



Bus Services to be withdrawn?

OCC subsidies are very likely to be withdrawn from all the buses that serve Upton and Blewbury (Routes 94/95 and 131) - this could happen as early as April.

OCC arranged short meetings between Parish Transport Representatives (PTRs) and the bus operators for individual routes. PTRs from the parishes served by the 94/95 met a representative from Thames Travel, Luke Marion, who explained the key points of Thames Travel's operations:

- If all subsidies are withdrawn, which seems likely, the operation will reduce from 120 drivers to 70. The timescale is April-June of 2016.
- The current 94/95 service receives a subsidy from OCC of £88,125 per annum. Revenues from passengers amount to around £46,500 of which roughly half is paying fares and the balance is concessionary fares. The total cost of operation is therefore around £130,000 with two thirds coming from the subsidy.
- The concessionary fares are reimbursed by OCC to Thames Travel at the rate of 50p in the £ (this is subsequently reimbursed to OCC by central Government).
- Removal of the subsidy would have one small positive effect as non-subsidised services can claim the fuel duty rebate - subsidised services may not.
- The operating margins for bus services is small - around 2.5%
- Thames Travel is part of the Go-Ahead Group. It is nominally self-sufficient, but does receive support in kind from Oxford Buses in the form of vehicle maintenance and the provision of vehicles transferred from other routes. Thames Travel operations do not generate enough revenue to support vehicle replacements.
- 56 days notice is required to start or stop a service.

Options to continue services:

- The vehicle use on the 94/95 is already close to optimum usage and Luke was not confident that efficiencies could be achieved by combining with other services (e.g. 97, Didcot internal services).
- Closer integration with school runs (e.g. Didcot Girls School, St Birinus, the new Technical College) could be explored. Buses already pick up from

DGS at the end of the school day.

- Can we bring the buses into the 'social need' category? OCC has a duty to assess social needs before withdrawing services
- Luke said that what works well is where villages lie on busy trunk routes (see discussion about the X2 below).

Other sources of funding:

- Some S106 money is available to support services within Didcot.
 - Given the size of the parishes served it is not practical for Parish Councils to make up the lost subsidy - the amount would be a significant percentage of the annual precept. There are also legal constraints: Councils may not have the authority to make grants for public bus services under Section 137 of the Local Government Act (OALC is checking this).
 - The concessionary bus passes are valued by passengers not just for the subsidised ride, but for their convenience. Longer term an evolution of the system such that passengers make some contribution could perhaps be explored.
 - Fare increases might work, but the gap between current revenue and total costs is large.
 - Parish Councils may be able to provide assistance to needy individuals
- What other services do the Council provide?

- OCC has a statutory duty to provide school transport where pupils live more than 3 miles from their school.

What do we know about bus users:

- From the revenue figures it can be deduced that two thirds of the passengers are using bus passes.
- The local bus is vital for many people some even saying that they will have to move if it goes.
- Some people have financial difficulties for various reasons including medical and the bus is a life line for them.
- More information on those who use the bus will be valuable.
- We need information on school journeys from our villages.

The X2 service between Didcot and Wallingford:

- The service is at risk, but may be retained.
- Thames Travel would like to increase frequency to twice per hour. They are seeking financial support from GWR to achieve this.
- Luke said that they were opening to exploring the option to serve the Moretons from this route
- The Moretons would value this as their services (shops, doctors etc) may equally be in Wallingford as Didcot.

Notes from the Parish Council

Your Parish Council met on 19th January on what was perhaps the coldest night of the winter. The County Council and District Council were represented and told us about the savage cuts being handed down by Government which is going to have a severe effect on everything from subsidised bus routes to the provision of pedestrian crossings..... on which subject an eloquent young lady from the village again spoke, to ask if any progress had been made on her former request for a crossing across the A417. Cllr Stewart Lilly was not very hopeful but he said he would do what he could to find out firstly if such a crossing was feasible, given the proximity of the 30mph limit and the three-way junction, and secondly, if there was any way he could find the cash - some £35-40,000! We wondered if perhaps there was a local benefactor who would like to sponsor a crossing? In the meantime, the works on Chilton Road is complete and on Hagbourne Hill it is progressing.

Cllr Rob Traynor then presented his draft Emergency Plan; this details what should happen if a disaster struck the village, where to go, who to call for help etc., but to complete this he needs a small group of volunteers, preferably first aid qualified or with other useful skills. Additionally he said he needs to set up a schedule of 'village assets' such as generators, four wheel drive vehicles, chainsaws, etc., which could be called upon in an

emergency. Please get in touch with him via the PC email address, parishcouncil@uptonvillage.co.uk.

