

The new Barkham Bridge under construction



**BARKHAM &
ARBORFIELD GREEN**

Village **INFO**

October/November 2020

Be bright this winter to help avoid becoming a victim of burglary.

Try to make your home look occupied by using timer switches on lights and radios.

Make sure your front door is illuminated by using dusk to dawn lighting that comes on automatically.

Consider purchasing and installing a video doorbell, house alarm or CCTV system.

Close and double lock all your doors and windows when going out or to bed.

Keep all valuables and keys out of sight and away from doors, windows and letterboxes. When not in use, keep electronic car keys in a security pouch to prevent them being scanned by thieves to open and steal your car.

If you have a key safe, ensure it is not visible to people passing by and anyone tampering with it would be clearly visible.

Don't advertise you are away from home on social media. Ask a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on your property or join a Neighbourhood or resident Watch Scheme.

Never leave garages or sheds unlocked, especially if they are connected to your property.

Register your valuables with www.immobilise.com.

For crime updates sign up to www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk.

Please contact us if you have any information relating to burglary in your neighbourhood or if you see anyone acting suspiciously. Report online at www.thamesvalley.police.uk, call us on **101** or in an emergency dial **999**.

Leave a
light on...
and burglars in the dark



Be bright and invest in a
light timer switch this winter

- Close and lock all your doors and windows when going out or to bed
- Keep valuables out of sight
- Don't advertise you are away from home on social media
- Register your valuables with www.immobilise.com
- For crime updates sign up to www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk



www.thamesvalley.police.uk

Contents

Village INFO

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Pam Stubbs (BPC Chairman), Ken Lane (Editorial Consultant) and Ellen Tims (Parish Clerk).

Village INFO and the Parish web site aim to keep residents informed of issues and opportunities affecting the area.

See web site for the Council's meetings (every month except August) at the Arborfield Green Community Centre.

www.barkham-parishcouncil.org.uk

Contact Ellen Tims, Barkham Parish Clerk, for details of advertising and frequency.

Tel: 0118 9762089

Arborfield Green Community Centre, Sheerlands Road, Arborfield, RG2 9ND.

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Office hours: Mon – Thurs, 10.00am – 2.00pm

Please note the office is currently closed due to the ongoing pandemic.

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Highlights



Barkham Bridge Update

Barkham Bridge on target to open Spring 2021



Meet your Police Team

Reporting crime and antisocial behaviour and your local police team



Covid and the Wokingham Hub

One volunteer's experience of working at the Hub during the Spring lockdown



Funding Infrastructure

Your views needed on how BPC could spend CIL money

Making the most of Barkham walks and leave the car at home

There has been a surge in the use of footpaths and walks in our area as people have gone exploring the countryside as part of their daily exercise regime during lockdown and again now as restrictions loom.

Did you know that you can walk all the way from Barkham Road along the Barkham Way through Rooks Nest Wood and on to California Country Park with only having to walk a few hundred metres along the pavement of Barkham Ride?

The walk can then continue via the new Greenway – The California Way - to the FBC Centre, or in the other direction to Hazebrouck Meadows.

You can also do the same walk from School Road using the trail to Barkham Street and join the Barkham Way by the Church. These walks across fields and through woods demonstrate the vision of the ongoing

Greenways project to connect such open areas and existing trails across Wokingham Borough.

On the other side of Barkham, The Coombes offers similar opportunities to roam in wonderful but very different surroundings. BPC produced a map distributed to all residents in 2017 showing the walks. Download a copy at barkham-parishcouncil.org.uk/document-category/walks/

Walking these routes shows why one of the main themes of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is about the countryside and the importance of maintaining the open areas between the various settlements.

The NP is now a material consideration for any planning application in Arborfield and Barkham and should help protect our diverse natural environment – but you you do have to leave the car at home to enjoy it.

NEWS

Exciting improvements to the play area at California Country Park

Residents exploring the wider Barkham area in lockdown may already have discovered California



California Country Park Play Space Design 10/09/20

Country Park and café off the Nine Mile Ride. Now comes news that the play park is having a major overhaul. Once built it will rival the play park at Dinton Country Park and Elm's Field.

Work is due to start this month (October) and will include new equipment, an inclusive sensory and water play area, a new woodland adventure trail and tree houses. The existing play area has been closed for the upgrade.

There will be improved accessibility for everyone, including children and parents/carers, with new surfacing and more seating, along with additional toilets and a new 'changing places' facility.

Construction should be completed in spring 2021.

FREE JOB-SEEKERS SUPPORT CENTRE REOPENS



Wokingham Job Support Centre has relaunched following the temporary closure of its Cornerstone office due to the Covid-19 pandemic

18 SEPTEMBER 2020, WOKINGHAM

The Wokingham Job Support Centre (WJSC), a key, free community service for local job seekers, has reopened its town-centre headquarters at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham, following five months of remote working helping the area's unemployed back into work.

WJSC Chairman Nigel Richards said: *"We have been working hard to ensure we can safely re-open our Centre in Wokingham and I am delighted that we will be able to provide this important service to the community at a time when many people may have concerns about their employment."*

WJSC will now operate by appointment only, due to a need to restrict numbers in the Centre at any one time. To make an appointment or to speak to an advisor, telephone **0118 977 0517** or email jobsearch@wjsc.org.uk.

