

Focus on Parish Councils – Monthly Update

June 2026

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Dear parish councillors and residents,

Please find below a range of updates. I have been active in my first month as a highways “super-user” and have reported over 30 road defects to date; I am starting to see fixes on my reports now as well which is heartening.



OCC News

1. OCC Leadership Changes

There have been a suite of changes at the County Council, with Tim Bearder now the Leader of the council, and a significant change in cabinet makeup. Tim is a close colleague who I’ve had the pleasure of working with in cabinet over this last year and is passionate and energetic about improving services. More detail on cabinet posts can be found on the OCC website.

2. Highways

Highway repairs continue to catch up with the backlog – a new infographic showing progress over time is shown opposite.

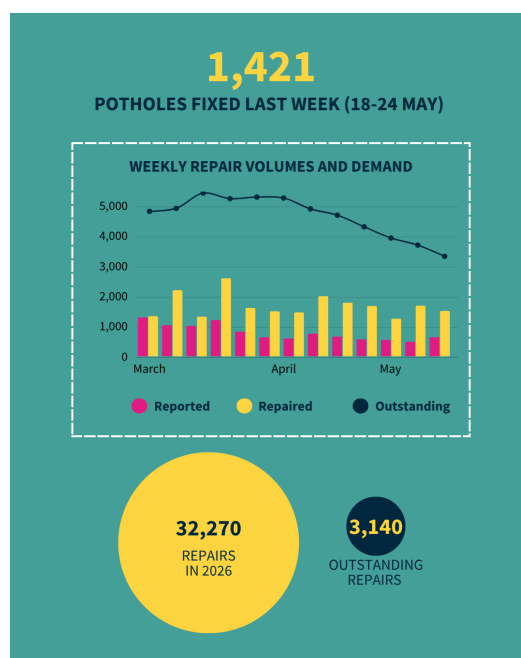
The 2026 surface dressing programme started on 7 April and will run until 20 June. It will eventually treat 1,031,331 sqm of road to prolong its life by 8-10 years and prevent pothole formation.

Areas locally with work being carried out include the A4130 from Bix to west of Nuffield, Cox’s lane in Stoke Row, Watlington Street at Park Corner, the road between Cuxham and Watlington, and Couching Street and Shirburn Road in Watlington.

3. Kidlington Waste Site Update

The Environment Agency has updated its web page with information on the progress they are making. Clearance of the northern section of the site has been completed, and waste removal is progressing as planned.

It has also published the latest set of water quality results from samples taken on 18



March, which can also be viewed online.

<https://engageenvironmentagency.uk.engagementhq.com/thames-regulated-industry-sites>

4. Purchase of Castle Quarter Leasehold

This month OCC completed the purchase of the long leasehold interest in the Castle Quarter, Oxford. This puts us in a stronger position to unlock the potential of a site that has seen many years of underinvestment and gives us more influence over how it will develop in the years ahead.

This also allows us to work more effectively with partners and investors to support regeneration in a more joined-up way. Crucially, the agreement will provide a steady income stream, which will go directly towards supporting frontline services at a time when budgets are under real pressure. Moving from a position of limited influence to one where the council can provide stewardship will be essential if the Castle Quarter is to become a thriving destination once again.

The Castle Quarter sits at a key point between the railway station, Westgate and Oxford's historic core. Bringing the lease back into council stewardship strengthens how regeneration is shaped across the west of the city and helps align future development with the transformation already underway around the station and plans to re-imagine County Hall as a hotel. Together, this strengthens the western arrival into Oxford and delivers long-term benefits for the city centre and public finances.

5. Water Safety

Please can you share an important safety message with residents across your communities, particularly families with children and young people.

When the weather is hot, it's natural for people to want to cool off and spend more time outdoors. Sadly, there have already been a number of water-related deaths across the country during the recent hot weather, including here in Oxfordshire.

Open water can look safe, but it often isn't. Cold water shock, strong currents, hidden hazards and sudden drops can catch people out very quickly, even experienced swimmers. These risks are often underestimated, and every year they lead to serious incidents, particularly involving young people.

