



# Upton News

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# The month ahead

## Village calendar

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
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	1	2	3

### 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
5 <sup>th</sup> April	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist	Children, Our village schools, Sunday club
12 <sup>th</sup> April	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist	Those recently baptised
26 <sup>th</sup> April	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist (followed by APCM)	Confirmation candidates, Our worship, Musicians, organists and choirs

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.

### Coffee & Kids!

Coffee & Kids! is a monthly baby & toddler group that meets in Blewbury, hosted by the local Mothers' Union. Our next monthly session is on **Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April** 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 provide a warm, friendly and safe place to enjoy the company of others and have some refreshment as the little ones have fun with toys, learn to play together and even do some craft activities! A donation of £2 is appreciated towards our costs. Mothers' Union hosts look forward to welcoming you. Any queries, contact Louise on 07837 009730

### Note to contributors

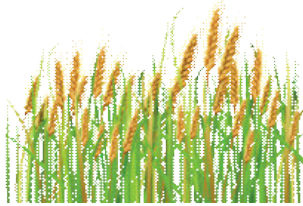
Contributions to Upton News are always very welcome. Please include your name, address and contact details (email and/or phone number) in case clarification is needed: we will not be able to publish your contribution without these details. The editor reserves the right to place, edit, shorten or omit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

Please send your contributions by email to [uptonox11news@gmail.com](mailto:uptonox11news@gmail.com)

The deadline for the April 2026 issue is **28<sup>th</sup> April 2026**.

## Father Jason writes

There are so many hymns and songs which have been written to celebrate the feast of Easter. I wonder if you have a favourite? One of my favourites begins:



*“Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,  
wheat that in the dark earth many days hath lain;  
love lives again, that with the dead has been: Love is  
come again, like wheat that springeth green”.*

These words were written by the Revd John Macleod Campbell Crum, a Church of England clergyman who served as Rector of Farnham in Surrey and as a Canon of Canterbury Cathedral.

The hymn focuses on a simple but profound image: if a seed is to release new life, it has to die to itself. Jesus used this image in a conversation with some of his disciples: *“very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit”* (John’s Gospel, chapter 12, verse 24).

At one level, this saying is about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus’ death was necessary in order to release the power of the resurrection: that new life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit, which brings new hope to us all, transforming our own lives and our relationships with God and with one another.

At another level, the death and resurrection of Jesus reveals a more general truth. Sometimes things have to come to an end before there can be a new beginning. It can be hard for us to let things die, in order that something new can start. We can gain a sense of security from keeping to the familiar and the well-tested. But sometimes we need to let go of what has gone before, and open ourselves to a new beginning in our lives. We need to have the courage to die to the old, so that we can welcome in the new.

Easter is the great celebration of the new life which comes to us as God’s gift in Jesus. This new life gives us hope, even in the face of death itself. We can look with confidence to the future, knowing that we have nothing to fear from the changes in our life and in our world. In the words of the hymn, love will *“come again, like wheat that springeth green”*. The death and resurrection of Jesus teaches us that God’s love never dies – it always *“lives again”*. No wonder Easter is the greatest festival of the Church’s year!



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

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# Upton Parish Council

## Local government reorganisation

Upton Parish Council has submitted an official response to the Government's consultation on proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire, setting out a clear parish view on all three options. In our response we emphasised Upton's rural character, our location within and alongside the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, and the importance of protecting this landscape in future planning and council structures.

We restated the Council's previously agreed support for the "Ridgeway Council" two-unitary model, arguing that it offers the most sensible geography and scale for small villages like ours, with better prospects for rural services, highways, and meaningful parish engagement. We also highlighted our concerns about the single-council and three-council options, particularly the risks they pose to rural representation, coherent planning, and the long-term protection of the AONB/National Landscape. Councillors believe this response looks carefully after Upton residents' interests by putting rural communities, landscape protection, and parish-level involvement at the centre of our comments.

## Changes to the National Planning Policy

Upton Parish Council also submitted a formal response to the Government's consultation on changing the National Planning Policy Framework, which sets the national rules for new development. In our response we stressed issues that matter most to this village: protecting the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and our open countryside, keeping the distinct rural character, scale and pattern of Upton, and making sure services, infrastructure and biodiversity are taken seriously when decisions are made. We also asked that national policy continues to give proper weight to the views of small rural communities, not just towns and cities, and that housing targets do not lead to unsuitable, speculative development in and around the village and National Landscape.

## Upton Parish Transport Representative

Upton Parish Council is looking for a resident to take on the voluntary role of Parish Transport Representative (PTR). This person acts as a local advocate for bus and other public transport users, linking the village with Oxfordshire County Council's transport planners and attending occasional online PTR meetings.

Ideally, we are keen to hear from someone who is a regular user of local buses or other public transport, or who has a strong interest in seeing services improved for Upton residents. The role would suit someone who can gather feedback from neighbours, highlight issues (such as timetables, routes, accessibility, and reliability), and feed this back constructively to the County Council.

If you might be interested or would like to know more about what is involved, please [contact the Parish Clerk](#) in the first instance. There is no long-term commitment at this stage – we would be very happy to have an informal chat before you decide whether it is right for you.