The organisation will operate in accordance with all current Covid-19 requirements and support from WJSC Advisors will continue to be offered over the phone or via internet platforms, such as Zoom, should job seekers still feel uncomfortable coming into the Centre.

WJSC offers a free blend of coaching, confidential advice, IT support, assistance with interviewing and CV writing techniques, and specific information on working for yourself, job searching online and utilising social media.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Steven Polak (Trustee)

Tel: 07710 124967

email: stevenpolak1@gmail.com

Or **Nigel Richards** (Trustee)

Tel: 07714 323267

email: nigeljohnrichards@outlook.com

ABOUT WJSC:

The Wokingham Job Support Centre is a charitable organisation founded 28 years ago and, in that time, has helped nearly 11,000 local residents back into work, or into better jobs. The Centre, which offers free, confidential advice to job seekers, is open from 10.00am to 2pm Monday to Friday at The Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham, RG40 1UE.

0118 977 0517

jobsearch@wjsc.org.uk

www.wjscadvisors.org.uk



Aerial views of Barkham works site

What is happening at Barkham Bridge?

The new Barkham Bridge is progressing well according to contractors Balfour Beatty. Once completed, the new bridge will allow a continuous flow of two-way traffic removing a significant bottleneck.

In addition to the new bridge, there has been considerable flood prevention work. It includes the storage of excess water as part of the flood risk management strategy.



Works undertaken at Barkham Brook under the new concrete bridge included regrading of the watercourse, installing shingle (small rounded pebbles) and bagwork (consisting of heavy material sewn into bags for protecting the embankment against scour) in the slopes

Balfour Beatty update - works to date

In their latest newsletter the contractors say:

"The main structural works are complete and the focus now is on progressing the carriageway, landscaping including new paving and kerbs and drainage as well as the installation of animal safety measures – to list just a few of the planned works.

With exception of heavy rainfall on the odd few days, the overall recent good weather has enabled us to progress our operational activities in line with our programme of works... we continue to follow Government advice and guidance on social distancing. As it stands, completion of the full scheme is still expected in spring 2021.

Upcoming works:

Previously planned overnight works have so far been taking place during the daytime. Overnight works tend to only be carried out in exceptional circumstances and where we can avoid this, we shall.

This is not always possible due to reasons beyond our control but we aim to do everything practical to keep any intrusion to a minimum and mitigate as far as possible. This includes the installation of acoustic barriers.

Drainage works have started and are planned to continue over the coming weeks. These are our slightly extended working hours which, we hope, will enable us to keep on top of the programme but also help us avoid the need to carry out any overnight works. We wish to extend our thanks to the local community for your patience and support whilst we carry out these necessary works. Please note dates can change at short notice if the required working conditions are impacted on by unforeseen circumstances.

For more information on roadworks you can visit one. network, an online platform which provides the latest information about upcoming works."

Temporary traffic lights will be in operation along the single lane, West and East side of Barkham Brook 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until mid-November, covering a road length of 300m.



Excavation of the eastern swale, as part of the drainage works, near the connection at Barkham Brook



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The greenway coming from Biggs Lane (Arborfield Green) crosses over Commonfield Lane

Help us allocate funds for improving infrastructure

Barkham Parish Council has a sizeable pot of CIL money arising from new housing in the area. So far it amounts to some £130,000. It's a sizeable amount, but the creation of new infrastructure isn't cheap.

There is a fairly wide definition of infrastructure, but BPC will check that any parish scheme meets the criteria. The money can be spent on parish projects, or projects suggested by Wokingham Borough Council. BPC can also put forward projects to WBC that might be co-funded by other CIL recipients and other parishes can put forward their projects that BPC could support.

WBC has suggested that BPC should co-fund part of a new 'greenway' running through Barkham and crossing Bearwood Road on towards Woosehill from Arborfield Cross. This would connect to the network

being developed across Arborfield Green giving access to Bohunt School and Finchampstead. As a part of the latter, a green route was recently opened from Commonfield Lane towards California Country Park and the FBC.

Co-funding the new Greenway project would involve the greater part of the existing BPC CIL 'pot' and, as yet, BPC hasn't seen the final plan.

The Greenway might be a good investment for residents, but there may be other worthy contenders. So BPC is looking for residents' views. Simply use the form opposite to give suggestions for facilities and infrastructure that could be considered.

Forms should be sent to the Parish Clerk by mail (or email). Simply tell us very briefly what should be considered and whom it would benefit.

What is CIL and why is it important?

As with all government initiatives, nothing is as simple as the initial idea would suggest. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) is all part of ‘localism’; the idea of giving people a say in the way their immediate neighbourhood is run and developed.

It is all based on receipts from developers for individual units. The bulk of the money goes to the Borough and a share goes to parish councils, larger if the parish has a Neighbourhood Plan. So, in future, some parishes in Wokingham will be swimming in CIL money and houses (probably unwanted) while others may have neither.