Cllr Traynor also discussed the Parish Plan, now nearing completion. This would be presented to the village at the Annual Parish Meeting being held on Monday April 8th in the Village Hall, 7 for 7.30pm when refreshments will be available, which all parishioners are invited to attend.

Outreach Post Office: a disappointing response has been received so far to the recent questionnaire in the Upton News. If you would like the facility of a four hour once-weekly Post Office in the Village Hall, please do click on the link:

www.uptonvillage.co.uk/outreach and complete the questionnaire! A further discussion on this will be held at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Recreation Ground Rules: The recently drafted rules, which are summarised elsewhere in this edition, have already been circulated and posted on the website for comment. The Council has now formally adopted these rules

Precept:

After discussion, the Council decided to make a further small increase in the Precept in the light of the above -mentioned cuts to Council budgets; this works out at an increase in the rates of about £2.80 per household. This will help us to maintain the existing facilities in the village.

Meeting dates for 2016/17: The Parish Council decided to change the existing day for PC meetings from Tuesday to Mondays, as this was more convenient for most attendees. The dates have been published on the Upton website and will be posted on the noticeboard. Parishioners are welcome to attend any of the PC's meetings.

The Council once again expressed grateful thanks to the organisers of the annual Uptonogood cycle event for their very generous donations both to the Village Hall Trust and the Parish Council. Part of this has already been spent on splendid new tables and trollies for the village hall, which we are sure will be greatly appreciated by all village hall users, as they are lighter, bigger and easier to move about than the old ones.

Our Queen will be 90 in April! We've received a letter from the Office of Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Oxford advising us about the official celebrations on the weekend of 11th and 12th June and suggesting that we might like to have a local celebration, for which we are advised some funds could be made available. After discussion, it was thought that a picnic on the recreation ground would be fun, and we're looking for volunteers to set this in motion. Please contact us on parishcouncil@uptonvillage.co.uk if you would be willing to help.

Parish Clerk

Upton Parish Council

Upton Village Emergency Plan

Many emergencies are dealt with in a co-ordinated joint response by the emergency services, local authorities and the major utilities providers. There may be occasions when communities could help themselves:

- While waiting for the arrival of emergency services.
- During widespread events such as flu pandemic, flooding, storm damage or deep snow.
- Following the loss of basic utilities for an extended period possibly combined with extreme weather conditions.

The Parish Council would like to have an effective community group that could provide immediate support to village residents impacted by such an emergency. There have been house fires, flooding and road traffic accidents.

An Emergency Management Team can be made up from anyone within the village who could offer their skills in time of a crisis. The Parish Council are looking for anyone willing to become part of the team and help devise a simple plan of action that could be put in place in times of an emergency.

For that once in a 'blue moon' situation it would be nice to have a group of people who could organise, communicate and address the short-term needs of individuals affected by the emergency.

If you would like to be part of this team please contact me, verbally or by email.

Rob Traynor

ronyart5@hotmail.com

Recreation Ground Rules

Upton Parish Council wishes that the Recreation Ground be of benefit to parishioners and other members of the public alike and in support of this aim has just published an 8 page document outlining the Guidance and Rules of Use for Casual and Organised Activities using the ground.

Casual Activities require no specific permission from UPC, but should at all times adhere to the general rules for the use of the ground. These activities include, all ball games with the strict exception of golf, frisbee, kite flying and other children's games, informal running, cycling and the taking of exercise, picnics (BBQ restrictions apply) and dog walking. Casual activities that are not permitted on the ground include driving motorised vehicles, golf practice of any kind, bonfires or ground based barbeques, fireworks or Chinese Lanterns, flying of powered model aircraft of any kind, horse riding, shooting or archery or any activity that is illegal or overtly dangerous or offensive to other users.

Organised Activities require UPC permission and include any event organised for the provision of entertainment, sport, and the sale of goods or services. Typical examples would be, Car Boot Sale, Fairground or Circus, Football, Rugby, Cricket or other Sports Club, Music Concert, Beer Festival, Country Show or Fete, Caravan Club, Dog Training Classes, Private parties or classes of any kind. The section on organised activities includes notes on how to apply to use the ground and lists organiser's responsibilities.

The document lists 13 General Rules covering such activities as parking, dog use, litter, barbeques, camping and consideration for near neighbours. Other sections cover maintenance, sanctions, UPC disclaimers and the inevitable health and safety.

