



# TOWN NEWS

A NEWSLETTER  
PRODUCED BY  
WANTAGE  
TOWN COUNCIL

## Mayor's Message



Mayor Angela Dunford at the Volunteers' Reception

As I write this, the nights are getting lighter, and the spring bulbs are coming out. I love this time of year.

Since the last newsletter I was incredibly lucky to be able to attend some wonderful events, such as a couple of lessons with 'riding for the disabled,' one of my wonderful charities. I had a great time galloping around on a hobby horse much to the amusement of all present. The lessons provide

the children and adults with a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the therapeutic benefits of animals and exercise with incredibly kind people in a practical environment.

I attended the wonderful 'Snowman' performance by the Wantage silver band and other festival events at the church, our musical talent is impressive in the town. I was also honoured to open the Charlton Lodge Care Home.

In February I hosted the Volunteers' Reception, a chance for us, the council, to treat the kind, generous volunteers of Wantage for their dedication to our community. Over 100 organisations and individuals were invited. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all people that volunteer and help others in our community. I wish you a happy spring!



### Oyé Oyé Oyé!

*My name is Liam Downes. As the new Town Crier of Wantage, I have the great honour of bringing news, proclamations, and a touch of tradition to our historic market town. Listen well, for there is much to be heard!*

**VE DAY**  
**80TH ANNIVERSARY**

\* SUNDAY, 11<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025 \*  
\* TIME : 11AM - 6PM \*

\*\*\* MARKET PLACE, WANTAGE (FULL ROAD CLOSURE) \*\*\*

**LIVE MUSIC:** WANTAGE BIG BAND, MOONLIGHTING BAND, THE VINTAGE SWEETHEARTS, SWING DANCE SUMMERTOWN  
**FAMILY FUN:** TRADITIONAL FAIRGROUND GAMES, FANCY DRESS COMPETITION (BEST 1940'S OUTFIT!)  
BRING A PICNIC AND ENJOY A GOOD OLD 1940'S STREET PARTY.  
LOCAL HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES OPEN FOR REFRESHMENTS.

Love Wantage  
FREE ENTRY - DRESS UP AND JOIN THE FUN  
www.lovewantage.uk

SCAN ME



## FUTURE FLOOD RESILIENCE GROUP

If you are concerned about, or are interested in, the local flooding along the Childrey and Letcombe Brooks, a new group has been formed called the Future Flood Resilience Group (FFRG). They are working in conjunction with the authorities responsible for flood risk and management as well as the water utility, local interest groups and victims of flooding to carry out research and scientific analysis and identify underlying causes of the worsening flooding. The new website has guides, reports, links and information for anyone that is interested. The website can be found at: <https://www.futurefloodresilience.co.uk/>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**VE Day 80th Anniversary**  
Sunday 11th May 11am to 6pm

**International Food & Drink Festival**  
Sunday 6th July 11am to 4pm

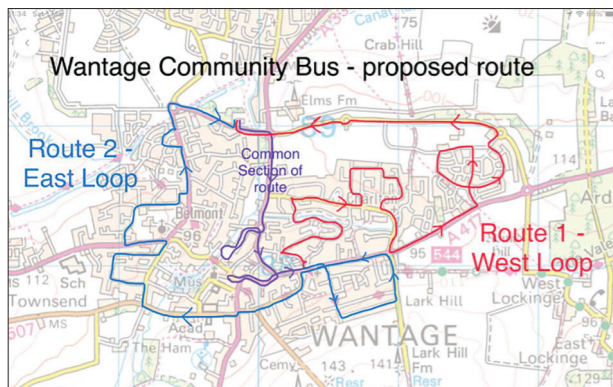
**Alfred Fest**  
Sunday 26th October 11am to 3pm

**Christmas Artisan Market**  
Sunday 30th November 11am to 3pm

## WANTAGE COMMUNITY BUS UPDATE

Since the last update (see September 2024 Newsletter) we have developed our ideas for a route which aims to access as many residential areas of the town as are practicable and connect them with the major town facilities.

Our proposed route is presented in the map below and consists of two interconnected parts known as **Route 1 – East Loop and Route 2 – West Loop**. Together these form a figure-of-eight with a common section serving the Mably Way Health Centre, Sainsbury's, The Market Place and The Community Hospital.



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**Route 1 – The East Loop** starts from the Market Place and proceeds via the Community Hospital to Charlton, then to Kingsgrove via the bus gate. From Kingsgrove the minibus uses King Alfred Way to reach the Health Centre, then returns via Sainsbury's to the Market Place.

**Route 2 – The West Loop** starts from the Market Place serves the Community Hospital and the Springfield Road area before travelling via Ormond Road and Portway to Ham Road. The minibus serves Naldertown and Stockham and Whittington Crescent en route to the Health Centre, then returns via Sainsbury's to the Market Place.

Each route will take approximately 30 minutes and after returning to the Market Place the minibus will switch between the two routes.

It is proposed that the bus will offer an hourly service from Wednesday to Saturday between 9am and 5pm approximately. We hope to arrange for the service to be visible on travel Apps such as the Oxford Bus App.

The minibus will use existing bus stops where these are available, and other sections will operate as Hail-and-Ride with preferred boarding points advertised. County Council older persons bus passes will be accepted as will debit/credit cards. We have yet to purchase a minibus, but we intend this to be wheelchair friendly.

If you have any comments on our proposal or wish to offer help in any way, please contact the Deputy-Mayor Councillor Iain Cameron at [iain.cameron@wantagetowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:iain.cameron@wantagetowncouncil.gov.uk)

## TOWN COUNCIL FINANCES

**The Town Council has set its precept for 2025/26 at £79.47 per year for a Band D property. This compares favourably with similar local Councils. (Grove – £148.64, Faringdon – £166.22 and Abingdon – £160.73)**

A parish or town council does not receive direct funding from central government; its main source of income is the precept. The council calculates the amount needed to fund its operations, which is then collected by the district council through council tax bills issued to residents. These bills also include charges for services provided by Oxfordshire County Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, and the Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley.

