



# Upton News

## February 2026

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# The month ahead

## Village calendar

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
26	27	28	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	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
- ✿ Nature Garden work group

### 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

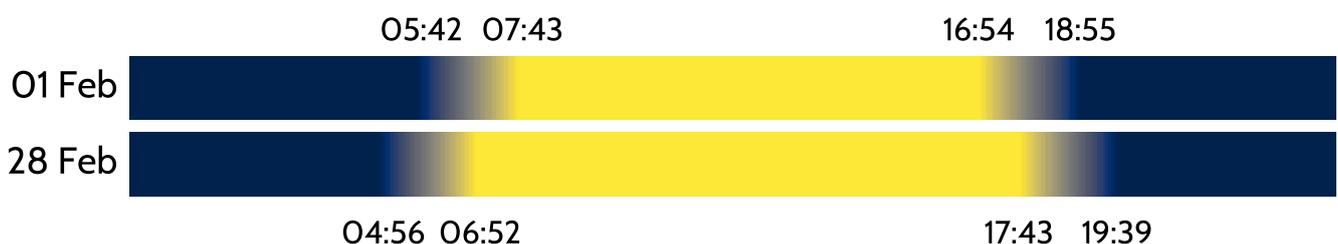
### Other

- 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



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# Village News

## St Mary's Church

### *Service times*

Date	Time	Type	Prayer focus
1 <sup>st</sup> February	9:15 am	Lay-led service	Churchwardens, Church fabric & churchyards, Church cleaners
8 <sup>th</sup> February	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist	PCC's, All in leadership Our Benefice operations manager
18 <sup>th</sup> February	8:00 pm	Service of Ashing and Holy Communion	
19 <sup>th</sup> February	10:00 am	Mother's Union Holy Communion	
25 <sup>th</sup> February	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist	Treasurer, Church finances

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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](mailto:uptonox11news@gmail.com)

The deadline for the February 2026 issue is **26<sup>th</sup> February 2026**.

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## Father Jason writes

I wonder if you plan on celebrating St. Valentine's Day? No one is quite sure why this day has become connected with the celebration of love, but the connection is now firmly embedded in our culture. I would add that it is also the case that no one is quite sure who St Valentine was – or indeed, whether there were actually two different St. Valentines, who happened to share the same name. The best guess is that there was in fact only one St. Valentine, who was martyred for his faith back in the Third Century AD.

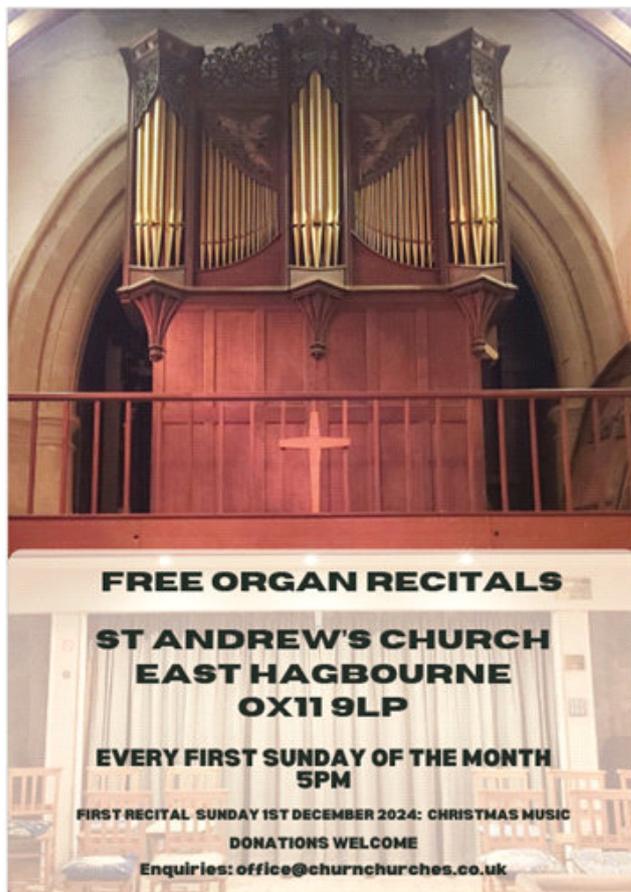


St. Valentine's Day is, of course, all about love. But what do we mean by the word "love"? Christians have been exploring the nature of love since the days of Jesus himself. Jesus himself summed up his teaching in terms of love: we are to love God and to love one another. This is not always easy to do, and we will often fall short and make mistakes.

But we should at least make the effort. The Church as an institution should have love at its heart: the Church is a means of celebrating God's love and sharing that love with his world. Unfortunately, the Church doesn't always live up to this calling, and there are times when it doesn't behave in a particularly loving way. But at least it tries to put love at the heart of all that it does, and when it makes mistakes, it usually tries its best to own up to its failings and to try and put things right.

