



Upton News

May 2025

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The month ahead

Village calendar

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
				●	●	△
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
●	● ●	●	●	●	●	▲
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
●	● ●	●	●	●	●	●
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
●	● ●	● ●	●	●	●	▲
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
●	● ● ●		▲	● ●	●	

Village Hall

- Parish Council
- Village Fete
- Uptonogood
- Wine club
- Brownies
- Community coffee morning
- Upton Christmas Readers
- Dance & Fitness
- Karate
- Dog training
- Kinetic gymnastics
- Tea Birds WI

St Mary's Church

- ▲ Parish Eucharist
- △ Lay-led service
- ▲ Other service

Waste collection

- Black bin
- Green bin + Brown bin
- Green bin + Brown bin + extra garden waste

Other

- Weekend/public holiday
- Clocks change
- Upton News deadline

For details of events at the Village Hall please see [here](#):

For details of services at St Mary's Church, please see [here](#):

Sunrise, sunset & twilight



Village News

St Mary's Church

Service times

Date	Time	Type	Prayer focus
4 th May	9:15 am	Lay-led service (followed by APCM)	Weddings, God's blessings on new and existing marriages
11 th May	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist	Churchwardens, Our church fabric and churchyards, Church cleaners
25 th May	9:15 am	Rogation Sunday Parish Eucharist	PCC's, All in leadership, Our Benefice operations manager
29 th May	8:00 pm	Benefice Ascension Day service	

The online services continue every Sunday at 10.30am. Login after 10.00 am to chat beforehand or to check your technology. Please click [here](#) to access log-in details on the Churn Churches website.

Note to contributors

Contributions to Upton News are always very welcome. Please include your name, address and contact details (email and/or phone number) in case clarification is needed: we will not be able to publish your contribution without these details. The editor reserves the right to place, edit, shorten or omit contributions as required.

Please send your contributions by email to uptonox11news@gmail.com

The deadline for the May 2025 issue is **29th May 2025**.

Father Jason writes ...

I wonder if you have any plans for the 8th May? Around the world, many churches keep 8th May as the feast day of Julian of Norwich, a female mystic and writer who lived as a recluse in Mediæval Norwich. She experienced the first of her visions on 8th May 1373, and spent many years thinking about, and reflecting on, what she had seen. The result was a book which is still read today: the *Revelations of Divine Love*.



This work is a profound work of spirituality in the Christian tradition, and it continues to inspire and comfort its readers even in our own day. The last 50 years or so has seen a considerable increase of interest in Julian, and you can visit the cell where she lived, at St Julian's Church in Norwich. Julian lived through the years of the Black Death, and much social disruption. The Church itself was under attack, and there would be every reason for Julian to have given up hope. But she didn't.

For Julian, the key thing is for us to remember that God has poured out His love, not just on human beings but on the whole of creation. God is loving and forgiving, creative and enabling. Yes, there is sin in our world, and much suffering, but sin and suffering exist within the wider context of a world loved by God. We live our lives surrounded by God's love, and our knowledge of this spiritual reality can give us the patience and re-assurance we need when things are difficult and our world seems to be falling apart. In Julian's own words, "*All shall be well and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well*".

In short, Julian's spirituality is joyful, homely, and re-assuring. Her writings speak powerfully to many people today, living as we do in a world full of worries and tensions. Julian was confident that whatever troubles we face, "*All shall be well and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well*". I have these words in a picture frame in my study, and they are good reminder to me that we live our lives surrounded by God's love. Even at times of stress and danger, we are in safe hands – God's hands.

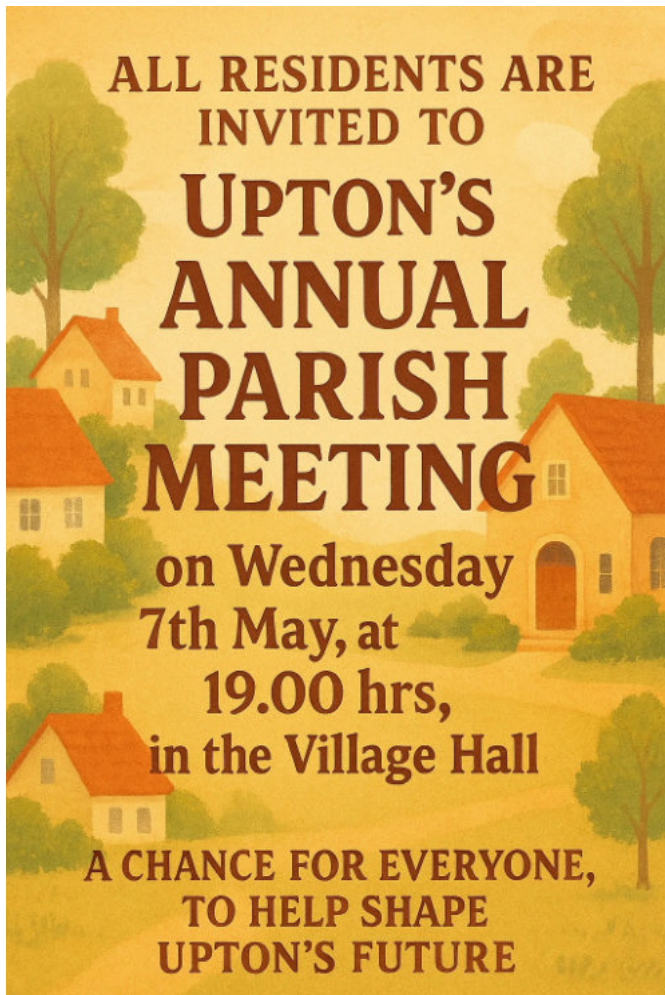


Upton Parish Council

Upton Parish Council met on 23rd April for a productive and forward-looking session, covering a range of topics from community sport to future planning.

