was assessed as 'green', the highest ranking. Our clients give us high satisfaction scores.

However, despite helping more clients each year, demand for our services is still growing faster than our volunteer team can keep up with. That's why we are continually looking for more people to join us as volunteer advisers. We're committed to building on the already fantastic team we have, and we hope more local residents will consider stepping forward to make a real difference to people's lives.

We are members of the national Citizens Advice charity but they do not provide core funding. We rely on funding from local councils and local charities. We are very grateful to all the local organisations who support us: Henley Town Council, Nettlebed Parish Council, SODC, Oxfordshire County Council, Friends of Henley Citizens Advice, Henley Lions Club, Henley Rotary Club, John Hodges Charitable Trust, John Hodges' Trust for Harpsden Hall, Henley Royal Regatta, Henley Rugby Club, Henley Rowing Club, Invesco, Waitrose, Tesco.

Citizens Advice Henley

32 Market Place
Henley-on-Thames
RG9 2AH

Admin Line: 01491 578267

Advice Line: 0808 169 6031

henley@caox.org.uk

www.caox.org.uk

Nettlebed Community School

Bethany Greenwood, Headteacher

I am pleased to provide this report to the Parish Council, outlining the current successes and challenges facing the school.

Our school currently has 166 children on roll, ranging from ages 3 to 11. I am proud to report that we have a waiting list for the fifth consecutive year. This is a significant achievement, particularly at a time when many primary schools are experiencing falling pupil numbers due to lower birth rates locally and nationally. Continued demand for places at our school reflects the confidence that families place in our provision, values, and reputation within the community.

Educationally, the school has had a very strong year. Our SATs results last year were the best in Oxfordshire, which is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and professionalism of our staff, as well as the commitment and resilience demonstrated by our pupils. We remain focused on sustaining these high standards while continuing to offer a broad, balanced, and supportive curriculum for all children.

The school continues to benefit from thriving community facilities, which are both well used and highly valued. These facilities contribute positively to the life of the village and also provide an important source of income for the school. This additional funding helps support school resources and facilities while strengthening our role as a central hub for the community.

Later this year, the school will undergo a significant and exciting change as we join the River Learning Trust, moving away from direct local authority control. We believe this transition will help future-proof the school, providing greater long-term stability and enabling us to be part of a close-knit group of schools with a sole focus on high-quality education. We are enthusiastic about the new opportunities this will bring for pupils, staff, and leadership development. Importantly, we are fully committed to retaining and strengthening our existing local partnerships and will continue to work closely with our fellow local schools and community organisations.

Like many schools, we continue to face challenges. Rising costs and financial pressures remain a concern, particularly in relation to staffing and resources. In addition, responding to the increasing range of needs among pupils, academically, socially, and emotionally, requires careful planning and sustained support. We remain proactive in addressing these challenges while prioritising the wellbeing of both pupils and staff.

Looking ahead, our focus remains on maintaining high educational standards, supporting a strong school community, and building positive partnerships locally and beyond. We are proud of the school's achievements and grateful for the continued support of the Parish Council and wider community.

Thank you for your ongoing interest in and support of the school.

Nettlebed Community School
High Street, Nettlebed, Oxon, RG9 5DA
Tel: 01491 641328
Email: office.2504@nettlebed.oxon.sch.uk
Headteacher: Mrs Bethany Greenwood

Friends of Nettlebed School

Vanessa Hoare

Introduction

The members of Friends of Nettlebed School (FONS) are all the parents and carers of children at Nettlebed School. It is a registered charity run by a small group of volunteer parents and carers. Our aim is to bring the school community together and raise money for the school.

So far this school year

So far, we have held the Halloween Disco, Wreath Making, a Pre-Loved Sale (for which the school children had special assemblies training and encouraging them to run their own businesses), Quiz Night and the Nettlebed Stinger.

The Stinger race was our largest ever event (511 runners - with 174 children taking part) and raised over £12,000 profit, which is fantastic! We recognise it can be quite a disruptive and busy weekend and we are immensely grateful to everyone who made the event such a wonderful experience, including our sponsors (including Brakspear, Robinson Sherston, Nettlebed Creamery, Nettlebed Estate, the Hillcrest, My Sports Pro, Peppard Building Supplies, F45, Tulu, EY and Jamieson Corporate Finance), as well as the farmers whose fields we ran across, the Cheese Shed who provided fantastic parking, the Council for allowing us the publicity, the Church and all our amazing volunteers from the village. We are hoping to hold next year's Stinger on Sunday the 25th of April 2027 and would welcome any feedback or suggestions!