The Church also thinks hard about what "love" means in practice. It sees love as being exercised in three dimensions. There is the love we share with other human beings – the love which is usually celebrated on St. Valentine's Day. But there is also the love we share with God: our love for God and God's love for us. And finally there is the third dimension of love, which is perhaps the most surprising: the love we show towards ourselves. Down the centuries, Christians have come to the understanding that we cannot truly love others or even love God, if we do not also love ourselves.

I wonder if you would agree that we cannot truly love others unless we have learnt to love ourselves? A challenging thought for St Valentine's Day!



## Coffee & Kids!

Coffee & Kids! is a monthly baby & toddler group that meets in Blewbury, hosted by the local Mothers' Union. Upton families are warmly invited. Our next session is on **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February** from 10:00 am to 11.30 am in the Vale Room, Blewbury Village Hall. We welcome all bumps(!), babies & toddlers, along with parents, grandparents or carers. We offer a warm, friendly and safe place to enjoy the company of others and have some refreshment as the little ones have fun with toys and learn to play together. There is often some craft work/hand & foot printing and always a sing-song before home time; (suggested donation of £2 towards our costs). We look forward to welcoming you - any queries, please contact Louise on 07837 009730

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# Upton Parish Council

## **Neighbourhood planning**

Councillors Peter Head and Françoise Yates attended the Neighbourhood Planning Event on 28<sup>th</sup> January at Didcot Civic Hall. The event covered national changes to the planning system and local support available for neighbourhood development plans, with an additional session on Local Government Reorganisation. The reorganisation will be under statutory consultation soon and we will share more information in due course as to how you can have your say.

## **Cemetery Extension - Hedge Laying Initiative**

An exciting community project is being explored for the cemetery extension. A local resident's daughter and partner, who are trained in hedge laying, have offered to run a course to create a traditional hedge barrier. The Parish Council will ensure the hedge is not cut back to preserve growth for this project over the next couple of years.

## **Village Deep Cleanse**

Biffa will be carrying out a deep cleanse operation in Upton between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026. This service includes litter picking, sweeping, and removing weeds and moss from pavements (but not roads). The Parish Council would like to hear from residents. Are there particular areas in Upton that you feel need special attention during the deep cleanse? Perhaps a particularly littered pathway, a pavement heavily affected by weeds, or an area that would benefit from extra attention?

Please note what is NOT included: weed spraying, general gardening, cutting grass or vegetation, or removing weeds and moss from roads. Only land to which the public has access and that is under direct control of the district council can be cleaned.

**Important:** Please [email](#) your suggestions to the Parish Clerk by 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026 (three weeks before the cleanse) so we can prioritise requests. Due to time constraints, Biffa may not be able to complete all requested work, so please help us identify the most important areas.

## **Play Area RoSPA Inspection Update**

The annual RoSPA Play Safety Inspection for the Upton Adventure Play Area and Pump Track is now complete. While the report highlighted a few areas of concern, nothing requires urgent replacement or was identified as an immediate danger. Consequently, we plan to replace the beam and reinstall the swing this spring. We are also evaluating options to remove or replace certain equipment within the trim trail. We may need a few volunteers to lend a hand in early spring—if you're able to help, please keep an eye out for updates.

## **Upton Parish Council Farewell & Vacancy**

The Parish Council has accepted the resignation of Councillor Emma Watts-Lay, effective 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026. During her time on the council, Emma made a valuable contribution to village life. She successfully managed the recreation ground project, overseeing quotes and the installation of the posts. She also played an important role in keeping the community informed through her work on council communications. The council is grateful for her service and wishes her well.

Following Emma's resignation, Upton Parish Council now has one vacant seat. If you are a registered local elector and interested in serving your community as a parish councillor, we would very much like to hear from you.

Councillors play a vital role in representing village interests, shaping our local services, and contributing to the decisions that affect us all. No prior experience is necessary - full support and training are available. A statutory Notice of Vacancy has been posted on the village notice board and on our website. If ten or more parishioners request an election to fill the seat, one will be held. Otherwise, the council will co-opt a suitable candidate.

For further information, please contact the [clerk](#). We look forward to welcoming a new member to the team.

## **Community Emergency Plan**

The Parish Council are in the early stages of reviewing the requirements of an emergency plan for our village. We hope to be contacting you in the coming months for input into this plan.

### Property Name Change in Upton

Official notification: The property formerly known as "Rigiblick" in Orchard Close is now known as "Goldfinch Cottage".

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026** at 7:00 pm in the Village Hall. 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](#).

## Upton Wine Club

Our village wine club kicked off the new year with something a little... unconventional. Instead of simply tasting our chosen wines, we asked a mischievous question: can you pair music with wine? Not food, not mood-music. And while we quickly discovered that finding a single perfect song for a glass of wine is rather like trying to agree on the best Quality Street chocolate - technically possible, but wildly improbable - the adventure was absolutely worth it.