Councillors were pleased to confirm training access for the Upton Young Ladies Football team run by Ashley Simms, continuing the village's support for local sport. (Please get [in touch](#) if you have a youngster who would like to train with the team). Meanwhile, preparations are well underway for the Annual Parish Meeting on 7th **May**, with printed leaflets and social media promotion agreed in the hopes of a strong turnout (see flyer opposite).

The Council also confirmed progress on improving the recreation ground, including approved plans for upgraded woodchip surfacing in the playground and new signage to help manage parking use fairly. A recent request for post-cycle event camping at Uptonogood? was granted with thoughtful guidelines to ensure a safe and respectful use of the space.



With a healthy financial outlook for the coming year, enthusiastic volunteer involvement to spread the woodchip on the playground, Upton continues to make steady, community-driven progress.

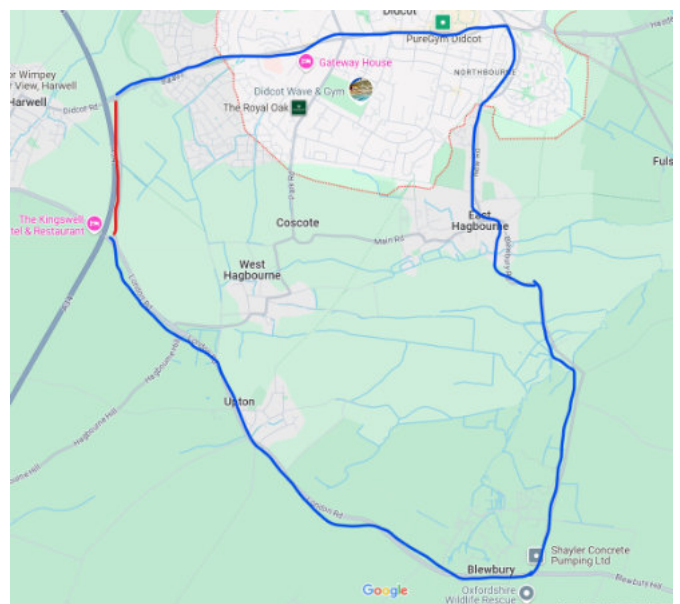
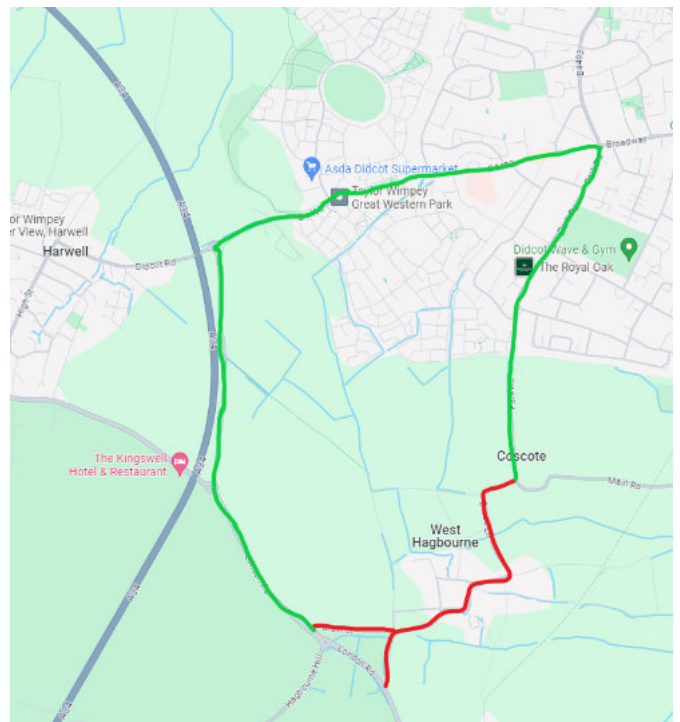
As always, the Council would like to invite comments from all villagers on any matter with which they have concern. These should be sent by [email](#) to the Parish Clerk. Please note that the Minutes of previous Parish Council meetings can be found [here](#).

The next meeting will be held on **28th May 2025** at the Village Hall.

Finally, the Council would like to draw your attention to the following temporary road closures to permit resurfacing work:

- Main Street, West Hagbourne from 7th May 2025 up to and including 10th May 2025, between 04:00 and 18:00 hrs;
- Harwell Link Road from 9th May 2025 up to and including 12th May 2025, between 04:00 and 18:00 hrs

Maps showing the closed section (in red) and the diversion routes (in blue) are shown below. Please note that Notices for urgent works can last up to 5 consecutive days only.



Garden waste subscriptions are changing this April



A new permit scheme for garden waste collections starts this year.

To receive garden waste collections from 1 April 2025, you must purchase an annual permit. This will replace your direct debit.

What you need to do:

- Visit the council's website or scan the QR code below to make a one-off, annual payment for your garden waste collections.
- When you get it in the post, stick your permit to the lid of your brown bin.

You can also sign up for an online account on our website to make things easier when you purchase your next permit in 2026.



southandvale.gov.uk/GardenWastePermit

Or call 01235 422422



Christian Aid Week



Christian Aid Week will be held **11th-17th May 2025**.

The tomato seeds are sown and I hope they will give me enough plants to satisfy any orders. I'm waiting for the collecting envelopes to be available. A poster will soon go on the **new** Church Notice Board and we are already talking about the Garden Party at St Mary's on **Saturday 17th May at 3:00 pm**. Please make a note of the day.

Any questions - or offers of help - to Malcolm Wright 850705 or via the village WhatsApp.