Apart from staff costs, the precept primarily funds vital local services such as the Independent Advice Centre, Sweatbox Youth Club, Vale & Downland Museum, and the GroW Families Community Group.

It also supports annual community events, including Alfred Fest and this year's VE Day 80th anniversary celebrations. Additionally, the precept is used to manage and maintain public amenities such as allotments, the cemetery, and street furniture.

The precept also funds traffic calming measures and supports the regular Wednesday and Saturday markets.

## Major investments at Wantage Leisure Centre



Works on the Leisure Centre are due to commence in mid-

March. This is a £2 million scheme to decarbonise and enhance the leisure centre funded by a grant received from central government and topped up by the Vale using developer contributions from the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Doubtless there will be some disruption during the works, but the end result will see a dramatic decrease in carbon emissions and in running costs and make the Leisure centre both warmer and more viable.

In addition, developer contributions are also being used to replace all the gym equipment in with new state of the art facilities.

## Betjeman Millennium Park

*A tranquil space for people and wildlife*

by Angela Dunford, Chair of the Betjeman Millennium Park Trust



**If you walk a few steps past the parish church and down Betjeman Lane, with its beautiful old brick wall, you will cross a little bridge over Letcombe Brook where children play Pooh sticks and then you are at the gates of the town's green lung, Betjeman Millennium Park.**

The Park is a rare thing: a space that allows plants, invertebrates, animals and birds to flourish right in the heart of a busy town, while also offering a peaceful place for human beings. When the land was threatened with development, thanks to the determination of local people and support from the Town and District Councils, the Park was placed in the hands of a charitable trust to preserve it for future generations to enjoy.

I am now the Chair of the Trust and I head a team of six Trustees

## It's a mystery!



Confirmation is still being obtained from Oxfordshire County Council regarding the reason for multiple

and numerous other volunteers who give their time and effort for free to manage and maintain the Park. Like many of our team, my life is already full, with a job, a family, a home to maintain and other hobbies and responsibilities. Working for a charity can be hard work and sometimes frustrating – so why do we do it, you might ask.

We do it simply because we love the Park. On the first Sunday of every month, we willingly exchange a lie-in to take part in a working party. Whether it's weeding, building a fernery or making a dead hedge to give bugs a home, we revel in the magic of this pocket of wildness.

Visitors often share how the park brings them comfort during times of loneliness, depression and grief; how their children play and picnic here; how it gives them pleasure every day to stroll through on the way into town. It's a truly life-affirming experience to work together in the fresh air, doing something for the community and our own physical and mental wellbeing, chatting over a cuppa and some well-earned cake.

If you haven't visited, we encourage you to explore the park. Learn more and sign up for our newsletter at [www.betjemanpark.org.uk](http://www.betjemanpark.org.uk)

Volunteers are always welcome!

benches on the slope at the lower end of the link road (King Alfred Way). An unconfirmed local source has reported that the slope was supposed to be a 1/20 gradient, but the final slope was 1/18 and the benches were installed as 'a form of compensation'. Hopefully, final confirmation will be received soon.

## Local Government Reorganisation

The Government has announced it is going to undertake a major restructuring of local government across England which is likely to have a significant impact here in Oxfordshire.

Their plan is to abolish both the Vale of White Horse District and Oxfordshire County Councils and effectively merge the functions of both into a single, larger authority.

The timings, details and geography of these changes have yet to be announced.

At this stage we do not expect a major impact on the lower tier – that is Town and Parish Councils – but will keep residents informed when we know more.

**Town Electorate Meeting**  
 Thursday 24 April 2025 – 7.30pm  
 Report on Council business & briefings on matters of local interest  
 at Sykes Hall Tugwell Field Wantage, OX12 8FR  
 All Wantage Residents Welcome FREE PARKING

## £1 million for Wantage Hospital



After nearly 2 years of meetings and negotiations Oxford Health have now agreed to make major improvements to Wantage Community Hospital.

The refurbishments will allow a range of new outpatient services to be delivered and Oxford Health estimate that this will mean around 30,000 fewer journeys to Central Oxford for local residents.

The majority of the funding will be provided by the Vale of White Horse District Council Community Infrastructure Levy collected from housing developers to recognise the additional demands new housing has on our local services.



## WANTAGE SUMMER ARTS FESTIVAL

**Sunday 22 June to Saturday 5 July**

All local individuals, groups, societies and organisations are invited to participate. Please contact **jamesmitchellonevoice@sky.com** for more information.



## Shop local!

Wantage named among England's top market towns

According to holiday and travel firm Independent Cottages, Wantage has earned recognition as one of England's top market towns, celebrated for its historic character and vibrant independent business scene.

The town boasts 235 independent businesses and 132 listed buildings, creating an authentic shopping experience impossible to replicate online. Shopping locally in Wantage strengthens our community's economy, reduces environmental impact and helps preserve the town's architectural heritage that spans nearly eight centuries. *Think local, shop local!*

Whats On April  
The Beacon Wantage

Visit [beaconwantage.co.uk](http://beaconwantage.co.uk) or scan the QR code for more information



Wantage Town Council works alongside Oxfordshire County Council and Vale of White Horse District Council. We hope you'll also find these contact details useful.



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[fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk)



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## YOUR FEEDBACK WELCOMED

We hope that you have enjoyed the articles in the Wantage Town Council Newsletters. Feedback and suggestions are welcome to:

**[info@wantagecouncil.gov.uk](mailto:info@wantagecouncil.gov.uk)**

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