From the moment the first cork was popped, we had a lot of fun. There was a lot of curiosity and the occasional raised eyebrow as we moved between sips and songs. What became clear almost immediately was that using more of our senses genuinely changes how we experience wine. Fast, lively music seemed to brighten some wines; slower, richer tones softened others – which is actually scientifically backed up!

We explored a gorgeous line-up this month, starting with a refined Franciacorta, whose gentle sparkle set the tone beautifully. A classic Sancerre followed - crisp, clean and as dependable as ever - before things took a delightfully surprising turn with a fragrant Albariño, carrying the faintest whisper of bay leaf on the nose.

A wonderfully expressive Alsace Riesling stepped into the spotlight next, made even more fun by a little light-show flair. White does make wine taste crisp, red enhances the sense of red berries and green really does make you think of herbs. Our red flight began with a silky Chilean Pinot Noir, and then deepened into the savoury charm of a Chianti Classico from Castello Vicchiomaggio. We rounded things off with a rich, velvety Mendoza Malbec—the musical equivalent of a warm armchair by the fire.

As the evening unfolded, we found ourselves naturally grouping wines and music together. Sparkling and high-energy whites were lifted by bright, upbeat melodies; aromatic whites like our Albariño and Riesling shone alongside lighter, intricate pieces. Mellow acoustic sets suited the Pinot Noir, while the Chianti enjoyed a bit of soft-rock swagger. The Malbec, full-bodied and generous, seemed happiest with something slower, deeper and bass-rich.

STRICTLY  WINE

"Weekday Wines - 25 top picks" - *Decanter*

**Zorzal Terroir Unico Cabernet Franc**



*"Concentrated yet cool, this supple, velvety red weaves together bright cranberry and rosehip with savoury hints of red pepper... A characterful, polished wine." 92pts*  
*Decanter magazine, February 2026*

[www.strictlywine.co.uk](http://www.strictlywine.co.uk)  
[sales@strictlywine.co.uk](mailto:sales@strictlywine.co.uk)

**01235 364536**

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But the real delight wasn't in "getting it right", it was in trying something new together, and proving once again that wine is as much about people, setting and atmosphere as it is about grapes and terroir. So while we may not have created the village's definitive playlist for wine tasting, we did discover that music can tune our palates just as much as it lifts our spirits.

A huge thank-you to everyone who poured, cleaned up at the end or simply joined the fun. Here's to the next wine club on 18<sup>th</sup> February, when we will be popping lots of corks with the classic fizz and port evening! If you would like to come along please take a look at our [website](#), [email](#) us or speak to the 50 or so villagers who are already members.

## Upton Full Fibre

There was some progress with the Upton Full Fibre project last month, with Mark Burgess (OCC) conducting a walk-around in the village, accompanied by a couple of villagers, to look at the existing telecoms infrastructure.

As explained in Upton News last month, our only chance of getting Full Fibre is by means of the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme; the good news is that Upton is one of ten Oxfordshire communities now being considered. It looks like Airband would be our only option in terms of provider because OpenReach is currently not willing to participate.

There are good reasons to pursue this opportunity:

- there is little prospect otherwise of installing fibre in the village in the foreseeable future. Our exchange is one of only a few dozen of the 3500+ exchanges nationwide where OpenReach have no planned date for installation;
- our existing broadband infrastructure risks not being able to cope with the explosion in data use: an increase of 20 times between 2013 and 2023 and rising fast;
- the lack of fibre to the premises (FTTP) is regarded as a disadvantage by potential house-buyers, while its provision adds several thousand pounds to property values

Airband are keen to work with the village, and their project manager has offered to meet us within the coming weeks. They will need to be assured that there would be sufficient 'sign-ups' (and hence vouchers) available to satisfy the business case. To demonstrate sufficient support for the Voucher Scheme, we will ultimately need to provide Airband (or any other potential supplier should there be one) with details of names, addresses and emails of residents who would be interested in signing up with them. To do so we would set up a small website that would allow residents to provide this information easily, while answering some of the common questions.

To gauge the initial level of interest within the village, please email me ([brian@rippon.net](mailto:brian@rippon.net)) if you are keen to see fibre installed to your property. We can then assess demand and I can keep you updated with progress.

## Upton Neighbourhood Watch

Thank you to everyone who came to the recent Neighbourhood Watch meeting. It is great to know that we live in a village where the community is so supportive and caring about what happens here.

We had a discussion about placing fake ANPR signs and, having taken into account a couple of objections from residents, concluded that we would shelve this idea for now. We are going to check whether there are any restrictions on the siting of the Neighbourhood Watch signs and get these installed around the village as appropriate.

We have had another relatively quiet period recently but it is important to remain vigilant. Please pop a message on the WhatsApp group if you spot anything which concerns you or you feel might be suspicious. Better to be safe than sorry!

The next meeting will be **Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April** at 7.30p m at the church. We hope to see you there!

# Upton Photographic Competition

We are once again holding a Photographic Competition, open to all residents of Upton. There are two age categories:

- anyone below 16
- anyone aged 16 and above.