Upton Wine Club

South America has emerged as a vibrant and dynamic wine-producing region, captivating wine enthusiasts with its diverse and high-quality offerings. The continent's innovative winemaking techniques, unique terroir and a commitment to quality have positioned countries like Chile, Argentina and Uruguay as top choices for wine lovers around the globe. At our monthly wine club in April, we explored some of these regions and their wines. We tried many wines during the evening but here are a few examples you may want to look at yourself as something a little different.

Chile's wine industry is renowned for its exceptional diversity and consistency. One of Chile's standout varietals is Carmenère, a grape originally from Bordeaux that has found its true home in Chilean soil. Known for its deep colour, smooth tannins, and distinctive flavours of red fruits and spices, Carmenère has become a symbol of Chilean winemaking excellence. We tried a De Martino Legardo, which was lovely and smooth, showing typical Carmenère characteristics. If you have never tried this grape variety before then it is definitely something to explore.

Argentina is synonymous with Malbec, a grape that has flourished in the high-altitude vineyards of the Andes. The Mendoza region, in particular, is celebrated for producing Malbecs. However, Argentina is much more than just Malbec and we tried Buenas Vidas, specially selected Cabernet Franc for our first red of the evening. A nice change to a Malbec and one that is perfect for drinking now: try it with your pizza this Summer!

While smaller in scale compared to its neighbours, Uruguay's wine industry is making waves with its distinctive and high-quality offerings. The country's flagship grape, Tannat, is celebrated for its bold tannins, deep colour, and complex flavours of dark berries and spices. We tried the Pisano family selection grand reserva Tannat. If you are looking for a bold wine and want to try something a little different then please give this one a go!

Interestingly, all the wines we tried promoted the "sustainable" nature of how their wines were made. This made us question what this actually meant. Broadly, this looks at wine producing methods that are environmentally friendly, socially responsible and economically viable, ensuring vineyards can thrive for generations to come. Farmers embrace techniques such as water conservation, using renewable energy and ethical labour practices to produce their wine.

If you have never tried wines from South America, then please do give them a try as an emerging continent that has plenty to explore. You can find out what wines we tried and details of how to join us on **21st May at 8pm** in the village hall by logging on to our [website](#), when we will be looking at wines for the Summer. Hope to see you there!



Palliative care bereavement support service

We are looking to recruit volunteers for our bereavement service to provide support to family and friends who have lost someone close to them.

Are you...

- warm, empathic and a good listener?
- able to support other people's expression of grief and distress?

Do you...

- have 16 hours a month to spare?
- have your own transport?
- want to make a difference?

We provide...

- foundation level training (apx. 60 hrs).
- ongoing training, supervision and support.
- travel and phone expenses.
- online mandatory training (apx. 8 hrs).

We do not recommend this work for those who have experienced a significant bereavement in the last two years.

Training will take place from September to December 2025 and it is essential that all training is attended.

**Closing date for applications:
30 June 2025**

If you are interested in finding out more or applying, please contact us on:

W: sobellhouse.org/bereavement-volunteer

E: pallcarevolunteerservices@ouh.nhs.uk

T: 01865 225944/01865 225868



Registered Charity No. 1118646

Uptonogood? Mountain Bike Festival

Since 2010, Uptonogood? has raised over £100k for local good causes and organisations, with over £59k of this spent on our recreation field and village hall facilities. The event owes its success in large part to the good folks of Upton volunteering in numbers. This year's Uptonogood? MTB Mountain Bike Festival will be held on **21st June 2025**. If you would like to help at this year's event, please register [here](#) where you will be able to nominate a charity of your choice for a £25 donation as a "thank you" from us.



Upton Nature Garden

Upton Nature Garden is many things for many people: a haven for local wild plants and animals; an adventure for kids to discover, a sanctuary for reflection under the trees; a picnic spot; a visual feast through the seasons; an opportunity to burn off those calories (or eat cake) at the working group meet-ups. All are welcome to explore, rest or just walk through on their way to the play park.

After three years the nature garden is maturing nicely. To date the Upton Nature Group has been successfully holding *ad hoc* working parties to carry out the relatively low amount of maintenance required to keep nature in balance and broaden the range of habitats and local native species that live there. We encourage people to pop in and work on the garden at their own convenience. We're now proposing three new initiatives:

1. A regular schedule (weather permitting) for working parties at which all are welcome on the 3rd Sunday of the month April - Oct to do regular "garden exercise". We hope this will help volunteers new and old to plan ahead (see overleaf for the 2025 schedule);
2. A quarterly program of family-focused nature activities to seed the new generation;
3. Contacting local schools and community groups to tell them about the Upton Nature Garden.

There were two volunteer working sessions and a family nature activity during April. The Easter family nature activity included "bird spotting on your phone" using *Merlin* (the Cornell University bird song recognition [app](#)). This helped us to identify a wide range of birds active within the garden on Easter Sunday: robin, wren, great tit, blue tit, blackcap, goldfinch, dunnock, wood pigeon, chiffchaff and possibly a black redstart, though the latter being unusual in the UK would have needed a visual confirmation to be sure.

We also cleared the bark chipping pile from outside the Nature Garden and used some of it to renew the paths through the woodland and to mulch under the edible hedge. The remainder was moved next to the nut tree bank ready for the May Green Gym session. Through April we've seen a great display of snakes head fritillary in the meadow - over 50 were counted in mid April - big clumps of cowslips and widespread native English bluebells.



The mulching of the woodland near the mound done last year to reduce competition from grass has really paid off this spring with the numerous English

bluebells flowering in this area now. The wild flower meadow perennials made a great showing last year and their leaves are looking strong again this year despite the very dry March; we've sown new poppy and corn marigold annuals to enrich the colour mix this summer. Pray for some April showers to help them germinate and grow!