A full copy of the document can be found on the website at www.uptonvillage.co.uk/recreation-ground-rules/

Harvest Supper and Barn Dance

Saturday 5th March 7.30-11.30, Blewbury Village Hall

Music by Linda Benton and The Mad Hatters, probably the very best local group, and there will be a caller to guide you through the steps. The emphasis is on fun - you can book a table of ten if you wish or just come along and join a group. Doors and Bar open 7pm - Dancing starts at 7.30 pm with a break for a baked potato supper, and it will be a great evening. There will be a bar and a raffle. Tickets £10 including supper on sale at Blewbury Post Office - or ring Pat Mattimore to reserve 01235 851088 - any remaining on sale at the door on the night. Profits to St Michael's Church Maintenance Fund.

Guides and Brownies

Girl Guides

2016 marks 100 years of the Senior Section of Girlguiding (for girls and young women ages 14-25). The Guides and Rangers will be taking part in all sorts of special events throughout the year, including working towards the Mission Spectacular badge.

One of our Guides will be performing at the Oxford Gang Show in February and we will be attending a show to cheer her on. February 22nd is World Thinking Day, when we focus on Guides in countries all round the world; this year we will celebrate with other units in our District at Didcot Civic Hall. We will also be outdoors, walking along part of the Ridgeway and tidying up our local area as part of "Clean for the Queen" to mark the Queen's 90th birthday.

If you are interested in joining us, either as a Guide or helping as a leader please get in touch.

lynn.nickerson.holywell@gmail.com

2nd Upton and Blewbury Brownies

This term the Brownies are working towards their Artist badge and also completing challenges to earn a Minute Marathon badge and raise money for Dyslexia.

We will also be celebrating Thinking Day and doing team building activities.

1st Upton and Blewbury Rainbows

This term the Rainbows will be completing their Roundabout About Me badge. Like the Brownies we will also be completing challenges to earn a Minute Marathon badge.

Other activities included celebrating festivals including Chinese New Year.

UVHAT 50 Club

UVHAT 50 Club Bumper Xmas Draw December Winners:

1st prize	£50	No 114	Lindsey Lott
2nd prize	£40	No 179	Karen Fenn
3rd prize	£30	No 164	John Haworth
4th prize	£20	No 103	Mrs Ollenbuttel

The 50 Club Winners for January are:

1st prize	£25	No 1	Neil Hubbard
2nd prize	£20	No 158	Liz Hardy
3rd prize	£15	No 76	Tony Durbin
4th prize	£10	No 60	Giulia Rippon

Fly Tipping

Fly Tipping is on the increase in the Vale. If you spot anything it is best to take a photo if safe to do so and report it to the Council with details of the location so that they can investigate it and get it cleared.

Just to remind everyone that it is your personal responsibility to ensure that anyone employed or contracted to remove household or building project waste by you has a Bona Fide licence to remove such waste. If fly tipping is traceable back to you, even via the route of a third party, as owner of the waste you are likely to face a hefty fine and possible prison sentence so it is worth ensuring you carry out the necessary checks.

A reminder to all dog owners that dog fouling on public or private land is a Strict Liability Offence with the possibility of an instant fine. Dog mess is a particular health hazard to children and other animals and we all know how unpleasant it is when you are wandering along having a look around and suddenly you feel this unpleasant lump on your shoe.

A large majority of the dog owners in this parish are very responsible and caring which is great but we still have all to frequent instances of mess on our footpaths and in the Recreation Ground both of which it should be noted are also regularly used by many people from outside the parish. If you witness dog mess being left then a polite reminder to the owner who may not have realised what has just happened is often enough but otherwise the Police advice given to the Neighbourhood Action Group is to take a photo if it is considered safe to do so and provide details if known about the dog and/or owner for them to follow up.

Village Clubs & Organisations

Blewbury WI

Karen Brooks 850219
karencbrooks@gmail.com

Calor Gas Syndicate

Lesley Shaw 07739 047688

Drop In Sessions

Yvonne Collins 850989

Guides, Brownies & Rainbows

Fiona Coomer
fiona.coomer@gmail.com 511809

Karate

John Hogan
johnhogan67@icloud.com

Short Mat Bowls Club

Tony Durbin 850035

Table Tennis Club

Bob Lott 851222

Tea Birds WI

Jo Christie tea-birdswi@hotmail.co.uk

Theatre Club

Malcolm Wright 850705

Upton Oil Syndicate

Colin Batchelor 01491 672444

Upton Village Hall

www.uptonvillagehall.co.uk 887129

Village Produce Association

Eileen Bracken 510095

Wine Appreciation Society

Kevin Jacklin 851404

Do you run a village club or organisation? Please let us have your details and we will add them to the list.