There are two competition themes based on an overall theme of "Winter":

1. Upton and Surrounding Area (in winter)  
Any photo that shows off the area in which we live: landscapes, buildings, people, nature, sunsets, weather, etc.
2. Any other "Winter" picture including photographs taken on holiday anywhere in the world.

All submissions should be emailed to [upton.photo@outlook.com](mailto:upton.photo@outlook.com). The closing date is Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March. Please include a brief description or title of your photo. The winning photographs will be displayed in the Village Hall.

Good Luck!



## *Jennie's Children's Trust Fundraising Dinner 2026*

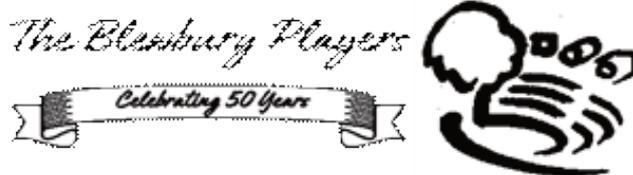
*Come with your friends and enjoy a wonderful evening with fine food and wine, on Saturday, 7th February 2026 at the Astons Village Hall. Put the date in your diary now, and gather a group of 8-10 guests before booking your table.*

*We will be serving a three course set menu along with a selection of amuse-bouches on arrival, dietary requirements will be catered for, please specify when booking. The suggested donation is £50 per person or £400-£500 per table. To reserve your table, please email [gracelancaster@gmail.com](mailto:gracelancaster@gmail.com).*

*Payment will be due by the 7th January 2026 with all funds raised in support of Jennie's Children's Trust.*

*Jennie's Children's Trust works to create happy memories for children and their families, who have suffered trauma. To find out more about the work they do, please visit [www.jennieschildrenstrust.org](http://www.jennieschildrenstrust.org)*

# Local News Blewbury Players



We are excited to offer a warm welcome to familiar and new faces in a variety of ways in our action packed 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, with an exciting mix of events and productions - something for everyone.

## ***The Dice House, 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> February 2026***

The cast will be performing this show as a 'radio play' reading from scripts accompanied by sound effects. As we're welcoming a number of new faces for this show there will be a different cast for each night. "The Dice House" is a darkly comic play set in a psychiatric clinic run by Dr. Ratner, where all life decisions are made by rolling dice. Dr. Drabble, a rival psychiatrist, manipulates his recently released patient Matthew into breaking into the clinic to kidnap his own wife Polly, who has embraced the chaos of dice therapy. As Matthew's mission spirals out of control, the play unfolds into a series of fast-paced, farcical episodes with surreal antics and absurd therapy sessions, ultimately challenging the very ideas of free will and sanity. The fate of the main characters hinges on chance, with reality and madness blurring until the final roll of the dice.

Be warned: this show contains adult themes and adult language. Tickets are available from our [online Box Office](#) or by scanning the QR code opposite.



## ***Book Launch and Friends' Evening; 20<sup>th</sup> March***

Steve White will be previewing his book "Drama in an Oxfordshire Village - Fifty Years of the Blewbury Players". He will look back to the origins of the Players during the growth of Blewbury after WWII, in the tradition of drama and performance which became established in the village through the sixties and seventies and in the legacy left by the Stockwells Players in Aston Upthorpe.

There'll be plenty of pictures, maybe some film and hopefully some live performance. The book will be published on 14<sup>th</sup> July. All tickets will include a complimentary glass of wine or a soft drink. Tickets for Friends will be complimentary, while general admission will be £5. The Box Office opens on 12<sup>th</sup> February (see details above).

### ***An Evening of Entertainment about the Blewbury Players; 20<sup>th</sup> June***

St. Michael's Church, Blewbury. Arranged by Catie Flye. More details to follow...

### ***The Wind in the Willows, 15<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> July 2026***

The summer production at Orchard Dene Garden Theatre, Blewbury will be "The Wind in the Willows" written by Kenneth Grahame, adapted by Alan Bennett and directed by Ed White.

### ***A Christmas Carol – Winter 2026.***

This will be held at St Michael's church, Blewbury between 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> November. More news soon...

## **Blewbury School Report**

### ***Governor monitoring at Blewbury School***

Governors of a school have three core functions:

- to set the vision and ethos of the school;
- to hold the leaders to account;
- to ensure that all funding is spent appropriately for the children at the school.

To help them do this, Governors monitor a wide range of information from the school and externally including the Department of Education. For example, an Oxford Diocesan Sschools Trust (ODST) adviser recently reported on Maths using internal anonymised data showing the progress that children are making. Governors use all this information to challenge leaders through questioning.

The most enjoyable part of this are visits to school so Governors can see for themselves the quality education being provided. Governors talk and listen to the children, staff and members of the community.

Some Governors visited school during the recent INSET day and gathered evidence by speaking to subject leaders and seeing their action plans for their subject. What did they learn?