## Plot 3, Chapel Furlong

There has been limited visible progress in advancing the purchase of the field known as Plot 3 at Chapel Furlong. However, the Parish Council would like to reassure residents that there is nothing untoward in this. The delays are largely due to the structure and administration of the trust which owns the land.

The land is held within a trust arrangement, which requires consultation and agreement from three separate beneficiaries. This process can take time, particularly where careful verification and due diligence are required.

In addition, progress has unfortunately been affected by the recent death of one of the trustees, who was also acting as solicitor on behalf of the trust. This sad event has inevitably contributed to delays while the trust makes the necessary arrangements moving forward.

As this matter relates to a financial transaction, there is necessarily limited information that can be disclosed at this stage. This is to protect the Council's position and to ensure compliance with proper fiscal management and good governance practices.

The Parish Council remains in contact with the relevant parties and will continue to progress matters as efficiently as possible. We will provide further updates as and when there are meaningful developments to report.

### Next meeting

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 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. The Minutes of previous Parish Council meetings can be found [here](#).

## Upton Wine Club

Nearly forty residents gathered in the village hall last month for one of Upton Wine Club's most engaging evenings yet. The guest speaker, Callum from Liberty Wines, led a lively and informative session on the art of food and wine pairing.

Callum's enthusiasm was infectious, and the selection of wines he brought along showcased a wonderful range of styles, regions, and grape varieties. Below is a round-up of the wines tasted, along with a little background and Callum's pairing suggestions. All wines can be sourced from [Strictly Wine](#) if you wanted to try something a little different!

### *Kir-Yianni Xinomavro Sparkling Brut*

Our first wine was a vibrant sparkling wine from northern Greece, made from the Xinomavro grape, famous for its lively acidity and fine, savoury structure. This bottle offers crisp apple, citrus, and a gentle biscuity note, making it a great alternative to a Prosecco! It goes really well with salted nuts, smoked salmon, or light canapés. The high acidity and delicate bubbles cut beautifully through salty or oily foods, refreshing the palate with every sip.

### *Kaiken Terroir Torrontés*

The next wine, from the high-altitude vineyards of Salta in Argentina, was an aromatic white bursting with floral notes, lychee, and citrus. Torrontés is known for its perfumed character, yet this example remains wonderfully fresh. This wine goes amazingly with spicy Asian dishes or aromatic curries. The wine's fragrant profile and gentle sweetness soften chilli heat and complement bold spices.

### *Sebastian Vaillant Valençay Sauvignon/Chardonnay*

This wine was a Loire Valley blend that marries Sauvignon Blanc's zesty freshness with Chardonnay's rounder texture. There was plenty of green apple, citrus, and a subtle creaminess. Try this with goat's cheese, salads, or grilled chicken. Sauvignon's acidity loves tangy cheeses, while the Chardonnay component adds enough body for lighter poultry dishes.

**STRICTLY  WINE**

**South African red blends**  
"South Africa is one of the wine world's hotspots for character and value"

**Brookdale Mason Road GSM**



*"Bold, juicy entry with bramble and blackberry, wild herbs and warm spices. Ripe, grippy tannins. Full-bodied and powerful. Drink 2026-2034"*  
**Highly recommended 94pts**  
**Decanter, March 2026**

**www.strictlywine.co.uk**  
**sales@strictlywine.co.uk**      **01235 364536**

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### *De Loach Heritage Collection Chardonnay*

The last white of the evening was a Californian Chardonnay with ripe stone fruit, gentle oak, and a smooth, rounded finish. It's richer than the Valençay blend but still beautifully balanced. This would be exceptional with your roast chicken Sunday lunch, a creamy pasta, or buttery fish dishes. The wine's weight and subtle oak echo creamy textures and richer flavours without overwhelming them.

### *Mandrarossa Frappato*

Our first red was a light, juicy red from Sicily, bursting with red cherry, raspberry, and soft herbal notes. Frappato is known for its freshness and soft tannins, making it a great Summer wine! Think of it when making a charcuterie, tomato-based pasta, or even chilled with summer dishes. Its bright fruit and low tannin make it incredibly versatile, especially with Mediterranean flavours.

### *Selvapiana Chianti Rufina*

We have all probably tried a Chianti at some point. This Sangiovese-based red from one of the most respected estates in Chianti Rufina, offers sour cherry, violet and earthy spice with firm, food-friendly tannins. It goes so well with Tuscan classics: tomato sauces, grilled meats, or hard cheeses. The acidity mirrors tomato-based dishes perfectly, while the tannins stand up to richer meats.

### *Causse de Thenon En Pente Malbec*

We ended with a French Malbec from Cahors, the grape's original home. This is more structured and savoury than its Argentinian cousins, with dark fruit, spice, and a mineral edge. Try it the next time you have a steak, lamb, or hearty stews. The wine's depth and tannin make it ideal for robust, protein-rich dishes.

The evening was a wonderful blend of learning, laughter, and community spirit—exactly what the Wine Club aims to offer. If you missed this month's tasting, fear not: the next wine club meeting is on the 15<sup>th</sup> April at the village hall where we will invite some of our members to talk about a wine of their choice! All details can be found on our [website](#); alternatively [email](#) us or speak to the 50 or so villagers who are already members.