Date	Theme	Gardening & Green Gym	Nature for all Ages
18 May	Orchard & nut tree bank	Cow parsley bashing, grass control, mulch trees	
June	No meet this month (Uptonogood?)		
20 Jul	Woodland glade	Summer prune, rebalance plants, clear around seats	Plant recognition treasure hunt
17 Aug	Wildflower meadow	Mow & clear top growth	
21 Sep	Hedges	Trim hedges (annual/ biennial/ triennial rota)	Food in the wild (look don't eat)
19 Oct	Bulb bank	Scallop bulb bank, rake paths, Bulb planting	

We'd love to hear from groups interested in making use of the nature garden - al fresco wine tasting, forest bathing, or an outdoor classroom venue are a few ideas. Contact either [Kathryn](#) or [Francoise](#) for more information.

All of this has been provided at no cost to the parish, as all the creation and maintenance has been funded by grants and local donations. We encourage the use of the nature garden by all - walk through, explore, enjoy.

Upton Neighbourhood Watch

There was no Neighbourhood Watch meeting during April - the next meeting will be held at St Mary's Church, Upton at **7:00 pm on Thursday 1st May**. We hope to see some of you there!

If you would like to join the group, please text your name to Katie Dickens (Tel: 0791 205 9430) and she will add you to the Upton Neighbourhood watch WhatsApp group where we agree meeting dates, agendas, share useful websites and share news on local police activity in nearby villages. Please do join us!

Jackie's Care

Are you looking for trustworthy, one-to-one care tailored to your needs? At Jackie's Care, I am proud to provide high-quality care services, at highly competitive rates, 7 days a week. I can offer the following Services:

- Personalized Care Plans: Tailored to meet your individual needs.
- Shopping Assistance: Help with errands and groceries.
- Medication Administration: Ensuring your health is a top priority.
- Appointments Support: Assistance with scheduling and attending appointments.
- Companionship: A caring presence to brighten your day.
- Administrative Work: Support with paperwork and managing daily tasks.
- Overnight Care: Comprehensive support through the night.

Please contact me by phone (07712455093) or email (jackiefideria@yahoo.com)

Local News

Blewbury Players

March and April have flown by, with sunshine, blue skies, spring flowers, design and construction meetings at Orchard Dene and launching our poster and online publicity. May will find us start our regular weekend rehearsals, have our first production meeting and prepare to open our Box Office in early June. The cast and production team for *A Monster Calls* gathered for the first time at the end of March. Following a captivating readthrough the cast enjoyed a workshop where they explored very effectively the worlds of Conor and the Monster through movement and sound.

Thirteen year old Conor has the same dream every night, ever since his mother first fell seriously ill. But tonight is different. Tonight when he wakes, there's monster at his window. It's elemental, a force of nature, and it offers to tell Conor three tales if the boy will, in return, tell him the truth. This story is perfectly placed within our natural garden setting, enabling the audience to become enveloped in Conor's world and the Monster's tales. It is a powerful story about family, love, loss, resilience, hope and the extraordinary power of storytelling. It is the play version of the bestselling classic novel by Patrick Ness. It is a coming of age story, a mix of moral fable and ancient myth.

We are delighted to welcome Sabina Netherclift as our director for our 49th Summer production. Sabina trained with Jacques Lecoq in Paris. She is a director, movement director and performer. She has directed in many venues including: The Southbank Centre, Hull Truck, The Place, Redcape Theatre, UK Tour, Greenwich Theatre. She has created performances with community participants for Rabble Theatre, Turtle Key Arts, Opera North, Pegasus Opera, ENO Baylis and Royal Opera House.

The Box Office for *A Monster Calls* opens for Friends on **4th June** and for general sales on **6th June**. This production is suitable for 11 years+. You can book [online](#) or by scanning this QR code.



Please note that the production is suitable for 11 years +. Tickets cost £16 for adults and £9 for children (up to 18). There are Evening performances **16th - 19th July** and a Matinee performance **19th July**.

Annual renewals for the Friends of Blewbury Players are now due, but we would also welcome new subscribers!. We are very grateful for the support that our Friends give the Players. Benefits of becoming a Friend are:

- > priority booking for productions
- > a free Friends social evening with a complimentary drink
- > a yearly newsletter

Subscriptions are put towards maintaining the theatre at Orchard Dene and buying equipment. We have not increased the fee since we relaunched The Friends in 2007 but with inflation since then, and after putting it off for a number of years, we will be raising the cost of a Friend's subscription to £20 payable on 1st May. If you would like to become a Friend please contact our Friends Secretary by [email](#).

Blewbury WI

Blewbury WI's next main meeting is at **7.30pm on Wednesday 28th May** in the Main hall of Blewbury village hall. Please note change of venue.

Antony Wood will be telling us all about "*Gertrude Bell – the Greatest Englishwoman of the Twentieth Century?*" (his question mark!) Gertrude Bell was an explorer, diplomat, spy, alpine climber, photographer, archaeologist, garden designer, cartographer and brilliant linguist. What talent! She was the first woman to map Arabia, then navigated the male-dominated world of diplomacy, helping to create a new country: Iraq. But why is Gertrude not better known?

To find out more, ring our Secretary, Joy, on 850543 or contact us by [email](#).