Maths is taught using a mastery approach, which has been developed over the last 18 months and uses a two-year rolling programme specially developed for smaller schools. This is working well. Monitoring shows that lessons reflect the three aims of the National Curriculum for Maths: fluency, problem-solving and reasoning. Teachers aim to develop deep and secure conceptual understanding using models, images and apparatus so that all children make progress in their learning. Some children will be given additional support if needed.

There is a new PE subject leader who joined the school in September. The school employs a specialist coach to support PE, and all children have 2 sessions a week. There are progression documents which all teachers use to ensure the development of skills. The school regularly takes part in tournaments against other local schools.

Following the school's very successful SIAMS inspection last May, the RE subject lead has ensured that the school has an updated curriculum, and spirituality continues to be developed across the school. Some governors were able to join the school and parents for the annual carol concert at St Michael's - a wonderful occasion with the whole school taking part

### **Christmas Tree Chipping**

Steve, Ben, Elizabeth and Pete would like to thank the people who kindly donated to have their Christmas trees chipped in aid of Helen and Douglas House in January. We raised £313.99, which has been passed on to Helen and Douglas House. Thank you all!



A CHAPEL IN THE HEART OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

Hill Farm, Church Lane, Steventon, OX13 6SW

[www.ridgewayfuneralservice.co.uk](http://www.ridgewayfuneralservice.co.uk)

[info@ridgewayfunerals.co.uk](mailto:info@ridgewayfunerals.co.uk)

01235 355269

# Papagena

"extraordinary voices"  
(BBC)



## LOVE, LEGENDS AND LULLABIES

A Valentine's concert with music from Monteverdi to Kate Bush,  
Purcell to Sandy Denny – something for everyone!

Medieval, folk, classical and contemporary a cappella

**Sunday 15th February 2026, 3pm**

St Andrew's Church, East Hagbourne, OX11 9LP

*In aid of Friends of St Andrew's*

**Tickets:** £20 to include a glass of wine (U18s £10)

**From:** Hagbourne Community Shop,  
Jeff Powell - 07751 607 932, or [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com)



@papagenasingers | [papagena.co.uk](http://papagena.co.uk)

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# Blewbury WI

The next monthly meeting of Blewbury WI will be on **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February** at 7:30 pm in the Vale room. The speaker will be Graham Horn, who is an experienced Blue Badge Tourist Guide telling us about "*The Royal Wives of Windsor*". This is the story of our Queen Consorts: the wives of our kings, from 1070 to the present day. Many of them played a role in shaping the monarchy, at Windsor Castle and beyond. Eleanor of Castile, Isabella of Valois, Catherine of Aragon and Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz are just some of those who have made their mark. Find out about a six-year-old queen, the witch queen, the "injured" queen, the one who "loved hospitals" and many more.

Blewbury WI is much more than you think! Not Jam and Jerusalem at all! Monthly meetings, playing informal games of Scrabble, Mah Jong and Rummikub. A book club, a monthly craft get together plus a monthly coffee morning at Style Acre. Walks when the weather allows. Plus support from other members with whatever life throws at you – a brilliant support network.

Although our WI is currently full, we have a waiting list for anyone that is interested in joining in the future. To find out more, please ring our Secretary, Joy, on 850543 or contact us by [email](#).

## Blewbury Post Office

As we head into February, we'd like to thank everyone for their continued support at Blewbury Village Store and Post Office. We hope you've all had a good start to the year and are keeping warm through the winter months. Our normal opening hours are:

Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri:	9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Weds:	9:00 am – 12:00 pm
Sat/Sun:	closed

Please note that due to half term, the Post Office will be operating reduced hours during the week commencing Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February.

Mon to Fri:	9:00 am – 12:00 pm
Sat/Sun:	closed

Normal opening hours will resume from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

In the Shop, our shelves are well stocked with everyday essentials, along with our popular fresh free-range eggs, local honey, sweet treats, chocolates and cold drinks.

Whether you're popping in for a quick top-up shop, posting a parcel, or just calling in for a chat, we're always happy to see you. Thank you once again for your continued support - it really does mean a great deal to us.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

## United Charities

If you, or someone you know, is struggling with the cost of living, we are able to support people of all ages living in Upton, the Aston and Blewbury. We have



funds to give a helping hand from the cost of the weekly food shop or clothing and equipment for school, to energy bills, or a one-off payment for essential items.

You can pick up a short application from the porch of St Mary's Church, or make a request by [email](#). We can help you fill in the form and please don't be reluctant to ask for help, all applications are totally confidential.

In 2025 we were able to support individuals, couples and families in Upton, Blewbury and the Astons, who were struggling during a year of rising living costs, and we hope to continue to offer the same level of support throughout 2026. But like many charities, we rely on the generosity of donations to make this possible.