## Upton Full Fibre

The planned meeting with Airband was postponed again, as they are still waiting for key data from Building Digital UK (BDUK). A new date will be arranged once this information arrives. However, Upton has now been confirmed as eligible for BDUK broadband vouchers, and Airband is preparing its application for these vouchers. We conducted a leaflet drop to each house in Upton last month and have so far received more than 60 positive expressions of interest which is very encouraging. If you are interested in faster broadband, but have not yet signed up, please express your initial interest by [email](#). There is no commitment at this stage, but we just need to gauge the level of interest within the village.

If sufficient interest is shown, Airband will carry out a full survey of the village to determine costs and how fibre can be routed to each home. Some existing infrastructure is already in place, and Airband is known for working well with residents during installations. Openreach has not provided any clear plans for Upton and is unlikely to deliver a solution, since it has disbanded its voucher team. The time to complete this project is tight but our local MPs (Olly and Freddie) have been in correspondence with Baroness Lloyd, Under Secretary of State Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), to try to extend the scheme deadline; DSIT are sponsors of the BDUK voucher scheme .

## Upton Neighbourhood Watch

Things have been quiet in the village during the last month - let's hope this continues! The next meeting will be Wednesday **29<sup>th</sup> April at 7:30 pm** at the church. We hope to see you there!

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## Christian Aid Week

Please note on your calendars that Christian Aid Week this year is **10<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> May**. Envelopes for your generous contributions will be delivered beforehand and the week will end with our now traditional Garden Party at **3:00 pm on 16<sup>th</sup> May** in the grounds of St Mary's Church. There will be delicious home-made refreshments, a generous raffle, a sale of garden plants and polite conversation. What better way to spend an afternoon and support a worthy cause?



Many guests and new volunteers are welcome - please contact Malcolm Wright (01235-850705) for further details

## Upton Annual Parish Meeting

This is NOT a Parish Council meeting but is an opportunity for Upton residents to hear the latest updates on the Chapel Furlong land acquisition, discuss planning matters, and see what our local clubs have been up to this year. We will be presenting the Parish Council Annual Report and hosting a Community Showcase for all local groups. You will also be able to meet your local District and County Councillors!

Refreshments (tea, coffee, wine, beer, cider, nibbles) will be provided, so please do come and join us at the Village Hall, 7:00 pm Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May.

If you would like to suggest a topic for discussion ask a specific question in advance of the meeting or showcase your activities, please contact either the Parish [Clerk](#) or the Parish Council [Chair](#)

We look forward to seeing you there!

## Upton Nature Garden



Spring flowers, red admiral butterflies, lots of singing birds and several ladybirds were amongst the wildlife in the Nature garden on 15<sup>th</sup> March.

Eight valiant volunteers shifted a triple mountain of chippings to give all the paths and picnic glade a deep weed-suppressing layer. A couple of small nettles around the banana bench have been removed, so that is ready for restful contemplation whilst the little ones race the figure-of-eight path around the trees.

We also carried out a spring plant survey and counted how many different plants we could see inside a 1m square. We're not botanists, so identification was done using a plant recognition app. The big white Oxeye Daisies can appear to be the only plant in the meadow in the height of summer but this survey showed there are many more plants in our meadow. Amongst the 12 species we spotted were Shepherd's Purse, Snake's Head Fritillary, Yarrow and Salad Burnett. On the mound in the centre of the glade, we spotted Ivy-leaf Speedwell and Wood Avens, which is a food plant for the Grizzled Skipper Butterfly; in the woodland, we found wild Strawberry, Cowslips and Bluebells amongst others. We'll repeat the survey in July and September to look for summer and autumn plants.

The regular meets are on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month, March – November, excluding June (Uptonogood month). Villagers are also encouraged to pop in at will to do a bit of weeding and watering through the summer. Our next meet-up will be **10:00 am, Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April** when we will attend to the orchard and nut bank, carry out a bird song survey and mow the meadow path.



YOUR VILLAGE. YOUR VOICE.

# UPTON'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

On Wednesday  
6th May  
7:00 PM

in the Village Hall

A CHANCE FOR EVERYONE  
TO HELP SHAPE  
UPTON'S FUTURE

# Upton Fete 2026

Mark your calendars for **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September**  
**12:00 noon to 4:00 pm.**

Enjoy a traditional village fete and help raise money for the village amenities, the school and the church. Enjoy the displays, show off your vintage car, watch the dog enjoy the BBQ and relax with tea and cakes whilst listening to the musicians.