So far this year, we have funded:

- £20,000 on a new Key Stage 2 playground
- £2,000 on Special Educational Needs & Disabilities resources
- Transport to Henley Youth Festival, Sulgrave Manor, Pitt Rivers Museum & the Earth Trust
- Farms2Ewe visit to school
- Skipping, Roman and art workshops
- Forest School
- Christmas craft resources
- Children's news magazine subscription
- Music lessons and resources

Still to come this year

This year's Nettlefest, our school music festival, will be held on 27th June. We would love to see you all there. We are hoping that the rain will stay away this year! The kids will

sing at some point, but don't worry - there will also be professional singers! We have booked some serious inflatables for you to try your hand at – a zombie strike nerf wall, the obligatory bouncy castle, bungee run and a gladiator duel. We will also have food, snacks, tombola, lucky dip, facepainting, hair make-overs, crafts and drinks. It's always a wonderful day out and such fun for the whole family. Tickets can be purchased at https://www.pta-events.co.uk/fonsevents/ or at the gate on the day.

It means so much to us and the children that we can hold these events and we are incredibly grateful for all the support and assistance provided by Nettlebed community.

If you have any questions about FONS, please email us at fonscommittee@gmail.com.

Nettlebed and District Good Neighbour Scheme

Lunch and coffee mornings – Jane Rigby & Conway Shaw
The lunches take place on the first Tuesday of every month at a cost of £5 for a 2 course meal. Food is served at 12.30. Booking is essential. Sue Abbot: 07968 870408. susan@theabbotts.co.uk

The coffee mornings take place on the third Tuesday of each month from 10.15 to 11.45. No booking required. There is a charge of £1.00 to cover the cost of hot sausage rolls, delicious cakes and hot drinks. There is a voluntary raffle on both days at a cost of £1.00.

The lunches and coffee mornings were originally started by Jim and Tessa McWhirter and have been running for more than 12 years. During this time volunteers have kindly given their time to run them.

Many thanks to Kites kitchen who provide us with a delicious meal each month for only £5. This however may increase in September. We had an inspection from the Environmental Health Officer who gave us a five star rating

In June last year Wallingford and Cholsey railway kindly offered us free tickets. A group of drivers transported people and we had a lovely trip on the train followed by tea and ice creams.

Sadly numbers have been dwindling recently and if anyone knows of anyone who would like to join our friendly group, then please ask them to contact Sue Abbott.

Shopping Bus – Jane Rigby & Conway Shaw
Sue Abbott arranges the timetable and confirms names of passengers with the bus service on a weekly basis. Without the financial commitment of the local Parish Councils this essential twice-monthly service would not be able to operate. Thank you to all.

The Handy Bus runs on a Tuesday and is paid for by Oxfordshire Transport. The Comet bus is paid for by the local parish councils (Nettlebed, Pishill and Stonor, Bix and Assendon and Swyncombe) who proportionally share the cost.

Volunteer Drivers – Wendy Ayre-Tilbury
Nettlebed Volunteer Drivers are still going strong. With an excellent team of Drivers.

Working on behalf of Nettlebed Surgery enables to help patients attend their appointments safely.

Also we are able to deliver prescriptions.

We are getting 10 - 15 jobs per month, but are looking for new drivers.

Patients can contact Wendy Ayre-Tilbury on the following

07944696329 dedicated NVD number or 01491 641597 (home number).

Nettlebed Art Society

Jane Williams

By way of introduction, I am Jane, the 'chair' of the Nettlebed Art Society.

As you know, each year NAS hold an art and craft show on the first weekend in August, in the Community Hall at the school. This year is the 72nd running of the show - a great testament to all those, past and present, who are involved in the organising, and the artists and public who continue to support us.

We have a collection of lovely documents and records going back over many years, some of which we put on display over the weekend for all to peruse. If you are interested in viewing the whole collection, please get in touch.

I've stood here in previous years almost pleading for a volunteer or two to join our committee – I'm delighted to say I have some good news! Christine Gibbs, very much a local resident, who ran the show for many years and usually has the outside pitch selling plants, pieces of her art and crafts, as well as advertising her garden design services, has made a comeback onto the committee! We welcomed her with open arms!

Big thanks for the support of our local artists. We generally hang between 120-150 framed original paintings/artwork each year, plus unframed works, all produced by local artists within a 20-mile radius of Nettlebed. We also have a dozen or so craft tables selling a diverse range of works; again, all produced within the same area.

The footfall over the weekend of last year's show was just shy of 700, which, for a small rural village, is very encouraging. We are always delighted to welcome our visitors who come from places near and afar. We have been told we are the best show/exhibition in the area – praise indeed, of which we are very proud!