We are aware that we have reached out to our local community before and are grateful to those of you who have generously made it possible for us to help local people in need. However, as the economy this year is likely to still leave household stretched for cash, we continue to look for a helping hand. Any amount of money would be appreciated and can be donated through our [Just Giving page](#)

We thank you very much in advance and if you have any questions, please do get in touch with us by [email](#)

# Vale News

## VoWHDC News

### **Thames Water Reservoir Consultation**

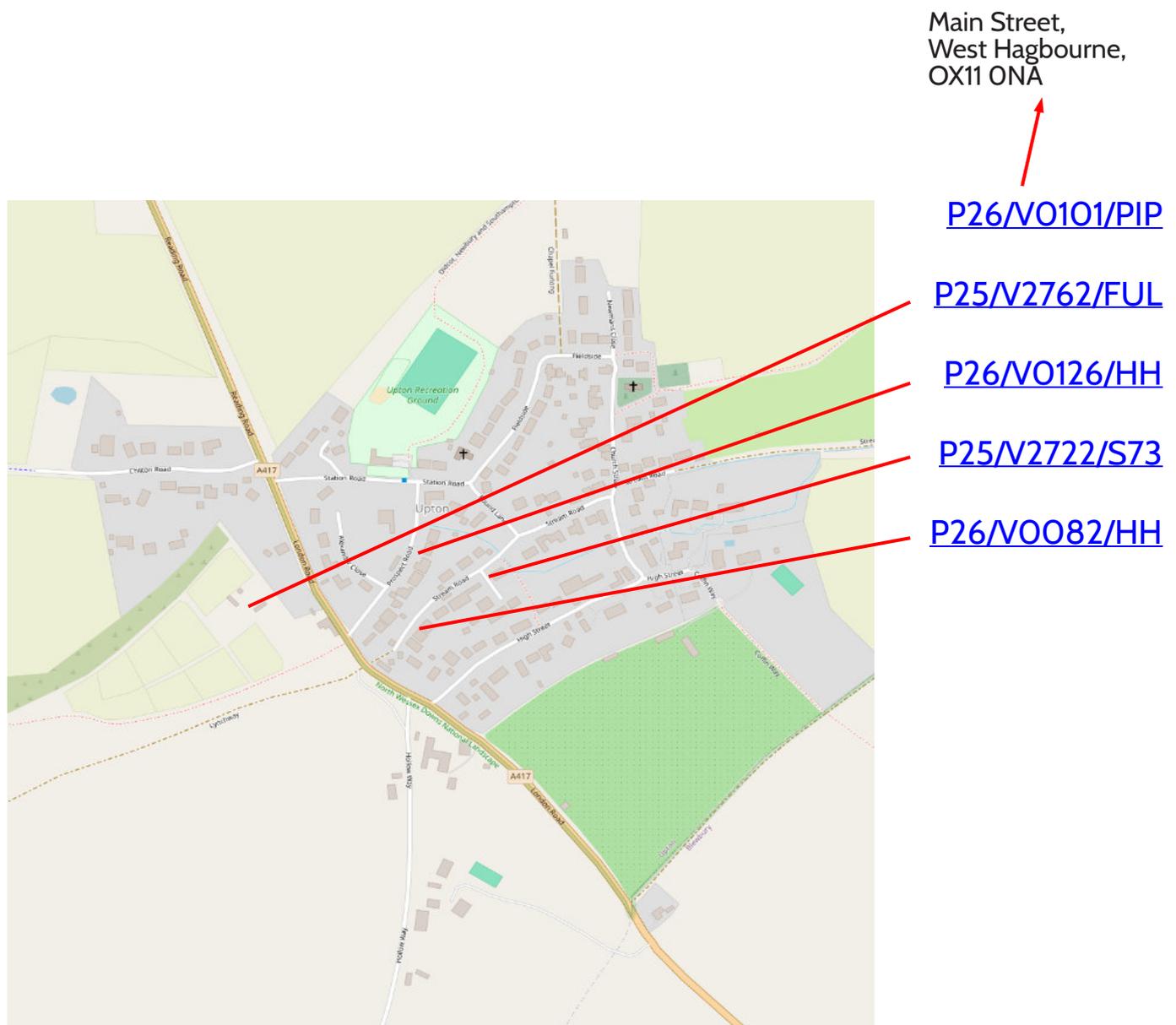
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have submitted their response to Thames Water's reservoir consultation and encourage all residents to participate.

### **Joint Local Plan Update**

Meetings are taking place with Planning Inspectors to discuss ways forward for the Joint Local Plan between South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils.

## 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 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026.



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# Olly Glover (MP)



This past month has been particularly busy, both in Parliament and meeting with local businesses in the constituency.

As discussions about the government's Great British Railways Bill continue, I have used my role as Liberal Democrat Transport Spokesperson to ensure the passengers are at the centre of these discussions. It is essential they improve the ongoing issues, such as train delays and expensive tickets, which I and many in our constituency experience regularly.