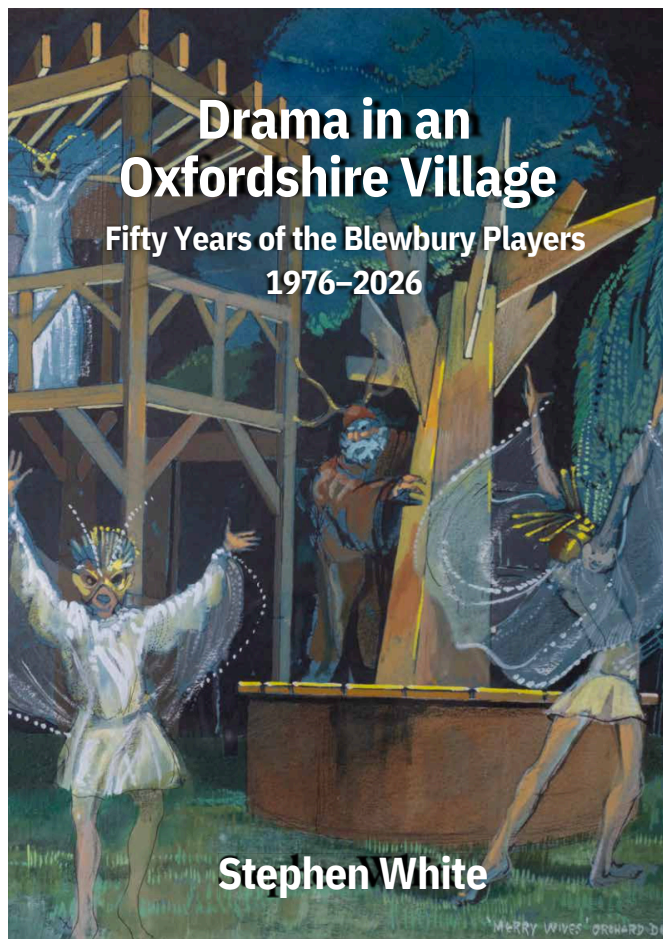
How to help now?

- Can you make some marmalade, or jam this summer, for the ever-popular produce stall?
- Do you know a local choir who would be able to perform in September?
- Can you face-paint, or know someone who could volunteer their time?

We also need helpers to run a stall, park cars, entertain the crowds, or help put gazebos up and down. If you can help, please contact the Fete Committee via the Upton Help Group on WhatsApp, the Village Social Facebook page or drop a note through my door (Kathryn Fletcher, Sine Nomine - opposite the church).

# 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 **20<sup>th</sup> June 2026**. 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.



## 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))

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# Local News

## Blewbury Players



We are having a wonderfully busy year, delighted by and appreciative of the involvement, attendances and support of so many with our ongoing 50th celebrations.

If you missed our entertaining evening preview of Steve's new book *Drama in an Oxfordshire Village Fifty Years of the Blewbury Players*, please take a moment at our website for more information and the [link](#) to pre-order. We would be very grateful if you would consider pre-ordering to help us cover the up-front costs of printing. Every pre-ordered copy will be signed by Steve!

Things may appear a little quieter for a while but be sure that what you can't see is a hive of activity in preparation for future events. We have just had our first gathering and read through for the cast and production team of *The Wind in the Willows*: it's always an exciting day watching the world emerge from the page. If anyone is interested in providing technical support or joining a non-performing role for this production please do [email](#) us. We can support with training and mentoring etc.

Our next events are...

### ***A Flye on the Wall: An Evening of Entertainment about the Blewbury Players; 20<sup>th</sup> June***

Starting at **7:30 pm on 20<sup>th</sup> June**, Catie Flye will be performing at St Michael's Church, Blewbury, joined by her usual *Two Cousins and a Piano* team, which has performed so many enjoyable revues in Blewbury over the years. The Box Office opens online on 29<sup>th</sup> May; tickets cost £15 and include a glass of wine.

### ***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.

We are now fully cast for our performances of *The Wind in the Willows* but if anyone is interested in technical support (i.e. lighting, sound, AVA, sewing, etc) do get in touch either by [email](#) or through our [website](#). We are prepared to support with training and mentoring etc.

### ***Fifty Years of Blewbury Players.***

Exhibition, Orchard Dene Garden, 15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> July

### ***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 WI

Our next monthly meeting is **Wednesday 22<sup>th</sup> April at 7:30 pm** in the Vale room. Jim MacLeod will tell us all about "*The history of the traditional British Toastmaster*". "My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, pray silence..." (really, really, ladies). From the first time the red tailcoat was worn by a toastmaster in 1894 to the current time, there have been many changes in the way that toastmasters work. This will be a humorous and informative history of a very British tradition.

The committee is concocting a super programme of meetings and visits as well as the usual subgroups of Scrabble, Mah Jong, craft club and book club. Blewbury WI often features in our 4,000 copy County magazine "*Oxfordshire Inspires*" in the "*Over to you*" section which highlights what different WIs have been up to. You'll often see us featured in the Didcot issue of the "*Round and About*" free publication, too.

We have a few new members and welcome them all to our sisterhood of fun and support. Although our WI is currently full yet again, we are running a shorter waiting list. If you are thinking of coming as a visitor please ring Joy on 850543 or contact us by [email](#) to ensure that this will work (we don't want the room to be too full - H&S and all that ...).

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# Blewbury School Report



We may be a small school but we have a big dream: to transform an unused outdoor space into a beautiful sensory garden for our children. This special area would provide a calm, engaging environment to support learning, wellbeing, and play for all pupils, including those with additional needs.

Our PTA has begun exploring plans and gathering quotes, but the cost of professional work, particularly for preparing the ground, has proved to be much higher than we can manage. As a first step, we are hoping to make the area safe and usable by flattening and resurfacing the ground. We are reaching out to our wonderful local community to ask if anyone could lend a hand?

Whether you have experience in landscaping, access to equipment, or simply time and willingness to help, your support would make a huge difference. Even advice or recommendations would be greatly appreciated. Together, we can create something truly special for all our children.

If you're able to help in any way, please get in touch with the school office or the PTA by calling 01235 850411 or by [email](#).