Notes from the Allotment

Finally some colder weather! Although all this has succeeded in doing is thoroughly confusing the wild life; hopefully the goodies will survive and the baddies will give up and die! I certainly haven't seen any slugs for a while now.

There is still a surprising amount of produce on the allotments - sprouts, cabbages, purple sprouting and leeks; as well as some brave little broad beans, onions and maybe garlic - hard to tell at this stage. I've just harvested the last sprout stalk, looking a little battered and scruffy, but still eminently edible. Its stem (and the others) are destined for the runner bean trench, when the ground dries up enough to dig it; it seems a really sensible way of composting them, as they are way too tough to go into the bin and it goes against the grain to let the council take them away.

I'd like to thank whoever it was who cut down and shredded the spindly trees near the entrance gate, on two grounds; firstly it has helped to increase visibility onto Bessels Way, difficult at the best of times; and secondly, it has provided a huge quantity of shredded material with which to top up my pathways. We spent an hour or so transporting

barrow-loads up to my plot and spreading it. Much appreciated, thank you!

Now was also a good time to (very carefully!) spray weed killer on the couch grass which is infesting my fruit patch; it is almost impossible to extract it from between the raspberry canes once they start to grow, so hopefully this bit of effort now will save me hours of work later in the year.

Compost Corner: I have taken my own advice and emptied my garden bin! It was full to the brim so took quite a lot of effort to rock it over onto a large plastic sheet. The resulting material was definitely a bit twiggy but they can just go back in with the uncomposted top layer. I ended up with eight trugs full to spread onto my asparagus and vegetable patch down the bottom of the garden. Up at the allotment, my 'noxious heap' composter (couch, bindweed, dandelions and prickly prunings) had somehow tipped over on its own accord; the produce from this bin, which has rotted down amazingly well, can be spread under the hedge to give it a feed.

Angela Hoy
(angela.hoy@sky.com)

Village Produce Association

We might be complaining about the rain and wind here - but aren't we lucky we don't live in Cumbria and further north. I do hope they are drying themselves out and getting back to normal.

First sprinkle of snow when I woke up this morning (17 Jan) - but didn't last long. Hopefully this cold snap will get rid of these horrible flu and cold bugs which have hit a few of us this winter.

Last year, the Committee made the decision not to have monthly meetings during 2016 but to have garden visits throughout the year.

Our first visit will be to Batsford Arboretum in Gloucestershire on Saturday 16th April. Full details will be in next month's newsletter.

We're all planning our garden and allotments chores, once the weather improves. Don't forget that the VPA has a variety of tools available for use by all residents of Blewbury and Upton. A donation is all that's required which helps to keep the equipment in tip top condition. These tools are great for the garden or allotment.

Mantis Rotavator with various attachments - contact: Karen 850219
Long arm pruner, garden roller, fertiliser distributor - contact: Joyce 850388

Lawn scarifier and aerator, electric leaf vacuum, gazebos - contact: Margaret 850126.

DID YOU KNOW? Camomile lawns were popular in Tudor times. Drake's famous game of bowls before he set sail to defeat the Armada was played on a camomile lawn.

Happy Gardening
Eileen

Didcot and Wallingford Orchestra

Did you play an instrument when you were younger? Do you wish you still had a chance to play it now? Would you like to get out of the house for 2 hours on a Monday evening? If so then the Didcot and Wallingford orchestra is for you!

The Didcot and Wallingford Orchestra meets every Monday evening at 7.30 at the Northbourne Centre, Didcot. We are a small, friendly rehearsal orchestra and in the last year have played a range of music, from Bach to modern pieces. Being a rehearsal orchestra means that if making a regular commitment is difficult for you then it is not a problem to just attend when you can; it's quite informal. We would like more players of all instruments to come and join us.

Please contact didcotandwallingfordorchestra@gmail.com or visit www.didcotorchestra.org.uk for more information.

Rector's Reflections

Some Spiritual DIY

Well, some people do it to wood, and some people do it to wallpaper. It can be hard work, and sometimes it's pretty messy too. But those who do it say it's definitely worthwhile.

You've probably guessed that I'm talking about the process of stripping wood or wall paper. Perhaps it's being done to reveal the natural beauty which lies hidden beneath the various layers which have accumulated over the years. Or it might be that the stripping is the starting point, a necessary preliminary to applying a fresh coat of paint or hanging new wallpaper.

But whatever the reason, the stripping is done with the intention of bringing about an improvement. The improvement we want isn't just going to happen by the power of thought alone. We've actually got to do something to bring it about.

This strikes me as quite a good way of looking at Lent, the 40 days which start on Ash Wednesday and lead up to Easter Day. Most of us are well aware of improvements that could and should be made in the ways we live our lives. But how can we actually make these improvements happen?