**SHEENCROFT
FARM
BLEWBURY
OX11 9ED**

**SATURDAY
17 MAY
9.30AM-5.30PM**

**ADULTS £12
10-16YRS £6
U10S FREE
PRE-BOOK ONLINE
FOR DISCOUNT**

**VINTAGE TRACTORS SHOW CATTLE
STEAM ENGINES OLD BERKS HUNT
YFC COMPETITIONS TRADE STANDS
CRAFT STALLS MOTOR BIKE DISPLAY
CHILDREN'S ATTRACTIONS DOG SHOW
KALEB COOPER CONTRACTING AND MORE**



More info: oxfordshireyfccountyshow.org.uk
Tickets: ticketsource.co.uk/oxfordshirecountyshow
or scan QR code

PRINTING SPONSORED BY



 **Oxfordshire Young Farmers County Show**

 **@oxyfcshow**

Dogs welcome on leads and to Dog show

Blewbury School Report



On Wednesday 2nd April, pupils from Year 4, 5 and 6 represented our school in the final round of the Vale of White Horse Small Schools League tournament, hosted at Harwell School. Competing against three other teams, our players demonstrated incredible determination, skill, and teamwork, culminating in an astonishing league victory by a single point.

The tournament kicked off with our first match against Harwell but, despite our best efforts, we struggled to break through their defence and ultimately suffered a 2-0 defeat. Next, we faced Stanford. Early in the match, we found ourselves trailing 2-0, but with resilience and teamwork, we fought back to equalize, ending the game with a hard-earned 2-2 draw. Our final match was against Whitchurch. Initially, we conceded an early goal, putting us 1-0 down. However, just before halftime, our team responded with two crucial goals. The second half saw an outstanding performance, with three more goals added to our tally. Archie, Jai, Kian, and Ivey all found the back of the net, securing a resounding victory.

To our amazement and delight, we discovered that we had won the entire league by just one point! *"The hard work and resilience of the pupils has made the school proud!"* said Miss Reeder, Headteacher. The achievement was both surprising and incredible, proving that perseverance and teamwork can lead to remarkable success ((Match report by Archie and Matilda, Banksy Class).

Astons Online

Astons Online promotes digital confidence in using the Internet, with smartphone apps or online services. Astons Online events and support are free of charge and open to everyone.

We're available for Zoom, Facetime, WhatsApp or telephone one-to-one sessions on Tuesday mornings between 10:00 am and 12:00 noon. The next in-person one-to-one session in Astons Village Hall (OX119EQ) is on **Tuesday 20th May** from 10:00 am to 12 noon.

United Charities

United Charities aims to support people of all ages living in Upton, Blewbury and the Astons, who may need financial support. We would like to thank all of you who have generously made donations, which allows us to continue reaching out to help individuals and family in need. By making your donations through our Just Giving [page](#) we can reclaim an additional 25% towards our funds (if the donor is a tax payer). All the money we receive goes towards helping people who apply for our assistance, from energy costs and general living expenses to school uniform and equipment.

If you have any questions, please do get in touch with us by [email](#)



Artweeks in Blewbury

As part of the Oxfordshire Artweeks Festival, Blewbury Clubhouse will be featuring the works of three local artists: Julian March, Freddy Paske, and Yvette Phillips, in a celebration of colour. Each artist brings their own unique medium to life, united by a passion for colour. Their work will be on display at the Blewbury Clubhouse from 10th to 18th May, with opening times 10:00 am - 5:00 pm (weekends) and 10:00 am - 3:00 pm (weekdays). This event is part of the Oxfordshire Artweeks festival which runs throughout May with over 400 venues to visit. Please [see](#) here for further details



[JULIAN MARCH](#) (Ceramics)

Jules is all about soul food crockery. His collection spans the functional and the decorative: from bowls and plates to vases and jugs: food to flowers. What sets his work apart are the interesting and vibrant colour combinations, paired with quirky, playful shapes that add character and charm to every piece.

[FREDDY PASKE](#) (Painting & Sculpture)

Freddy is an award-winning wildlife artist, celebrated for his vibrant and expressive paintings of the animal kingdom. Many of his works are inspired by his travels, where he has observed the interplay of light in exotic locations. Freddy's art has been collected by royals, celebrities, and art dealers worldwide. In 2022, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II appointed him as her Artist-in-Residence for the Platinum Jubilee.

[YVETTE PHILLIPS](#) (Textiles & Embroidery)

Yvette combines vintage fabrics with intricate hand embroidery to create boldly coloured and visually striking works of art, inspired by nature. Her pieces range from small, finely detailed embroidered works to large-scale collages, each showcasing a rich and diverse palette of colours, patterns, and textures.



Vale News

VoWHDC News

Hello from Hayleigh and Debra



As we write this, it is the start of the Easter holidays. The longer evenings and the brighter weather have been very welcome.

The most exciting news this month is that the GP surgery on Great Western Park has been given planning permission as of the start of April. This is a key milestone in delivering the much-needed surgery and we're sure that this will be welcome news for parish councils and residents across our ward who have felt that the current services in Didcot are stretched. Woodlands will be running the surgery, so they will now be working with their developers to start preparing the site, ready for construction. We will share any news related to project timelines as and when we get it, but, as the health authority, BOB ICB, have responsibility for this – please do also keep any eye on their communication [website](#).

Local Government Reorganisation continues to dominate the work of the Council. In early February, the government set out in more detail its timelines for changes in local government structures. A request was made to all remaining two-tier areas across England (county and district councils) for interim proposals for new single-tier (unitary) authorities by 21st March and final proposals by 28th November. An initial proposal has been submitted on behalf of West Berkshire Council and the South Oxfordshire and the Vale of

White Horse District Councils for the creation of a new unitary council that would see the three areas combined. This is the favoured proposal of our Council as we believe that the three councils have similar characteristics and the population/geographical size would be appropriate – big enough to be viable, in the government's eyes and small enough that democratic accountability is maintained.