Might you be interested in supporting the school in a different way by volunteering to become a school governor? If you would like to find out more, contact us as above and one of us would be delighted to meet with you and explain more about the role and the commitment involved.

# Blewbury Post Office

Spring has arrived at last, and we hope everyone is enjoying the lighter days and signs of the new season around Blewbury. Thank you, as always, for your continued support of the Village Store and Post Office. It's lovely to see so many of you popping in regularly. 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

Over the Easter period (Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March to Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2026) we will be operating reduced hours.

Mon to Fri: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

These temporary hours help us manage staffing over the holiday period. Normal opening hours will resume from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

We are keeping the shop stocked with everyday essentials alongside our popular fresh free-range eggs, local honey, sweet treats and groceries. We are also starting to stock a selection of cute gifts and beautiful floral wreaths, perfect for springtime, seasonal decorating, or as thoughtful presents for friends and family. With Easter approaching, we'll have a selection of seasonal chocolates and treats available too.

We would like to wish all our customers a very Happy Easter, and thank you again for supporting your local Post Office and shop. It really does make a difference to our small village community. We look forward to seeing you soon.

# Astons Online

Astons Online CIC provides tech support people who want to be digitally confident on the Internet, with smartphone apps or online services like health and banking. Astons Online CIC events and support are free of charge and open to everyone. We're available for one-to-one sessions on Tuesday mornings between 10:00 am and 12:00 noon using Zoom, Facetime, WhatsApp or telephone. Please book a 30 minute appointment by [email](#) or by phoo

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Didcot based charity *Getting Oxfordshire Online* would love to have your unwanted laptops, tablets and smartphones to distribute to others who are not able to have their own. Demand in the county is greater than supply so any used devices would be welcome. Contact us by email or phone as above.

## 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

### Local councillor's report

We did not receive a report from our local VoWHDC councillors this month.

### Easter activities

Families can enjoy a jam-packed line-up of Easter activities this spring, with events taking place across the SODC and VoWHDC areas from **30<sup>th</sup> March to 11<sup>th</sup> April**.

The holidays start with an Activity Morning in Cholsey and an Activity Afternoon at The Junction in Abingdon. Followed by *Born to Move* fun fitness sessions in Wallingford and a football day in Faringdon. Midweek, join the Easter themed *Xplorer* challenge in Botley and younger children can finish off the first week with a Mini Fun Day in Abingdon.

The fun continues in the second week, with an *Xplorer* session and a Mini Fun Day in Didcot on **8<sup>th</sup> April** followed by a free Fun Day at Thame Leisure Centre on **9<sup>th</sup> April**. And to round off the holiday, everyone is invited to an Open Day at The Junction in Abingdon, where families can drop in and try a range of fun activities including crafts, soft play and New Age Kurling.

There's also plenty of Easter holiday fun at The Beacon in Wantage, with films, creative sessions and theatre experiences to keep families entertained throughout the holiday, including relaxed movie mornings, hands-on crafts and a play-along theatre adventure for children aged 2–6. At Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot, families can enjoy free Easter-themed activities, including egg painting and much more, suitable for children of all ages when accompanied by an adult.

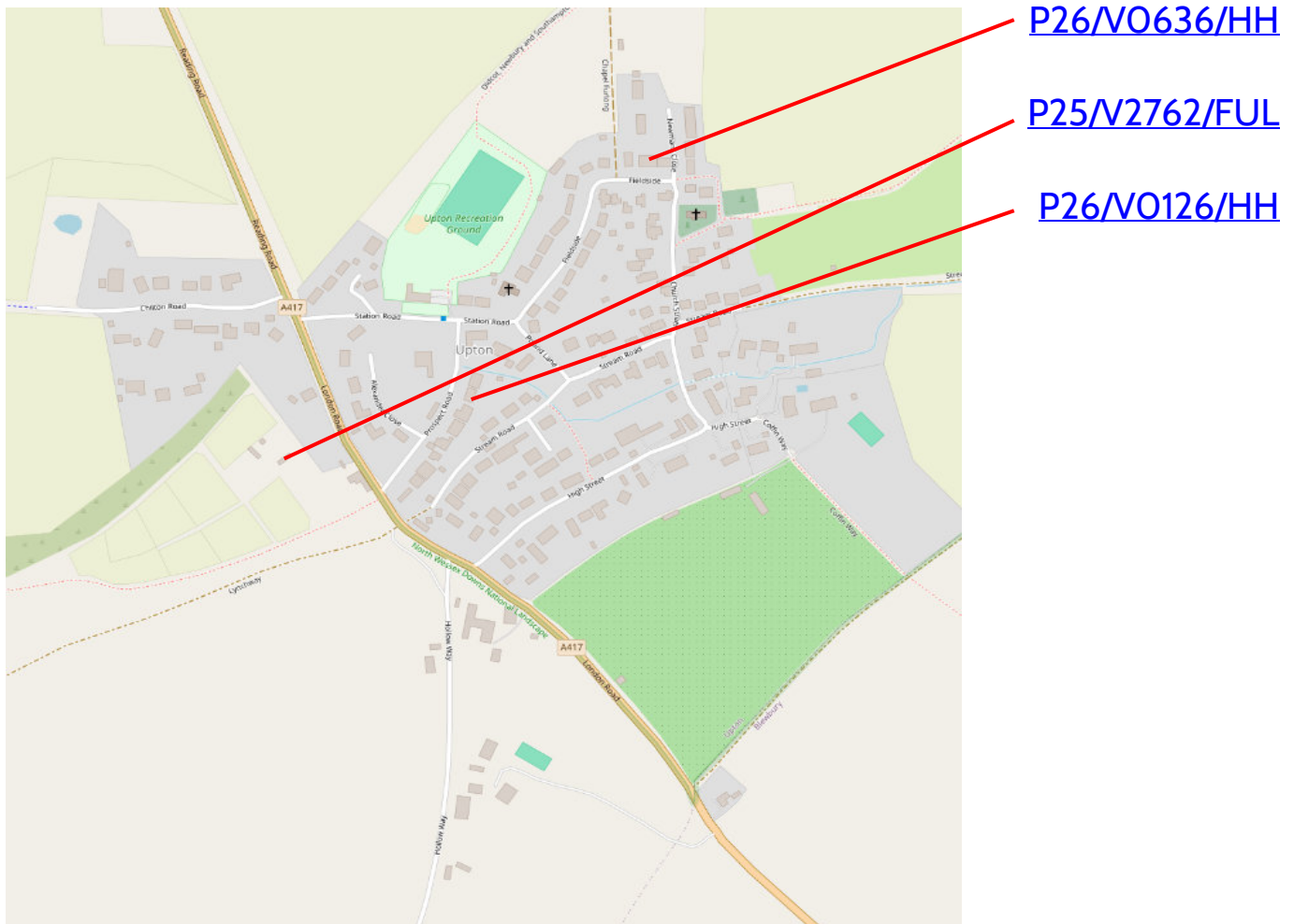
These activities are expected to be very popular so please book early [here](#) to avoid disappointment.