When we reflect on our lives, we realise that over the years we've picked up various attitudes and behaviours which prevent us from living truly happy and fulfilled lives. There are things that need to be stripped away. It might be that we have become so self-focussed that we've forgotten about the needs of our families, friends and communities. So we need to strip away a thick layer of selfishness. Or it might be that we have allowed our lives to be dominated by fear - fear of others, fear of the future, fear of God. We have forgotten that God loves us and cares for us. So it's a layer of fearfulness that needs to go. Or perhaps we've allowed a relationship to go sour, and we've given up bothering to try and put it right.

I wonder what needs to be stripped away in your life and in my life? Simply thinking about this can be hard enough. But it's a good thing to think about; and what better time to begin than the 40 days of Lent? What better time than the present for a spot of Spiritual DIY?

Fr Jason

Church Services

Services at St. Mary's

Sun 7 Feb 0900 Candlemas - sung Eucharist, followed by refreshments

Sun 14 Feb 0900 sung Eucharist

Sun 21 Feb 0900 sung Eucharist

Sun 28 Feb 1030 All Age Service, followed by refreshments

Sun 6 Mar 0900 Mothering Sunday Eucharist, followed at 1000 with refreshments and a short celebration of all our Mothers with distribution of posies for ladies. Everyone welcome.

On Tuesdays Morning Prayer is said at 9.30am, followed by Holy Communion at 10am. Evening Prayer is said at 5.30pm.

Lent courses are held across the Benefice commencing on 16th February.

In brief:

Tuesday evenings from 8.00-9.30pm, the 'Pilgrim Course' looks at practical implications of our faith.

Wednesday evenings from 7.30-9.00pm, Exploring God through Music, the life and music of JS Bach.

Friday 1.30-2.30pm 'York Course', looking at the Psalms. You might like to meet for lunch at 1.00pm in the Benefice Centre.

A Service to bring Hope, Peace & .Healing

Sunday 14th February at 3pm

St. Andrew's Hagbourne

Perhaps you are unwell or suffering from physical or mental scars. You may be about to undergo hospital treatment, or care for someone who is suffering.

If you would value the opportunity to spend time in a sacred place, and to absorb the healing love and peace of God, you are warmly invited to a time of Hope, Prayer and Healing at St Andrew's Church, Hagbourne, on Sunday February 14th at 3pm. During this short, simple and very gentle 'service', which will include prayer, silence and music, there will be an opportunity to receive the 'laying on of hands', or simply to sit still and experience God's loving presence and touch. You do not need to be a church member to attend. All are welcome.

If you would like more information about any of the services please contact Clare Lightfoot on 850486 or email Lthimbles@btinternet.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Upton Wine Appreciation Club

Many of us are familiar with that last minute dash to the shops, to buy a bottle or two of wine to accompany a special meal or to take out to supper with friends. So how far do you have to go, and how much do you have to spend, in order to get a decent bottle of wine? The new year saw Upton's Wine Appreciation Club meet to investigate this important question. The challenge - to find the best wines available within a few miles of the village within a budget of £10 a bottle. With each member of the committee finding one or two wines, all headed to Didcot and to Aldi, Sainsbury and Tesco.

Wines selected ranged from a very on-trend Aperol Spritz aperitif and Champagne (with change from £10) to whites from South Africa and New Zealand. Reds were from the old world, a Madiran and Rioja Reserva both from Tesco. I had thought that sweet wines would pose a real challenge, being hard to find within budget, but I needn't have worried - Sicilian Marsala provided an interesting counterpoint to a sweet red wine, Mavrodaphne of Patras, which is made in a manner reminiscent of Port and offers some of the more famous wine's character albeit with less alcohol.

Our members enjoyed the evening, and discussion during and after the event seemed to suggest that we could run a repeat imposing a more restrictive budget.

If you've wondered about joining us, please do contact an existing member or anyone from the committee - you're very welcome to try your first meeting as a guest, and the more the merrier.

Looking ahead, our meetings continue on the third Wednesday of each month. Subject to final confirmation, we intend to enjoy:

17 February: Wines of Australia presented by Mike Collins, the club's first Chairman.

16 March: Popular visiting wine professional, Lee Isaacs, introducing wines from Italy.

20 April: A flying visit from winemaker, Katie Jones, from the Languedoc in France.

18 May: Your committee presenting some of their favourite food and wine matches.

Cheers!

William Betts, Chairman

Submissions for *Upton News* should be sent to news@uptonvillage.co.uk.

Deadline for the March edition is **Saturday 20th February**.