Ridgeway Council forms one half of a two-unitary council proposal for Oxfordshire, with the other half made up from the district council areas of West Oxfordshire, Oxford City and Cherwell. West Oxfordshire District Council and Cherwell District Council have confirmed they will be developing the North Oxfordshire Council half of the proposal. The government does not have to agree with our proposals, of course and may choose to listen to the City or County Councils or do something different entirely. To our mind, this is a key time in local government, and it is important to stay engaged and influence where possible.

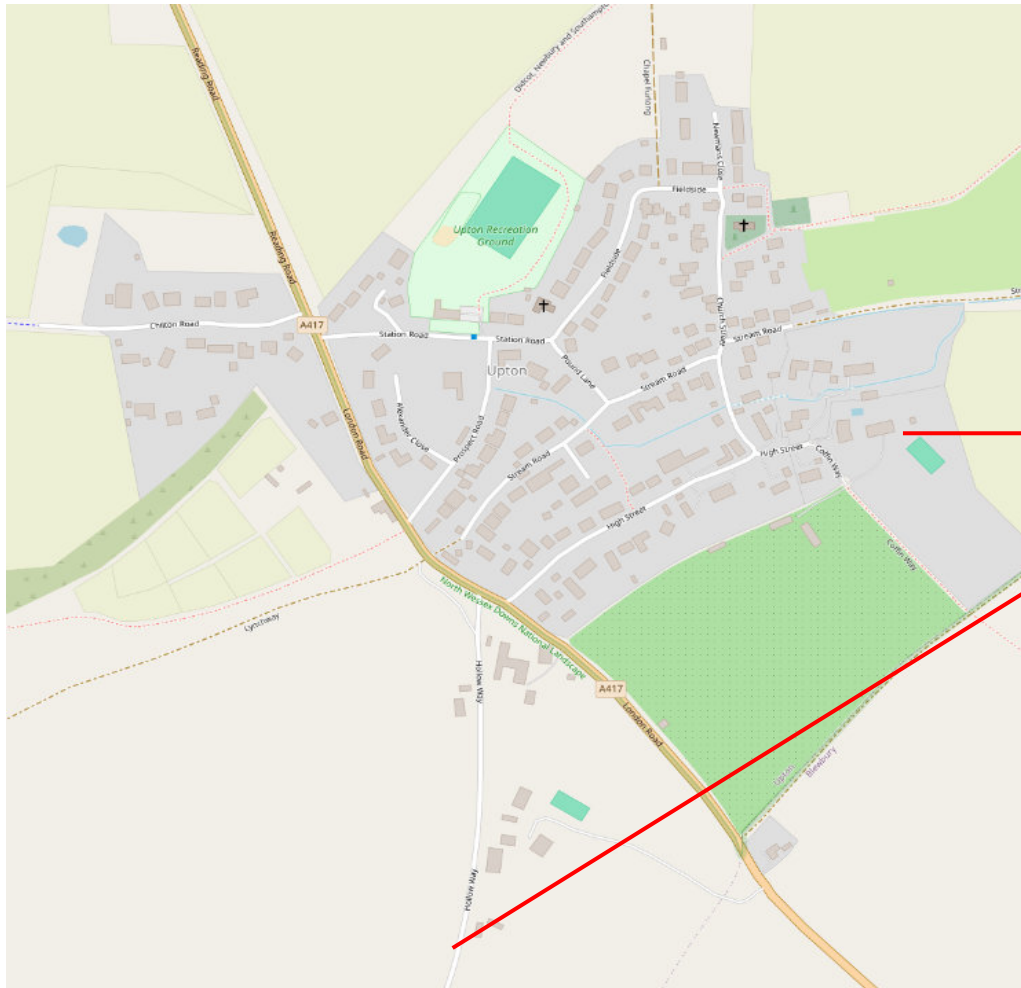
The next round of the Climate Action Fund will open to applications in May. Local 'not for profit' organisations (which has included amateur dramatic groups and pre-schools as well as town and parish councils) can apply for a share of the £100,000 fund, with up to £10,000 on offer for individual projects (minimum request of £250).

As ever, the councils are looking to help finance community projects that aim to address climate change and nature recovery. The fund has previously supported projects such as the installation of public electric vehicle charging points and solar panels and a boardwalk at a nature site to allow visitors access without damaging important habitats. Full details of the Climate Action Fund and how to apply are available [here](#).

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions for us as councillors, please do email us (email addresses [here](#) and [here](#)). We also post regular updates on our Facebook pages [here](#) and [here](#).

Current planning applications

The map below shows the location of all planning applications within the parish of Upton that are *Current* and were registered between 1st January 2021 and 30th April 2025. Details of each application can be obtained by following the hyperlinks on the right-hand side of the map.



[P24/V1119/FUL](#)

[P25/V0811/HH](#)

Olly Glover (MP)



Spending time with local people and businesses to understand your concerns and working to find ways to make improvements is the most important part of my role as your MP. I am grateful for opportunities like this newsletter to provide you with updates and prompt new connections.

In Parliament, I have continued to advocate for issues that matter to our constituency. I've spoken at every opportunity about the importance of aligning new housing developments with adequate infrastructure such as a new railway station serving Grove and Wantage and new or expanded GP surgeries. I am therefore pleased to be sitting on the legislative committee scrutinising the government's new Planning and Infrastructure Bill. This is a chance to examine critically the Government's bill that will guide development in the future and suggest amendments and improvements before it becomes law. It will also provide the opportunity to deal with emerging concerns that the Bill will not address the imbalance between new housing and expanded public services and infrastructure, nor give sufficient consideration for natural and architectural conservation

I have started working with fellow MPs on cross-party efforts to improve safety on the A34, including concerns about the length of the slip roads at the Chilton interchange. A project to improve safety and congestion was 'paused' by the previous administration, but the huge disruption caused by accidents on the A34, and more importantly injury and loss of life on this National Highways Road must still be addressed.