As you probably know, Claire Harwood, and her lovely team of helpers, sell tea, coffee, savoury rolls and, of course, cake - delicious, homemade cake! Whilst enjoying this very important element of the show, visitors can chat to friends, family and fellow artists whilst sitting at our tea tables.

Profits from these sales go toward the Nettlebed senior citizens Christmas lunch. Profits from show entries, sales takings and donations are shared among our chosen local charities each year. In 2025 we were delighted to donate to:

- St Bartholomew's Church Fund
- Charles Bertioli Staying Alive Foundation
- Nettlebed Commons Conservation
- Nettlebed Sports Association
- Food Bank
- Nettlebed Senior Citizens Christmas Party
- Nettlebed Village Club
- Nettlebed Good Neighbour Scheme
- Friends of Nettlebed School
- Thames Valley Air Ambulance

This year, we are hoping to have a local celebrity open our show; more news on this nearer the time so please keep an eye on social media, village magazines, posters and flyers nearer the time.

Our sincere thanks to all on the committee, the band of volunteers who help over the show weekend, our local artists and the many organisations who advertise in our show catalogue. If you come to the show, please take your catalogue home and refer to the advertisements within its pages – after all, without their sponsorship the show would not have the financial support required to run things the way we do, and in the way it seems to work! This year we have added a couple of puzzles to the pages – another reason to take the catalogue home with you!

If you would like to get involved over the show weekend, on the organisation side, or both - please get in touch. We need volunteers to help with the physical building and re-rig, as well as many people to 'man' the welcome desks and sales table – a couple of hours of your time would help tremendously and be very much appreciated.

Hope to see you on either Saturday or Sunday 1st or 2nd August – or both!

nettlebedaschair@gmail.com

07785 366878

Nettlebed Bell Ringers

Susan Byers

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Susan Byers 01491 641138

susan.byers1980@gmail.com

Oil Buyers Group

Nick Mead

I currently coordinate the Nettlebed Oil Group, which was established several years ago and which I took over last year.

The group supports local residents by organising collective heating oil purchases across the surrounding villages. I coordinate regular buying rounds - approximately every three weeks in winter and every five weeks in summer - contacting members, collecting orders, and liaising with suppliers to secure efficient deliveries and competitive prices for around 160 members.

Through collective purchasing, we are often able to achieve savings of between 3% and 8% compared with individual orders.

As heating oil prices can vary by at least 10% between suppliers, the group also helps protect residents who might otherwise rely on pricing from a single supplier.

New members are always welcome to join by emailing me at nick.mead@nettlebedoilgroup.co.uk"

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Susan Byers

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Telephone: 0808 802 8080 **Telephone overseas: +44 (0)20 3376 8080**
Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks
Email: info@britishlegion.org.uk

Nettlebed & District Branch Royal British Legion - David Challis

The Nettlebed & District Branch RBL was founded on 6th May 1925 101 years ago.

The committee meet officially on the First Thursday of the month at 8.00pm at The Village Club, where the Branch has held its meetings since August 1978.

The 2026 Poppy Appeal launches on 29 October 2026. The 2025 appeal raised £56m nationally.

Remembrance Sunday 8th November Parade 10.30 to The Village War Memorial (Church Lytch Gate). with the laying of Wreaths followed by a Church Service.

Armistice day Wednesday 11th November. The Year 6 School children attend a short Remembrance service at the Village War Memorial (Lytch Gate). The Children lay Wooden Poppy Crosses on the two marked Graves. We have a Third unmarked grave which we hope to place a Marker in the coming months.

There is a new group in the area "Friends of Checkendon, Nettlebed and Kingwood Common camps"

They are trying to keep alive the memory of these 3 army camps and the subsequent Polish resettlement hostels.

They plan to hold commemorative events in the area and their first event will be at the Black Horse Pub, Checkendon 12pm Saturday 30 May 2026.

Our Branch will lead a 2-minute silence etc. Attended by the Nettlebed and Henley Branch Standards.

Others attending will be, 100-year-old Polish veteran, Ches Black, who was stationed at Highmoor. British Army 7th Regiment Royal Logistics Corps and Redline WW2 home guard re-enactors.

There will be performances from Mlody las Polish folk-dance group. Katy Carr, singing and playing Polish and English songs. May Blossom will sing English 1940s melodies and well-known WW2 songs.

There will be displays by the WW2 re-enactment soldiers, including WW2 jeeps and other 1940s vehicles.

More details can be found at the below link.

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1940s-polish-heritage-fete-commemorating-80-years-of-checkendon-army-camp-tickets-1986761801029