Agreeing spending priorities will always be difficult, but with your help Barkham’s CIL money will at least give something back for the strain that extra housing has imposed.

‘The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) as a planning charge was introduced by the Planning Act

2008 as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. It came into force on 6 April 2010 through the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

Most new development which creates net additional floor space of 100 square metres or more, or creates a new dwelling, is potentially liable for the levy.’

(Source: www.planningportal.co.uk.)



Follow the greenway



CIL Comment Form

Your views are important in choosing future projects.

Please complete (photocopies acceptable) and send or deliver to the Parish Office. You can also email your thoughts as long as the questions are answered as below.

Barkham Parish Council, Arborfield Green Community Centre, Sheerlands Road, Arborfield, RG2 9ND.

Email: clerk@barkhamparishcouncil.org.uk

Suggested project (e.g. a community facility, etc.) No more than 20 words

Location (if appropriate)

Reason for suggestion (ie, better play facility for children, safer road crossing)

Many thanks for taking part. Your views will be taken into account when planning future projects.

Speedwatch set to restart when restrictions lift

Speedwatch checks across the area came to an abrupt halt, after a great start last year, when COVID appeared. In the meantime, lockdown has led to speeding motorists and bikers breaking the law across the country and offenders are still to be heard and seen on our streets.

Community Speed Watch activities cannot resume until Thames Valley Police (TVP) give the go ahead. In the meantime, the Speedwatch group has been using the time to produce an operating manual for volunteers and getting new signs.

Chris Heyliger, a BPC councillor, leads the group and he is pleased that the teams seen on the streets last year are now backed up by additional volunteers. The numbers have increased to ten, all keen to help reduce speeding in the neighbourhood. He says that excessive speed through villages is one of the most common issues raised within communities. It not only impacts on road safety, but also the quality of life of those residents who have to endure it.

The volunteers now have an operating and procedures manual for using the Speed Indication Device (SID). The SID was tested before COVID and performed very well. It has outstanding visibility for and is well suited to deployment as a semi-permanent vehicle activation (VAS) sign.

The aim for the Speedwatch campaign is to promote safer driving by education rather than prosecution. It also plays an important role in collecting data to support possible changes to speed limits and other measures.

Wokingham Borough Council is reviewing speed limits across the borough in their five yearly review. Chris remarks that we have been asked to submit a list of the roads causing us concern as part of the public consultation. Once the hotspots in Barkham are identified, the aim will be to focus activities on those roads and also to consider whether other

forms of intervention (eg, vehicle activated signs -VAS) to slow down the traffic might be useful.

By using GPS technology to identify hotspots across the borough some initial feedback from WBC Highways is expected over the coming months

The formal review of the speed limits by the borough and police will take time to complete. Any changes need to be based on evidence of current speeds and accident history before deciding whether a new speed limit is appropriate.

Some of this data can be obtained by WBC by deploying rubber strips across the road but we could assist, says Chris, by using a dedicated speed data recorder (SDR).

These devices are easy to instal on lamp posts and offer quick download and evaluation of data. Morelock, the Speedwatch supplier, has offered the group a trial unit which will soon be tested alongside WBC's rubber strip technology. If successful BPC will be considering purchasing a device.

In another development, yellow 'Speed Watch Area' signs will be fixed below the five green Gateway Signs at the boundaries of the parish. These will be a further reminder to motorists to observe the speed limits.



Speed is not the only consideration. Safe crossings are also needed especially for children going to school. There are currently discussions with WBC to see if Highways can put a crossing on Biggs Lane in the vicinity of the new primary school, and, possibly,

others on Commonfield Lane, in the vicinity of the Greenway from Finchampstead and also in the vicinity of Waterman's as an integral part of the FBC to Bohunt cycle track.



The SID in operation on Biggs Lane

Volunteers still needed

Speedwatch could always do with more volunteers. If you are interested please contact Ellen, the parish clerk at

clerk@barkham-parishcouncil.org.uk

Chris, or one of the existing volunteers, will be more than happy to explain how it all works and what your commitment might be.

During lockdown there was a welcome reduction in traffic volumes and more pedestrians and cyclists on the roads. But for some motorists it has just been an opportunity to speed excessively and dangerously.

NEWS

Are you eligible for eco upgrades?

Wokingham Borough Council's executive recently approved the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and local ECO Flex 'Help to Heat' scheme.

This new green initiative aims to help eligible residents improve the energy efficiency of low performing homes with a range of initiatives such as loft or cavity wall insulation. And the best part is that the improvements are usually either free or heavily subsidised as they are funded through a national levy on major energy suppliers such as British Gas, EDF Energy, EON, Npower, Scottish Power and SSE.

In addition to helping local home owners access the scheme the council intends to use ECO funding to improve low performing council homes to help benefit local tenants as well.

To qualify for support resident's will need to meet certain eligibility criteria and have their homes

current energy performance surveyed by the council's ECO scheme partner, Insta Group Ltd, to assess whether improvements can be made in line with the scheme requirements.

National ECO eligibility criteria includes those in receipt of a range of benefits such as Universal Credit or the Personal Independence Payment (PIP). However, by adopting the local ECO Flex 'Help to Heat' element alongside this, the council will also be able to increase eligibility criteria to include a wider range of residents.