Back in the constituency, I recently joined young people at an Oxfordshire County Council Pizza and Politics session, where we discussed the use of smart phones, amongst other topics. I also attended Aureus School's "Human Library" for National Careers Week and welcomed the news that planning permission has been granted for the new GP Surgery at Great Western Park.

Our area is a hub of research, innovation, and enterprise. Recent activities included opening the Nebula Building at Milton Park and welcoming Harley Davidson. With government's announcement of the Oxford Growth Corridor, I am keen to help ensure that Culham, Harwell Campus, and Milton Park can benefit from investment and opportunities that arise. But I am mindful that most of our local businesses are small or medium sized and face different challenges. I recently chaired a discussion with local entrepreneurs and have visited local farms to understand how new policies around tax and national insurance are impacting them, and the cost and availability of food.

The local and regional media have covered several issues affecting our area recently, so I have been interviewed about A417 flooding, hare coursing, and rural crime. On the BBC's Politics South show, I was on a panel discussing conflict in Ukraine and rising energy bills -topics many of you have contacted me about.

If you have any concerns that you think I can help you with, please [email](#) me or, if you are not able to email, you can leave a voice message on 0207 219 7657.

Didcot u3a

After enjoying and celebrating the Easter festivities we can all now look forward to the lengthening summer days, weeks and months, and for those recently retired or semi-retired, perhaps wonder how to fill those long, balmy hours? Then look no further and consider joining the Didcot & District u3a (University of the Third Age) to 'Learn, Laugh, Live'. We have 30 plus Interest Groups to whet your appetite, so if you ever wanted to expand or start a new interest such as: photography, gardening, learning a language, walking with friends, playing guitar or ukulele, then look no further. For further information concerning matters u3a please visit our new [website](#).

New members are always warmly welcomed to join (first visit is 'free to see') and chat over tea and biscuits at the monthly meetings held on the third Tuesday of every month for this nationwide self-help teaching and learning organisation in the Didcot Civic Hall starting at 2:30pm. At the monthly meetings there will also be an interesting presentation by a Guest Speaker, and over the coming months we have the following Speakers and topics:

- 15 Apr All the things your history teacher never taught you
Speaker: Ian Paton
- 20 May AGM plus Be Free Young Carers
Speaker: Hannah Waugh
- 17 June Autossharp and Dulcimer Delight
Speaker: David Fenton
- 15 July Slovenia/Albania
Speaker: Nick Brazil

For more detailed information about this locally nationwide organisation for retired or semi-retired individuals still wishing to 'Learn, Laugh, Live' then please contact us [here](#). We look forward to seeing you soon!

News from afar

Thames Valley Police Commissioner



I recently spent some time sifting through grant applications for my Community Fund. Each year we provide around half a million pounds to good causes in Thames Valley by taking money from criminals. Some of the money comes through the courts, when judges can make orders under the Proceeds of Crime Act; and in cases where stolen goods are recovered but cannot be reunited with their rightful owner, they are sold and the money goes into this fund.

Any local group can apply. They don't need to be registered charities, but the money does need to go towards crime prevention in some way. Some of the local organisations that have benefited included:

- > The Sinodun Players in Wallingford, with a project to reduce anti-social behaviour;
- > Didcot Army Cadets
- > Be Free Young Carers
- > Youth Challenge Oxfordshire
- > Sofea - the fantastic Didcot-based charity working with young people transitioning between primary and secondary school.

Amongst a wide range of applications received this year we've tried to focus on schemes to tackle anti-social behaviour and vehicle crime. This has included CCTV systems, knife crime prevention and support for victims of crime.

By law, we cannot put this money straight back into police budgets, so it is great to work with the community on crime reduction. Preventing crime in the first place is, after all, better than catching criminals afterwards. As well as the regular funding available to local groups the cash taken from criminals is also used to support other organisations. I have set up ongoing funding arrangements with Neighbourhood Watch across Thames Valley to help support their crime prevention work. We support Street Pastors, volunteers from local churches who give up their time to make sure that people can get home safely after a night out. Recently Business Crime Reduction Partnerships have started to benefit from this money to help them in the fight against shoplifting and retail crime. As well as supporting our counties' High Sheriffs in their charitable work, one of the most important partnerships that this money enables is with our volunteer search and rescue teams who do so much to help those missing and in distress.

The next round of funding will open in the summer. If you'd like to be find out more and be notified when applications are open please visit the Community Fund [website](#).

Wild Oxfordshire

Wild Oxfordshire

Wild Road Verges

Over 700 species of wildflower grow on road verges, which provide important linear habitats and wildlife corridors. We can combat the 20% drop in floral diversity since 1990 (reported by Plantlife) of verges by adopting better management strategies to protect and cultivate grass verges. One of the best strategies is to encourage your local parish to adopt a two-cut management approach to suppress coarse grass whilst encouraging more diverse wildflower growth.

See the graph below to work out which timing works best for your local area! The graph is taken from Plantlife's 'Managing grassland road verges: a best practice guide', which you can download [here](#).