This Easter children can also enjoy Kids Swim for £1 at the council's Better Leisure Centres. Family Fun Swims will be running throughout the holidays as well as Swimming Lesson Courses. Better Leisure also has lots of other activities lined up including, Drop in Badminton, Tennis, Pickleball Sessions, Bouncy Castle Sessions and Junior Gym Sessions. More details can be found on the leisure centre's Facebook pages, [Better UK website](#) and app.

Cllr Helen Pighills, Cabinet Member for Community Health and Wellbeing at VoWHDC, said: *"This Easter we have plenty for kids and families to enjoy with activities for everyone. Whether it's getting creative with workshops and family theatre at The Beacon, enjoying the fresh air with outdoor challenges, or coming along to a free family fun day – and with everything free or low-cost, they're a brilliant way to make the most of the school holidays".*

## 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 29<sup>th</sup> March 2026.



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# Olly Glover (MP)



Spring is finally here, and I am pleased to say it has brought some great progress in the constituency, as well as hopeful developments in Parliament.

The roads have been a main topic of discussion, particularly the ongoing roadworks near Milton and Culham to improve road safety and the stepping up of pothole repairs now the weather has improved. There is more work to be done, so please continue reporting potholes and other defects on [FixMyStreet](#) to make sure they are logged with the County Council.

As a regular cyclist myself, I raised concerns in parliament about the lack of government investment in active travel, which in many areas could reduce congestion, improve public health, and lower carbon emissions. In a Transport Committee meeting, we heard interesting evidence about the future of electric vehicles and the barriers which prevent them from being more widely used.

I asked the Department for Culture Media and Sport minister about the much-loved Vale and Downland Museum in Wantage, which, like many others, has battled against funding cuts to keep up the valuable work they do for the community.

In the Westminster Hall Debate on Environmental Protection and Biodiversity, I had the opportunity to raise the outstanding work of many local groups and organisations. Community action groups including The Letcombe Brooke Project, The Earth Trust, and Sustainable Didcot, need adequate support from the government to continue to protect the countryside that surrounds our constituency.

My team has received a significant amount of casework on student loan repayment plans, and I was able to raise two of these cases in a parliamentary debate. The Treasury Committee have now launched an inquiry into student and graduate finance to identify ways to make it fairer. If you are over 16 you can respond to their survey using this [link](#).

Back in the constituency, I have had the pleasure of meeting Carbon-ion Energy, a tech company developing next-generation energy storage, and Agratas Innovation Lab, a cutting-edge research facility on battery manufacturing. At UTC in Didcot, I spoke with students and staff, answering questions about local and national political activities, and even shared my own curry recipe.

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 please consider 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;

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!

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# News from Afar

## Oxfordshire County Councillor's report



This month has been quite the mix; some progress on the roads, ongoing maintenance follow-ups from the winter weather, and important scrutiny work.

At County Hall last month, I attended another Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, where our role is to provide a critical, evidence-based eye on policy and process. I'm pleased that – despite some resistance – we have now agreed the terms of reference for a working group to conduct a detailed look into the circumstances surrounding one of our SEND schools that was placed into forced academisation. This was a distressing experience for both pupils and parents. It's vital that Oxfordshire County Council learns from this: if there were failings in communication or process, they must be recognised and addressed so that we can strengthen our approach and ensure this can't happen again.

Last month I met Highways Engagement Officers in Blewbury, alongside representatives from the Parish Council, to look at several long-standing issues including damaged and faded signage, road repairs and persistent flooding locations. A number of these have now been scheduled for action, and I'll keep pressing for the remainder to be picked up.