Details of the wider eligibility criteria, the types of improvements available and how to apply for support, will be shared when the council ECO Help to Heat scheme launches later in October.

You can find out more about the ECO scheme on the Ofgem website at:

www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-programmes/eco



ONLY CALL 999 WHEN IT'S AN EMERGENCY

NOT AN EMERGENCY? CALL 101

NON-EMERGENCY? REPORT ONLINE

#ThinkBeforeYouDial
WWW.THAMESVALLEY.POLICE.UK

NOT AN EMERGENCY?
REPORT ONLINE
thamesvalley.police.uk

IF A CRIME IS IN PROGRESS OR A LIFE IS IN DANGER, CALL 999



Report crime to the Police

All non-emergency crime reports and enquiries can be made online at:

www.thamesvalley.police.uk

or over the phone by calling **101**

Some reports are best directed to your local authority:

- Fly-tipping
- Abandoned vehicles
- Nuisance noise
- Litter in public place

Details for your local authority can be found at:

www.gov.uk/find-local-council

Think before you dial

When you find yourself in need of contacting the police, do you know the best way to get in touch?
999 should only be used in emergency situations; when a life is in danger or a crime is happening right now.
To speak to the police about anything else, you should call 101 or contact us online.

Around 7,000 hours of our call handlers' time each year is spent dealing with issues that aren't police matters.
Our most common misdirected calls can be found below along with who should be contacted:

Abandoned Vehicles

An abandoned vehicle is one that has not been moved or attended to in a long time. These can cause a nuisance or an eye sore to those living near it. Unless the vehicle appears to have been stolen or used in a crime, you should report them to your local council.

Nuisance Noise

Nuisance noise is any loud or persistent noise that causes you ongoing concern or affects your quality of life. Your local council should be your first contact for reporting nuisance noise as this is usually dealt with by their Environmental Health team. However, if the situation feels like it may get heated or violent as a result of the noise we will intervene.

Fly Tipping

Fly tipping is the illegal dumping of large items of waste. It is a civil offence to fly tip and so reports should be made to your local council. Reports of fly tipping in progress, with the offenders on scene should be reported to the police on 101.

Broken Down Vehicles

Unless a vehicle has broken down in a dangerous position, for example in the middle of a lane on a busy road, you should contact a breakdown or recovery service.

Civil Advice

We can only answer questions and offer advice on issues that relate to criminal offences. Citizens Advice is dedicated to offering free advice and guidance on a range of issues such as obtaining civil orders, advice on housing and how to proceed with any civil disputes over payment, for example a poor quality refurbishment in your home.

Still not sure who to speak to? The independent website Ask the Police, is full of information about what to do and who to contact about a wide range of issues.

INFORMATION TEMPLATE

Here's a reminder of important information to capture when reporting antisocial behaviour

TIME: _____ DATE: _____

LOCATION: _____

DESCRIPTION OF THE OFFENDER(S) – height, build, ethnicity, hair colour:

TYPE OF CLOTHING WORN BY THE OFFENDER(S) – colour, distinguishing features:

REGISTRATION NUMBER – for any vehicles involved _____

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENT _____

COSAS v1.0a18

Information to note when reporting a crime

YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAM

Shinfield, Swallowfield, Spencers Wood, Riseley, Arborfield and Barkham



Inspector
Alastair Lloyd



Sergeant
Simon Botham



PC
Richard Probert



PC
Monika
Taranczewska



PCSO
Karen Bird



PCSO
Vicky Lendrum



PCSO
Chris Scullin



PCSO
Hannah Millington

**Your neighbourhood policing team are working on
issues identified by the local community and the police**

To contact them call: 101

This is a non-emergency number

Alternatively, email them on:

FieldsNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

Neighbourhood Policing

Working in partnership to make our community safer



School Road closure proposal debate

There has been a lively debate about the proposals to close School Road to through traffic. The rationale for this suggestion is to maximise the benefits of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road, which is on target to open in the Autumn, and reduce traffic flows through Arborfield Cross village centre.



School Road is no longer a 'B' road and would be closed to through traffic under the proposals

Clearly there are merits for Barkham residents living in School Road with respect to volume of traffic and a reduction in HGVs. However, no consideration has yet been given to how this would impact residents living in Langley Common Road who would see an increase in traffic volume including more HGVs.

Unfortunately, Barkham Parish Council (BPC) only became aware of these proposals very late in the day and was in a somewhat invidious position of having to submit its views via the formal consultation rather than being partied to the development of the scheme.

One of the core duties of any parish council is to represent the best interests of its Parishioners and here BPC had a proposal that clearly benefited

one group (those living on School Road) at the apparent expense of another (those living on Langley Common Road).