Management option	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
One cut									full cut			
Summer and autumn cutting								partial cut		full cut		
Two cuts										full cut		
Late winter and autumn cutting			full cut							full cut		
Dry verges (short vegetation)		regular cuts								regular cuts		
Species-rich verges with mown edge		1m strip								full cut		

It is then also important to collect the cuttings. Wildflowers of species-rich grasslands grow best in lower fertility soils, whilst high fertility soils support vigorous grass growth. Therefore, taking the biomass, and thus nutrients, they contain away from the verge can reduce the layer of dead grass or thatch and 'open up' the soil surface to allow seed germination. Repeated over several years, this benefits less robust growth and more diversity, and therefore less management is required to create beautiful natural spaces on the roadside. See our [guidance on verges](#) for more help



Lyne Road Green volunteers preparing the ground for wildflower seeds

Let it Grow!

The temptation for many of us can be to mow our greenspaces regularly and keep them looking as neat as possible but research by Plantlife has shown just how beneficial to wildlife the opposite can be. In their 'No Mow May' survey, Plantlife found that the highest production of flowers and nectar sugar was on grass cut once every four weeks. 'Short-grass' plants like daisies and white clover had a chance to flower in between mowing, boosting nectar production tenfold. Areas of grass that were left to grow for even longer periods of time were more diverse in their range of flowers, with other nectar-rich plants like oxeye daisy, field scabious and knapweed providing varied nectar sources well into late summer.

At the end, you can take part in a survey by counting the flowers in a square metre of your green space and reporting it to Plantlife. Find out more [here](#).

Garden mini-meadows:

Spring has arrived, and with it comes the annual tradition of No Mow May: a movement urging people to lock up their lawnmowers throughout May, promoting biodiversity and supporting pollinators. It's an opportunity to witness the beauty of wildflowers and native plants, which thrive when lawns are left untouched. But this year, why not take it a step further and create a mini-meadow or grassland?

No-mow is great to show you where the wildflowers are in your lawn, i.e. what is already there naturally - making it the perfect first step for creation of a "mini-meadow". If you want to provide the maximum food source for your pollinators, rather than mowing it all again in June, leave an area of it untouched throughout spring and summer and only mow it in September once the flowers have finished. This is the easiest way to grow a mini-meadow in your garden and means our native bees can easily find nectar sources throughout their most active months. You can always enhance this area with bulbs or by planting wildflowers (e.g., cowslips, ox-eye daisy or foxgloves).

Lawns, or sections of garden, can be turned into wildflower meadows in several ways, depending on how much time and effort you want to put in and the result you want to achieve:

- The easiest option is to simply leave some, or all, of your lawn unmown and to let the grass grow long where any wildflowers are already present and for them to be able to reach the height needed to flower. Mow and remove the cuttings in September;
- Another easy option is to plant low-growing wildflowers and spring bulbs in your lawn to create a flower-rich mown lawn. If your lawn already supports several low-growing wildflowers, this will lend itself to adopting this option. This is a good compromise as it requires less frequent mowing than a regular lawn but can still be cut before it gets long if you want a shorter, lawn-like finish. Species such as birds-foot trefoil and selfheal are great for butterfly species, such as common blue and small skipper, as well as other pollinators. These wildflowers can also cope with being mown since they can adapt to flower at a short height. Clover is another low-growing species favoured by bees;
- The third option is to convert a lawn into a wildflower meadow, which can be done over several years. There are lots of 'how-to' meadow guides out there. I would recommend Plantlife's 'How to Grow a Wildflower Meadow' which you can find online [here](#);
- Managing your lawn to both include both shorter and longer areas (to create structural diversity) will support the greatest diversity of species.

Whichever option you choose, mini-meadows are a boon for pollinators and massively increase your garden's biodiversity and benefit to wildlife. I had a hedgehog fossicking in my little wildflower border last year. Remember, your garden must work for you too, so why not have a play and try different things?

So, as May unfolds and the grass grows taller, consider creating a mini-meadow. Let your lawn be a sanctuary for pollinators, and a testament to the beauty of nature. Together, we can turn our gardens into vibrant ecosystems which collectively make a real difference for nature. Happy gardening everyone!

World Bee Day

20th May is annual World Bee Day! Hopefully you're already helping bees get a wide range of diverse nectar sources by partaking in 'No Mow May'. Some other ways to help protect our declining bee populations include purchasing sustainable local honey, ditching harmful synthetic pesticides, providing a suitable water source for thirsty pollinators (can simply be a shallow bowl of water with stones in it for bees to land on), or hosting an event to raise awareness in your local area.

Thank you so much for all you have done for nature's recovery in the last year. Together we have brought people together, created more space for nature, and inspired more people to act for nature. Many people contribute to Wild Oxfordshire, and this support enables us to create a more natural, resilient, and biodiverse Oxfordshire for the benefit of all. If you would like to join in and are able to, we would greatly appreciate a contribution towards our work, either through a one-off contribution, or a monthly contribution. Check out our [website](#) to find out more about the many ways you can support us and our recent achievements.

Local directory

What's On

Venue	Telephone	Website
Didcot		
Cornerstone	01235 515144	https://www.cornerstone-arts.org/whats-on
Cineworld	0871 2002000	https://www.cineworld.co.uk/cinemas/didcot/
Wallingford		
Corn Exchange	01491 825000	https://www.cornexchange.org.uk/whats-on/
Wantage		
The Beacon	01235 763456	https://www.beaconwantage.co.uk/whats-on/
Abingdon		
The Abbey Cinema	01235 616000	https://theabbey.ac/web

Service centre

If you are an Upton Village resident and have a skill or trade that other residents might find useful, please contact the editor with a short summary of your skill/trade and your contact details. We will include these in the next edition of Upton News, free of charge.

Listings will initially be restricted to Upton Village residents but if there are any skills or trades not covered, then we may include entries from residents of nearby villages.

Useful contacts

Contact	Telephone	email
Upton News Upton News Editor	n/a	uptonox1news@gmail.com
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