Resurfacing is now complete at Milton Interchange, including the correction of some initial road marking errors at the contractor's expense. However, I've since been picking up several questions from residents about the new road markings. I'm following these up to make sure everything meets the required standard.

As the worst of the winter seems to have passed, I've once again escalated a number of flooding hotspots and areas where the recent freeze-thaw cycle has caused road surfaces to break down. London Road in Blewbury, the A4130 and its junction with Great Western Park, as well as High Street and Westfield in Harwell are all on my list, along with a push for a long-term fix on Hagbourne Hill. The current road width simply isn't suitable for the increased volume of HGVs, so I'm working with officers to find a permanent solution. I know residents are also concerned about the state of the Long Wittenham-Clifton Hampden bridge road. My colleague has escalated this (I take no credit!), and we should see 500 metres of "Bobcat" patching on both approaches to the bridge this month.

As always, all maintenance work is weather-dependent, so please be prepared for dates to shift if conditions worsen. And a reminder: if any patching or resurfacing fails within 12 months, it can be redone free of charge. If you spot a recent repair that hasn't held, please report it on [FixMyStreet](#) and mark it as a "failed repair" – it really does help uphold quality.

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## Resident's queries

Recent queries I've raised on behalf of residents and Parish Councils are given below:

Description	Status	Outcome
Blewbury road safety	In progress	Funding for a puffin crossing at Savages has been submitted for inclusion in forward plan of works (2026/27 financial year)
Harwell roadworks	In progress	Investigation into the Grove Road works is ongoing – I have pushed for more information on this. Still waiting for a meeting. Have raised with Officers in context of roadworks in the area in general not meeting expectations
Road safety issues on A417	In progress	Crossing confirmed at the Winnaway, with other speeding measures to be included as part of the works. Have asked for an update. Included in budget for 26/27
Coffin Way cycle-path	Awaiting response	Requested briefing on previous work re: footpath/potential cycle route between Blewbury and Upton – relevant officer on leave. Meeting date being arranged
Hagbourne Hill improvements	Awaiting response	Query re: safety improvements, kerbing/widening etc. – interim ditches filled with Type1 stone but have asked for more permanent measures to be looked into

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## Transport update

### **A4130 Steventon Lights scheme Phase 2**

From now until April 2026, Trenchard Avenue will be closed. There are multi-way signals on the High Street but two-way traffic will be maintained (in narrow lanes).

### **Harwell Link Road**

There will be multi-way signals until 15<sup>th</sup> April that are likely to cause delays. I'll be keeping a particular eye on the quality of these works, as it's a road that was only surface dressed last year.

### **London Road/Blewbury Hill**

From 31<sup>st</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April there will be a full closure of London Road between Spring Lane, Blewbury and Stream Road, Upton. This is to undertake some extremely necessary patching works. We have been requesting fixes through here for a long time, so please be understanding of the long diversion up Spring Lane, Hagbourne Road and through Didcot. (Also be aware, some more wins coming up in May with resurfacing works for Boham's Road and A417 beyond Blewbury, towards Goring)

Please continue to report any highway defects on [FixMyStreet](#).

## Other news and information

### **Harwell Campus consultation**

Harwell campus is consulting on its long-term plans for the site. There will be a programme of live events, but you can also offer your feedback [here](#).

### **HWRC Booking System**

You now need to book a slot to visit any of the Household Waste Recycling Centres. When visiting, you will need to bring proof of address. If you're unable to sort your recycling in advance, you will be asked to do so onsite in the designated sorting areas. For more information or to book your slot please follow this [link](#).

### **Carers Phone Friends**

This service from Carers Oxfordshire offers support to unpaid carers by connecting them with trained volunteers who understand the challenges of caring. You can find out more [here](#).

### **Councillor Priority Fund**

All County Councillors have access to a pot of funding to support local community projects. Applications are open until November 2026. The minimum grant is £500, and there are rules regarding eligibility of applicants and projects. You can read more [here](#).

# Thames Valley Police Commissioner

Last month I joined Thames Valley Police Officers for the launch of the Force's new Roads Policing Unit (RPU) Tasking Team.

The RPU Tasking Team will deliver a more strategic and targeted approach to road safety across the Thames Valley using data and intelligence to identify areas of greatest risk and highest harm. The team will then proactively deploy to these locations to directly address the behaviours and offences driving those risks. The creation of the RPU Tasking Team will be a major boost to Thames Valley Police's capability to bear down on the dangerous and illegal drivers who put others at risk and criminals using our roads.

In addition to their proactive work, the team will support local policing operations wherever possible and will also target those individuals known to us through intelligence, including those involved in drink or drug driving.

In a two day operation last month to mark the launch of the new team, police officers were joined by other agencies including Immigration Enforcement, HMRC, taxi licensing and Environmental Health. During the operation 16 arrests were made for drug driving and immigration offences along with over a hundred dangerous vehicles taken off the road.

Of course this kind of work is what Roads Policing Officers do each and every day, but the purpose of this team is to be much more proactive. Before, officers would often be called on to respond to collisions on our roads or to assist other officers with arrests. The RPU Tasking Team is intended to focus more dedicated resources to take criminals and dangerous drivers off our roads.