In parliament, a debate regarding Thames Water ensured I was able to raise the concerns raised by residents about the escalating costs and the lack of trust in Thames Water to safely build the largest banded reservoir in the county. I have also engaged with local media about problems with postal delivery services, including Evri, and the delayed parcels in Grove and other areas of the constituency. In an interview with the BBC, I spoke about the GP surgery delays specifically affecting Great Western Park.

I have been spending time with some of our wonderful small business to better understand the impact of last year's budget and the support they need to keep trading and providing us with products and food. It is always a highlight of my week visiting local businesses and community groups to learn about the work they do for our communities and making sure I am well informed when raising their needs when in parliament. I have also had the pleasure of meeting many residents in Stanford in the Vale and Didcot on their doorsteps recently and in Wantage at one of

my regular surgeries. My team and I have now closed over 10,000 constituent cases, supporting individuals, families and businesses to resolve a huge variety of problems.

As always, if there is anything you feel I can help you with please do not hesitate to contact me and my team either by [email](#), or by leaving a voice message at 0207 219 7657.

## Didcot u3a

If you have recently retired or are semi-retired, live in Didcot or the surrounding area and are looking for new interests whilst making new friendships, then what could be a better way to start 2026 than joining the Didcot & District U3A to . . . . .  
*"Learn, Laugh, Live"!*

With over 30 Interest Groups, you could learn a new language, delve into your family history, enjoy walking with friends, learn to play an instrument, and many more: full details can be found [here!](#)

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 in the Didcot Civic Hall, starting at 2:30 pm.

Meetings for the coming months will include;

- 17 Feb Women and the Victorian Army;  
Speaker: Dan Allen
- 17 Mar *"On top but never in control!"* a talk from a botanist about gardening;  
Speaker: Timothy Walker
- 21 Apr A talk from a former forensic expert;  
Speaker: Haley

For more information about the nationwide self-help teaching and learning organisation that is u3a please contact us [here](#). We look forward to seeing you soon!

# News from Afar

## OCC news

### **New Booking System at Waste Recycling Centres**

From 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026, everyone must book a time slot to visit Oxfordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres. You can book (using this [link](#)) 30 minutes before your visit (subject to availability) or up to two weeks in advance. To speed up your visit, please sort recyclable items from waste before you arrive, or use the sorting area on site.

### **Warm Homes Local Grant**

Government funding is available to help residents on low incomes make their homes more energy efficient. The scheme provides fully funded upgrades including insulation, solar panels, and heat pumps for eligible homeowners and private tenants. Funding is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, so act quickly if you're eligible.

### **Winter Warmth Support**

Cold, damp housing costs the NHS £1.4 billion a year through respiratory and cardiovascular problems. Support is available to help residents stay warm, safe and independent in their homes. Contact Oxfordshire County Council for information on accessing this support.

## **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](mailto:jackiefideria@yahoo.com))

### **Oxford Temporary Congestion Charge**

Six congestion charge locations are now in place in Oxford for car travellers. Residents can apply for a limited number of passes, and permits are available for Blue Badge holders and mobile traders. If you drive into Oxford, make sure you know how to apply for permits and pay the charge. Oxfordshire residents can apply for permits [here](#).

### **Live Well Oxfordshire**

Over 2,800 activities and services are now available through Live Well Oxfordshire, ranging from care services to new hobbies, transport services, aids for daily tasks, and support for unpaid carers. Visit the [portal](#) to find information and a calendar of events.

### **Support for Unpaid Carers**

Whether you care for someone a few hours a week or all day every day, support is available. Many people don't identify as carers but face real emotional, practical and financial difficulties. Resources are available to make life easier for those who care for others in Oxfordshire.



**Brightwell Orchard Group  
invite you to an evening of**

# Fine Perry Tasting

**Saturday 07/03/26  
Brightwell Village Hall  
19:30-22:00**

**Tickets £20 pp, available from  
Brightwell Village Stores  
or by email: [villageorchardgroup@gmail.com](mailto:villageorchardgroup@gmail.com)**

# Thames Valley Police Commissioner

Back in December, the Government announced the funding settlement for Thames Valley Police - allocating nearly £9m less than they had previously indicated! The funding from central government will barely cover the costs of inflation and pay increases for police officers. In addition the Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, confirmed at the end of January that the Government would only fund 40% of the cost of new police neighbourhood officers, putting more pressure on your local council tax bill and squeezing other parts of policing.

Despite these financial pressures, I am confident that we will be able to deliver 53 more neighbourhood officers this coming year, that's on top of the 218 extra officers delivered in the last three years.

This comes at the same time the Government has published a White Paper on Police Reform. It sets out radical changes including the regionalisation of policing into mega-forces that could see the abolition of Thames Valley Police. As well as plans for force mergers the document proposes the creation of a new National Police Force and suggests changing the law to introduce more direct control by ministers for the first time, risking the end of operational independence.