With more free time during the summer holidays, it's important we help children and young people understand these dangers and make safer choices.

Our advice is:

- Do not swim in rivers, lakes, quarries or reservoirs.
- Choose safe, supervised places such as swimming pools or lifeguarded areas.
- Never jump or dive into open water.
- Keep back from edges and unstable banks.
- Look out for friends and avoid encouraging risky behaviour.
- If you see someone in trouble in the water, your instinct might be to jump in to try and help. But entering the water yourself is dangerous and can put you at risk too.

Instead, remember **Phone, Float, Throw**:

- Phone 999 to get help – do not enter the water yourself
- Float encourage the person in the water to float on their back to keep their airway clear
- Throw something that floats to help them stay above water
- You can find more advice and resources online.

We'd really value your help in sharing this advice in your communities, in whatever way works best locally. It can also help to prompt conversations with children and young people about the risks of open water, particularly during hot weather.

Our firefighters see first-hand how quickly these situations can unfold, often with little warning.

6. Consultations

There are a range of consultations open on <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>,

Consultation on a draft interim policy for community benefit contributions and community shared ownership for low carbon energy projects in Oxfordshire

We are asking for residents' views on a proposed policy that will guide how communities benefit from private, for-profit, new renewable energy projects such as solar farms, wind turbines and battery storage.

As Oxfordshire moves towards cleaner energy, it's important local people and communities benefit from hosting clean energy projects in their area, have a say in how financial and other contributions are used and can take part in shared ownership opportunities.

Feedback will help us improve the policy before it is finalised. The survey will be open until 15 June.

Adult social care contributions policy consultation

We are asking for residents' views on some suggested changes to charges for some statutory and non-statutory adult social care services. No decisions have been made yet. This is a consultation, and we want to hear what you think.

These proposed changes would apply to people who receive care at home. The consultation is live until 21 June.

East West Rail consultation

East West Rail (EWR) is running a route-wide public consultation from 14 April to 9 June 2026 on updated proposals. The consultation focuses on changes since winter 2024/25, with particular relevance to Oxfordshire at London Road, Bicester, and Oxford Parkway.

During this consultation period EWR is holding several events:

- Three online webinars on 20 April, 6 May and 2 June.

- An in-person event at the King's Centre, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES on 12 May, 11am-6pm.

This is likely the final public consultation before EWR submits its development consent application in summer/autumn 2027, making it an important opportunity for the public to share views while the proposals are still being developed. We will be submitting a response to this consultation.

For more information, visit EWR's website.

7. Funding

I have made my allocations under the SODC councillor grant scheme, which are in the process of being awarded.

There is an OCC councillor priority fund scheme open – the link is below. Any applications need to be discussed with me before submission under the scheme rules.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/communities/councillor-priority-fund>

Parish Round-Up

I hope to attend Parish Councils in person as regularly as I can. Below are some notes on issues raised at recent meetings:

- Watlington – relief road continued planning delays, CIL funding, Church St/Chapel St/New Road.
- Britwell Salome – expansion of the 20mph area raised in parish meeting, road conditions.
- Checkendon – review of application for extension of 20mph limit; flooding issue by pub
- Stoke Row – road conditions, lotting.
- Pishill with Stonor – mobile phone coverage with retirement of analogue phonelines, road condition.
- Cuxham – Chalgrove New Town and removal of bypass proposal, HGV traffic (including construction traffic), condition of roads.
- Nuffield – Speeding enforcement, speed limits on the A4130, condition of Ewelme junction next to May's farm cottages, Fred's field.
- Shirburn – 20mph limit request, chicane (alternatives after recent trial).
- Swyncombe – issue with unpermitted development on lotted land.
- Nettlebed – community sports facilities, cycle path from Nettlebed to Bix.
- Rotherfield Peppard – repeated issue with drain cover, road conditions, junction of Stoke Row Road/Gallowstree Road.
- Highmoor – flooding issue on Holly close