BPC sought the views of both these groups as well as proponents of the idea. Comments were received from residents in both roads and two residents from School Road were present for the virtual council meeting on 8th Sep 2020 and gave their views during the open session*

At the meeting, the council concluded that before any closure of School Road could be progressed further, a number of recommendations should be considered which included:

- **The negative impact on Langley Common Road should be assessed and mitigated by a number of measures including extending the 30mph speed limit along the full length of Langley Common Road, enforcing this by the installation of vehicle activated signs (VAS) and restricting access to HGVs.**
- **Trials should be undertaken to deter HGVs approaching and entering School Road to avoid the need for them to turn or reverse once they encounter the closed road.**

BPC's full response to the consultation has been included in the minutes of the above meeting which can be viewed at barkham-parishcouncil.org.uk/document-category/meetings-and-minutes/.

The debate highlighted common concerns about speeding and congestion expressed by residents throughout the parish. See Chris Heyliger's comment in his article on page 10.

**Residents are always welcome at BPC meetings whether held virtually or not and can express their views during the public session. Complex questions should be raised in advance with the Clerk or a full answer may have to be provided at the following meeting.*



Barkham Newsletter

from the Barkham Village Residents Association

<https://www.barkham.org.uk>

Twitter: @BarkhamVRA Facebook: <https://gid.uk/BVRAF>

The Barkham Village Residents Association has been in existence since 1987, it was set up to raise awareness of the threat of development in The Coombes, though protection and conservation continues to be of primary concern its activities have expanded to encourage and promote activities within the Parish and to foster communication between members of the community.

It is managed by General Committee and membership is open to all persons who share the objects and aims of the Association. Prior to the onset of Covid-19 the Social committee would organize a number of events throughout the year such as Quiz night, Skittles with fish supper, Barn dance, Easter egg hunt, summer party and the very popular Carols in the Park. Of course, these events have had to be put on hold until the current health crisis has been brought under control.

The quarterly newsletter is distributed throughout the parish and highlights useful information and events happening within the community including updates

from the council and planning committee. it also provides a platform for local groups, associations, charities and individuals to publicize their meetings, events and services.

It is run by volunteers and we are always looking for people who would like to get involved. Our website has all the details how to get in touch with the BVRA, we also have a Facebook discussion page and Twitter. We would love to hear from you and look forward to seeing you at one of social events in the future.

Barkham Village Residents Association

Keep an eye on development proposals

Sign up to receive the Barkham Village Development Watch email alerts from BVRA which provide early news on planning applications

www.barkham.org.uk/uncategorised/keep-in-touch-with-bvra

Remembrance Day Parade Changes

Having had advice from Royal British Legion and detailed discussions with other Authorities based on Government direction and rulings, it is clear that our Remembrance Sunday here in Arborfield and Barkham will be substantially different to previous years.

Every aspect of our normal Remembrance Sunday event is clearly impacted by the ongoing challenges with COVID-19 and although it is critically important to take time to remember and reflect for all those who have served our country and their families, we must never put people's own health and wellbeing in a position of risk doing so.

Therefore, with huge regret we must say that the parade elements of the event will not take place this year.

Similarly, at this stage the mass gathering of between 1500 & 2000 people together would be irresponsible – therefore again with regret the full public remembrance service will not proceed.

It is hoped that a very limited wreath laying ceremony can occur on the 8th around 11am. Numbers of those laying wreaths will be limited to allow for social distancing, and will be dependent on the wider COVID Rules and regulations at that time. We are also provisionally planning to live stream the wreath laying so those who would normally be in attendance but are unable to be there for public health reasons can still feel part of the remembrance process.

To find out more on the plans for Remembrance Sunday visit www.barkham-parishcouncil.org.uk/notices/

Wokingham to Turkey and beyond

Following the COVID Lockdown, Wokingham members of the U3A cycle groups were unable to cycle together. So the answer was for each member individually to cycle over 28 days as a challenge to see how far they could go?

It was not a competition. Each of the 18 cyclists would cycle to the best of their ability. By adding up each individual target the total came to 2300 miles, which virtually would take them from Wokingham to Ankara. Chris Heyliger, a BPC councillor, says: *"We aimed to get sponsors to raise money for NHS Charities together. We now had little excuse not to cycle and were raring to go!"*

Chris and Judith Neuhofer, former Barkham Parish Clerk, started the challenge on 9 May, a lovely sunny day with a temperature of 20C. Chris says: *"The wonderful weather and virtually car free roads helped*

us tremendously. How nice it was to be out and about on our bikes and to see so many others doing the same, a boom to cycling, long may it last!"

The group explored near and far, and as Chris says *"Apart from helping to raise funds for our great NHS, who were doing such an incredible job, it was a wonderful opportunity to be outside and get lots of fresh air and exercise during this very unusual time."*

At the end of the four weeks, each cyclist had far exceeded their individual targets, and as a group they cycled almost 4000 miles, the distance from Wokingham to Mecca and collectively raised around £6500 for NHS Charities Together.



Chris and Judith Neuhofer starting the challenge

NEWS

Unwanted bikes get a new home

Bikes that have been left at the re3 recycling centres by residents are being given a new lease of life.

WBC's 'My Journey' team have been working in partnership with re3 and local bike maintenance service Dr Bike to collect any bikes from the centres that could be serviced and safely brought back to their former glory to use again by other eager cyclists.

Last year over 4,000 bikes left at both re3 recycling centres, in Longshot Lane, Bracknell and Island Road, Reading, have been reused instead of being sent to landfill. This benefits the environment and generates savings through the reduction of disposal costs.