Despite some good intent around better sharing of information between police forces to tackle serious and complex crime, overall I am deeply concerned by these plans which will do nothing to deliver better policing locally and are likely to see less money available for the police in our area. I will continue to challenge the Home Office on these plans and stand up for policing locally.



Matthew Barber  
Your voice in  
Thames Valley

**STAY IN TOUCH**  
matthewbarber.co.uk  
@matthewbarberpcc  
@matthew\_barber

JOIN MY WHATSAPP COMMUNITY

Powered by Matthew Barber on his own behalf, of Waterdon House, 18-22 High Street, Wilmsley, Oxfordshire, OX28 9HL.

Greater efforts on crime prevention, alongside more police officers, are making a difference, with crime falling across Oxfordshire. Locally the priority will always remain cutting crime and catching criminals despite the pressures imposed by the Government.

## North Berks Referees Association

The North Berks Referees Association chucks up 90 years of its existence this year.



The association was formed on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1936 at “The Junction Hall” in Didcot with subsequent meetings held at the “Barley Mow” Abingdon and then at various pubs and venues across the area, a geographical location known affectionately to many as “North Berks”. This was a colloquialism arising from its old Parliamentary Constituency name. With only a slight alteration, this became known as “The Abingdon Constituency” which existed between 1895 and 1983 when it was abolished although it had already ceased to be in Berkshire when county boundary changes came into effect in 1974 (on April Fool’s Day!).

The local football league and the Association retained the North Berks tag as a token of pride marking its heritage, history and development. It is fifty two years since the change to South Oxfordshire from Berkshire, yet another example of how fleet-footed time seems to be.

The Association would love to hear from any of its former members, other referees, former players, club officials and spectators so they can keep them informed of the varied events and activities they are planning to mark and celebrate this landmark in their history of which those listed are all a part. If you’re interested, please contact Ernie Tilley by [email](#).

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# Local directory

## What's On ....

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

## Useful links

Organisation	Website
Upton Village website	<a href="https://www.uptonvillage.co.uk/">https://www.uptonvillage.co.uk/</a>
Upton Village Hall	<a href="https://www.uptonvillagehall.co.uk/">https://www.uptonvillagehall.co.uk/</a>
Upton Wine Club	<a href="https://uptonwineclub.com/">https://uptonwineclub.com/</a>
Upton Village Social	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/231071594674815">https://www.facebook.com/groups/231071594674815</a>

Various WhatsApp groups also exist - please ask a neighbour for details!

## 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.

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# Useful contacts

Contact	Telephone	email
<b>Upton News</b> Upton News Editor	n/a	<a href="mailto:uptonox1news@gmail.com">uptonox1news@gmail.com</a>
<b>Churn Benefice</b> Father Jason St. John Nicolle	01235 850267	<a href="mailto:office@churnchurches.co.uk">office@churnchurches.co.uk</a>
Revd Louise Butler	07837 009730	<a href="mailto:revlouiseb@aol.com">revlouiseb@aol.com</a>
Revd John Clarke	01235 510073	<a href="mailto:jphclarke@gmail.com">jphclarke@gmail.com</a>
Revd Dr Mark Rhodes-Smith	01235 850267	<a href="mailto:mark.rhodes-smith@churnchurches.co.uk">mark.rhodes-smith@churnchurches.co.uk</a>
Elaine de Ridder	01235 850267	<a href="mailto:office@churnchurches.co.uk">office@churnchurches.co.uk</a>
<b>Parish Council</b> Chair	n/a	<a href="mailto:francoisey@councillors.uptonparishcouncil.gov.uk">francoisey@councillors.uptonparishcouncil.gov.uk</a>
Clerk	n/a	<a href="mailto:parish.clerk@uptonparishcouncil.gov.uk">parish.clerk@uptonparishcouncil.gov.uk</a>
<b>VoWH District Councillors</b> Hayleigh Gascoigne	n/a	<a href="mailto:hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk">hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk</a>
Debra Dewhurst	n/a	<a href="mailto:debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk">debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk</a>
<b>Oxfordshire County Councillor</b> Rebekah Fletcher	n/a	<a href="mailto:rebekah.fletcher@oxfordshire.gov.uk">rebekah.fletcher@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>Member of Parliament</b> Olly Glover	0207 219 765	<a href="mailto:olly.glover.mp@parliament.uk">olly.glover.mp@parliament.uk</a>
<b>Astons Online</b> Bruno Brunskill	07780 958249	<a href="mailto:theastonsonline@gmail.com">theastonsonline@gmail.com</a>
<b>United Charities</b> Main contact	n/a	<a href="mailto:unitedcharities@outlook.com">unitedcharities@outlook.com</a>

## And finally ...

Due to budgetary constraints, Upton News is published in electronic format only. A copy is placed on the Upton Village [website](#) each month, which you can download. We also manage a distribution list whose subscribers receive a copy directly in their email Inbox at the start of each month.

If you would like to be added to this list, then please email [me](#) and I will add your email address to our database. Thank you for your interest!