# Wild Oxfordshire

## Wildlife river corridors

Wildlife corridors are living tapestries woven together to produce a natural passage connecting fragmented habitats. These vital tapestries allow animals to safely migrate, find food, reproduce, and adapt to environmental changes while keeping our landscape functioning as a single, connected system rather than a scatter of isolated fragments. Thus, migration is the key behavioural adaptation that allows nature to thrive.

But with increased development of land, through housing, road building, and agricultural activity, the mobility of wildlife has become restricted, areas isolated, and the genetic diversity of our ecosystems reduced.

And this extends to our rivers and waterways. These waterways, which are so key to providing vital habitat for freshwater wildlife, now find themselves confined and carved apart by human pressures. Strengthening both land and river corridors restores the weave of the landscape. It rebuilds the very connections that allow ecosystems to function, species to thrive, and nature to adapt in an ever-changing environment.

### *The call for wilder river corridors*



At the Evenlode Catchment Partnership (a collaboration of over 20 organisations and many more individuals, united by a shared commitment to improving the water environments within the Evenlode catchment, hosted by Wild Oxfordshire), we value the role of these corridors as lifelines that connect segregated habitats, while championing the benefit to communities when local green and blue spaces are cared for.

We have developed innovative approaches to river restoration, such as the creation of wetlands, ponds, and fish passages, alongside natural flood management efforts like the installation of leaky woody dams and storage bunds. These interventions not only restore natural habitats but also reduce flood risks, benefiting local communities.

Additionally, intensive farming practices rely heavily on fertilisers and pesticides, and that dependence comes at a financial cost to farmers, poorer water quality, and shrinking space for wildlife. When fields are pushed to produce more, the landscape loses the complexity and breathing room that rivers, insects, birds, mammals, and soil organisms need to function well.

Sustainable farming offers a different path. Across Oxfordshire and the Evenlode catchment, farmers are being supported to adopt approaches that work with natural processes rather than against them.

### **What's possible?**

Even occasional involvement helps build bigger, better-connected habitats. For example, you could join a local Friends of the River group, help with hedgerow planting days, Riverfly surveying and monitoring, pond creation, or organise litter picks along local streams and rivers. You can also report pollution or blockages using the Environment Agency incident hotline or [website](#), Thames Water's pollution reporting [page](#) or via The Canal & River Trust contact form for fly-tipping.

## **Gardening tips for April**

Spring has officially sprung; dandelions, primroses, and crocuses have all shot up from the once frosty soil! And you'll be pleased to hear that April marks the start of the sowing season - this is where the fun begins!! Here are some top tips on how to bring more wildlife (and a splash of colour while you're at it) into your garden, community green space, or any outdoor patch you can get your hands on – big and small, there's always a job to be done!

### **1. Sow what? Sow everything.**

There is an abundance of fruit and vegetables that can start to be sown in April, from salads leaves to potatoes. Help nature out and give yourself a tasty snack whilst doing so.



Honeysuckle provides nectar for insects, prey for bats, nesting for birds and food for small mammals

### **2. Plant for pollinators**

Now is your time to start planting native plants, flowers, and more. Planting nectar-rich flowers attracts these winged beauties, such as butterflies and bees, and provides a vital food source later in the year. Try plants such as Snake's Head Fritillary, Forget-Me-Not, or a climber like Honeysuckle, which will also attract moths and bats in the summer, provide nectar for insects, prey for bats, nesting for birds and food for small mammals

### **3. Provide water sources**

Don't just feed the birds, give them something to drink! Water features are a must-have for any wildlife-friendly space. From birdbaths to ponds, water sources provide essential habitats, hydration or even a bath for your feathery (and not so feathery) guests.

### **4. Add a compost pile**

Composting really is a benefit to all: by turning kitchen scraps and garden waste into nutrient-rich soil, you're feeding your plants and reducing waste!

- pick a level, well-drained, easy spot to access to use as your compost heap;
- build an airy base using twigs, straw, and small branches.
- layer browns and greens: 2:1 browns-to-greens (by volume).
- add moisture: damp, not soggy.
- turn regularly every 1–2 weeks.

You can then start adding your waste, such as vegetable peels and fruit cores, fresh grass clippings, coffee grounds, tea bags (plastic-free), weeds (but only if they haven't gone to seed), and crushed eggshells.

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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 Revd Louise Butler Revd John Clarke Revd Dr Mark Rhodes-Smith Elaine de Ridder	01235 850267 07837 009730 01235 510073 01235 850267 01235 850267	<a href="mailto:office@churnchurches.co.uk">office@churnchurches.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:revlouiseb@aol.com">revlouiseb@aol.com</a> <a href="mailto:jphclarke@gmail.com">jphclarke@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:mark.rhodes-smith@churnchurches.co.uk">mark.rhodes-smith@churnchurches.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:office@churnchurches.co.uk">office@churnchurches.co.uk</a>
<b>Parish Council</b> Chair Clerk	n/a n/a	<a href="mailto:francoisey@councillors.uptonparishcouncil.gov.uk">francoisey@councillors.uptonparishcouncil.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:parish.clerk@uptonparishcouncil.gov.uk">parish.clerk@uptonparishcouncil.gov.uk</a>
<b>VoWH District Councillors</b> Hayleigh Gascoigne Debra Dewhurst	n/a n/a	<a href="mailto:hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk">hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk</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!