A number of these pre-owned bicycles, which have all been professionally safety checked and sanitised, have been donated to My Journey to use during their bike training sessions, from their balance bike training for

2 to 4 year olds to the over 60s led cycle rides. The re3 bikes are also being used as loan bikes for adults who are looking to switch into safer and greener ways to get to work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another organisation to benefit from the use of the recycled bikes is Sue Ryder .

Jane Bullen, retail sales manager at Sue Ryder, says: *"The bikes donated by re3 are a fantastic way for us to raise funds for our palliative, bereavement and neurological support. As the bikes are donated to us, we are able to sell them at a reasonable price to make sure cycling is as accessible as possible for our community."*

For further information about the council's cycle training and My Journey team visit www.myjourneywokingham.com

An update from Barkham Ward Councillor - John Kaiser

As many of you will know the council's Shute End civic offices have been closed to the public as part of the council's efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and this will continue for the foreseeable future . The council have been actively reviewing Government announcements and instructions daily so that we can continue to deliver services, while at the same time protecting you the residents and staff. This advice has caused us to make some changes to the way we deliver our service. The council will try to run services as normal where possible, but there may be some delays.

Staff are working from home to prevent the illness spreading. This means that we will try to email you where possible, or there may be a delay when we post letters to residents. We will work hard to make sure that documents you post to us are scanned on to our system as quickly as possible to minimise delays.

We know this is an extremely difficult time for people and are seeking to provide relief and support wherever necessary. The Government has confirmed a £500 million hardship fund will provide Council Tax relief for vulnerable people and households to help those affected most by coronavirus.

Working age residents supported through our Council Tax Reduction Scheme will receive up to an additional £150 reduction to their bill. These changes will be automatically applied – you do not need to do anything further. Food distribution was one part of the overall Wokingham Borough Community Response, which also included wellbeing checks, and befriending service. It has been key in helping support residents with their food needs. However, during the past few weeks, the support required has reduced as more people are able to access food via other routes, such as supermarket online click and collect or through some local

charities which have programmes to help residents with their shopping.

Since March, more than 4,600 food parcels have been delivered supporting more than 1,885 people across the borough. It was a huge team effort with more than 106 volunteers and 12 redeployed borough council staff taking on critical roles at the hub to ensure the health and wellbeing of our residents were supported. From taking the initial referrals to packing food parcels and delivering essential supplies to hundreds of households, it was a mammoth task to organise.

Some 34 per cent of parcels were delivered to the over 70s, with more than 200 shielding households receiving weekly food parcels. On one day alone almost 115 food parcels were delivered by a dedicated team of volunteer drivers. And some 30 per cent of initial referrals required immediate support, and food and essential goods were delivered on the same day.

Although the food distribution has stopped it does not mean care and support to residents will stop. Wokingham Borough Council will continue to work with the voluntary sector as well as town and parish councils to provide a COVID-19 response.



Citizens Advice Wokingham will continue to provide the 'front door' for the community response. They take calls and emails from residents and will put them in contact with the people and organisations who can help.

Residents can call Citizens Advice Wokingham on **0300 330 1189** or visit the Citizens Advice Wokingham website at: citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk/

covid-19 testing capacity issues

There is a national shortage of Covid-19 testing capability and Wokingham Borough Council is taking a twin approach to help local people until the issue is resolved.

The council has been lobbying Central Government for adequate testing locally and will continue to push for local sites and sufficient capacity. But, with demand currently exceeding supply, it is important that people call NHS 111 if they believe they have Covid symptoms and seek advice before requesting a test

Executive member for Adult Social Care Cllr Charles Margetts said: *"This is a national issue and we have written to our local MPs and raised this issue through all the appropriate channels and will continue to do so until it is resolved."*

Demand for testing is increasing and priority is being given to areas of concern (those with more Covid cases), which means areas with a lower number of cases (such as Wokingham Borough) are having less capacity.

Some of the increase in demand is being caused by people seeking tests when they do not need to, and Public Health teams are calling on residents to get tested only if they have symptoms or have been told to by the local authority or Public Health.

Berkshire has lower case numbers than elsewhere in the country and (as this was being written) over 97% of tests on Berkshire residents last week were negative. We at the council have purchased an emergency supply of tests which will be used in situations where school or care homes cannot get timely tests to ensure outbreaks are controlled in these environments.

The national guidance on when to seek a test is: If you have any symptoms of Covid, you should isolate and seek a test by phoning 119 or booking online. The symptoms to look out for are fever, a continuous cough and loss of taste or smell. If you do not have symptoms you do not need a test unless you are part of a group of health and care workers who receive regular testing.

If you have been identified as a contact of a case, then you should isolate for 14 days. Fourteen days covers the incubation and infectious periods of the infection. You do not need a test unless you have symptoms but if you do have a test and it comes back negative, you still need to isolate for the whole period. The same applies if you are isolating having returned from overseas. The government has announced a scheme which supplies financial help for anybody where isolating meaning they cannot work and you should apply to the council if you find yourself in that situation as the scheme will be operated by Wokingham Borough Council.

03444 111 445. Phone lines are staffed Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm and Saturday, 9am to 1pm.

The foodbanks in Wokingham and Woodley are still welcoming donations for local people in need. To donate food to the Wokingham and Woodley foodbanks visit: wokingham.foodbank.org.uk/ and directory.wokingham.gov.uk/kb5/wokingham/directory/service.page?id=6AUGlnxiwPU

Housing Numbers

Wokingham Borough Council is asking residents to imagine what the borough would be like if the Government's proposal to double the number of homes built in the borough each year goes ahead. The council is extremely concerned about the impact of 1600 new homes every year would have on the borough's infrastructure.

If the Government go ahead with their proposal to double the borough's housing numbers, our system of planning for new homes strategically just would not be able to cope. We would be playing catch up with the infrastructure for years to come.

We have created a parliamentary petition asking the Government to re-think this proposal. You can find it on the parliamentary petition website by searching for 'housing target' or by visiting petition.parliament.uk/petitions/548391.

We have built 10,000 new homes in the borough in the last 10 years, but these houses were planned and continue to deliver the infrastructure the borough needs.

We have seven new primary schools in the borough either already open, under construction or on the way, and a new secondary school open at Bohunt in Arborfield Green. We have five major new roads, the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road already open, the Arborfield Cross Relief Road opening in October, the North Wokingham Distributor and Winnersh Relief Roads mostly open and nearing completion and the South Wokingham Distributor Road and the Nine Mile Ride extension coming in the next couple of years.

We are investing £170million in new public open space, play areas and parks and £45million in new sports facilities. We have five new community centres coming and £420million worth of affordable housing. But, that is all about how we have been building in the past, based on our last local plan, which acted as a roadmap of how to develop the borough responsibly, planning new communities in four strategic locations across the borough all with the infrastructure to support them.

Wokingham Borough Council has been urging residents to respond to the Government's proposal that would see the number of houses built each year in Wokingham Borough more than double. The consultation, which closed on the 1 October, on the Government's proposal would see over 1600 new homes a year imposed on Wokingham Borough. This is more than double the current figure. See the parliamentary petition by visiting petition.parliament.uk/petitions/548391 or visiting the parliamentary petitions webpage and searching for 'housing target'. What the government is proposing is outrageous – we have been playing according to the rules for years, building thousands of new homes in Wokingham

Borough. We have had 10,000 new homes in the borough in the last 10 years and now the government want us to more than double that – they want us to build 25,000 new homes in the next 15 years. That would be like building two new towns the size of Wokingham every 15 years!

We have spoken directly to the secretary of state for housing Robert Jenrick about the disastrous impact this would have on Wokingham. To get him to really listen to us, we need you our residents to contact their MP and Robert Jenrick himself,

On a final note, Covid continues to be the major concern of residents and as schemes such as furlough and government support for small business run out it is important if you need help you contact Citizens Advice Wokingham on **0300 330 1189** or visit the Citizens Advice Wokingham website at: citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk/

If you are finding it difficult to pay your council tax email the council at ctax@wokingham.gov.uk so we can work with you on a more manageable repayment plan. The council will still accept calls on **0118 974 6000**, but there is likely to be some interruptions to the service.

Finally, there are some who think money is more important than anything else. Granted life is difficult without it, but if this pandemic teaches us anything it is that there are much more important things in this life such as friends family and community. I for one will value them more than I have done in the past and will take nothing for granted.

I just want to get back to normal, whatever that looks like, as quickly as we can.

Stay safe everyone.

John Kaiser

Member for Barkham

Deputy Leader

Executive member for finance and housing

Wokingham Borough council



WBCH 'Supermarket' (part of) – errily deserted on last day

Wokingham Borough Community Hub - volunteering during lockdown

Rob Rowe, a former BPC councillor and Barkham resident, along with over 700 people across the borough, earlier this year put his name forward to the Wokingham Volunteer Centre, not long before the lockdown commenced. He hoped, he says, “that I might be able to assist our local community in some way.” This is the story of the remarkable way that it all came together under the aegis of WBC, First Days charity, Citizens Advice (Wokingham) and its ‘One front door’ for supporting residents, the Wokingham Volunteer Centre and other agencies.

In all honesty, living alone, and recently retired, I wanted to help keep myself occupied for my own well-being too, rather than stare at four walls for most of the day when I decided to volunteer.

The Wokingham Volunteer Centre perform a really useful role as a gateway to so many of the wider community’s volunteering requirements, where they help steer people according to the prevailing needs, volunteer skills and wishes. Such that each

organisation need not have to organise this by themselves, with all the duplicated effort that would entail, especially at a time of national crisis.

As it turned out they asked me initially to help with prescription fulfilment, and then also with several food distribution shifts per week, at the Wokingham Borough Community Hub that had temporarily taken over the St. Crispin’s Leisure Centre. Where I duly reported and was equipped with a hub T shirt, volunteer picture ID and brought up to speed on all the hygiene and logistic procedures to be rigorously followed on site.

The Wokingham Borough Community Hub was instigated, within a week in early March, by the voluntary sector meeting with Wokingham Borough Council to discuss how to work together during the crisis, led by the First Days charity in conjunction with the Link Visiting Scheme and Citizens Advice.

The aim was to provide a vital service in support of those vulnerable and isolating at home, through

health or circumstance, with weekly supplies of essential food and household items to sustain them through the lockdown period. And in the process raise awareness of the Link Visiting Scheme in support of an older generation who may feel particularly isolated and lonely at this time.



Volunteer about to load car

Beyond those known to be at risk, already on the council's register, anyone newly needing assistance would be asked to contact Citizen's Advice Wokingham as a 'front door' to assess their needs and refer them, as appropriate, to Wokingham Borough Community Hub or other support services.

Volunteers at the hub also had the opportunity to assist the Wokingham Food Bank with some of their deliveries too, as no one could visit them during lockdown.

All of the above had been very slickly organised at short notice, growing from ground zero at the beginning of March to a logistics exercise of such scale and complexity to serve at its peak, around Easter, some 1400 people (nearly 1% of the borough's population) requiring up to 100+ deliveries a day, six days a week, to be made.

This entailed creating a mini supermarket at the St Crispin's sports complex, complete with loaned trolleys and donated carrier and cool bags. There were over seventy hub volunteers, and Wokingham Borough Council's Sport and Leisure Team, who managed the huge daily deliveries into the hub. Deliveries had to be manually unloaded and then either stored around the facility, on an array of product specific tables, or kept chilled in a long line of fridges, along with additional fresh fruit

and vegetables kindly donated from various parish allotment groups.

Added to this, the community at large generously offering quantities of magazines, DVDs and games to be turned into entertainment packs. These, having been quarantined for three days in the squash courts, were provided to help distract those sheltering at home from climbing the walls!

All made possible by the sterling efforts of the hard-pressed hub management team behind the scenes, who built from scratch the logistics spreadsheets and warehouse processes, to daily order dozens of products lines against these collective household needs.

These supplies then all had to be stock picked into individual deliveries profiled against the demographics of the household for a balanced diet and any specific needs. Made up into individually numbered consignments of delivery bags, all grouped by parish for efficient handling.

In turn these consignments were passed to the shifts of hub drivers to organise their delivery routes across the borough. Stretching from the boundaries of Hampshire to the south and across to Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire to the north, an area of nearly 180 sq. kms comprising over 170,000 souls ... all in all a vast undertaking delivered by the whole volunteer community pulling together.

While mobile mapping technology greatly eased the delivery route planning, it struggled to keep up with the house building onslaught around Wokingham. This often required a postcode clue to be turned into a map reference via the Royal Mail web site, just for it to be depicted as a 'green field' on certain well-known mapping apps.

My knowledge of the borough's geography certainly improved no end over the 850 miles driven and nearly 200 deliveries made until we were all stood down in late June. Having visited areas I'd never explored, or in some cases even knew existed, despite the thirty odd years I've lived in the area.

I now look back and marvel at how such a diverse cross-section of volunteers from charities, councillors, driving instructors, fitness trainers, hairdressers, homemakers and logistics managers to name just a few, along with retirees like myself, suddenly came together as a '*flash mob*' to make this happen. It was an intense few months with the days, and weeks, rolling together such that I simply noted the passage of time by my lengthening hair.

While rewarding to see the smiles on faces when making deliveries, there were also some emotional, and thought provoking, moments with families who were bearing the painful brunt of this dreadful virus. Where you instinctively just wanted to give them a supportive hug. Of course, the very last thing possible, kind words were the all too hollow alternative to offer ... at a distance.



WBCB Picking & Dispatch Area – also deserted on last day

I'm thankful to have played a small part in working with all these wonderful people and, when conditions allow, hope to meet up with them again to renew friendships and raise a glass for all those we helped kept supplied and to reflect on those less fortunate that we met in the course of our travels.

With a still, rather uncertain, future ahead of us, and if your circumstances allow, please consider getting in touch with the Wokingham Volunteer Centre (wokinghamvolunteercentre.org.uk) to see if there is a role you might play in supporting our community in a time of need.

Rob Rowe

Village INFO

www.barkham-parishcouncil.org.uk has a host of information about police, Drs contacts, etc under local information and directory. A few of the contacts are reproduced here. Let Ellen Tims (Parish Clerk) know if you would like a local organisation, club etc, to be highlighted here in a future issue.

Barkham Parochial Charities

providing help to those in need - Malcolm Clark via Parish Clerk

Barkham Pre School

www.barkhampreschool.net

Barkham St James Church

www.achurchnearyou.com

BVRA residents' association

www.barkham.org.uk

Barkham Village Store

01189 799131. barkhamvillagestore@hotmail.co.uk

1st Wokingham Beaver, Cub and Scout Group

www.firstwokingham.org.uk

The Bull at Barkham

www.thebullbarkham.com

The Coombes CE Primary School.

www.thecoombes.com

Wokingham Job Support Centre

www.wjsc.org.uk

Wokingham Citizens Advice Bureau

www.citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk

Wokingham Cancer Care Trust

www.wdctt.org

Shine WBC activities for the over 50s

www.wokingham.gov.uk

Reach Wokingham

www.reachwokingham.com



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