
STANFORD IN THE VALE PARISH COUNCIL



NEWS UPDATE April 2021

It is with great reluctance that I have had to accept Simon Jackson's resignation from his role within the Parish Council. Simon was first elected to the Parish Council in 2011 and since then has turned his skills and attention to many different areas of village life, particularly in relation to our recreation and leisure facilities and has spent countless hours contributing to bringing the QEII Recreation Field project to life. Simon has been a real tour de force, and his selfless dedication to improving village life for all will be sorely missed.

Parish Council Vacancy

In light of the above, there is currently a casual vacancy within the Parish Council which will be filled by co-opting a new member. If you'd like to find out more about what being a councillor entails, please reach out to any of our existing councillors who would be more than happy to discuss this with you. Alternatively, if you would like to be considered for this voluntary role, then please contact the Clerk by Sunday 18 April, 2021

(clerk@stanfordinthevalepc.co.uk).

Skate Park

Further to our previous newsletter and the issues with petty vandalism we had been seeing, it is particularly disappointing to find that the steel safety fencing installed around some damaged items at the Skatepark has been wrecked overnight on 16/17 March. Perhaps your family members are particularly frustrated that the ramps are fenced off (do you know where they were during that evening?), or maybe you saw something suspicious – if so please report it to us, or Thames Valley Police. The picture below shows one of those fence panels "wrapped" around the youth shelter, at least 2 others were damaged.

The fencing had been loaned to us by a local firm, and now necessitates being removed, the damaged units replaced, and other measures considered to secure the damaged skate park ramps themselves. Wear and tear has led to some ramps developing dangerous defects (hence why they were fenced off), actions such as these distract from our efforts to find replacements for the ramps themselves and risk the ramps being removed altogether.



High Street Flooding

Whilst some improvements have been observed following interventions by the County Council, there remains an ongoing issue with water pooling around the gullies outside the Co-op and on the corner of Sheards Lane. OCC Highways believe they have identified a collapsed pipe in this area, and we are hopeful that the required budget to remedy this will be available from April.

Footpaths, livestock and dogs

Over the past 12 months, it's fair to say that our local footpaths and bridleways have seen significantly heavier footfall than usual. I am certain these local routes, providing access to the countryside have contributed to the wellbeing of a significant number of residents. We are aware that a number of stiles have fallen into a poor state of repair, particularly those in the fields to the south of the Ock and whilst it had been agreed that the County Council would be undertaking repairs to the worst of these before Christmas, the works have been delayed – we continue to press for an urgent resolution on this. Whilst it has been heartening to see the increased use

of these routes, it has been particularly disappointing to hear that some landowners are frustrated by the lack of respect for their property. We have reports of dogs running free in fields with livestock (cattle, horse and sheep), as well as dogs, children and in some cases, adults straying from the permitted path altogether. It should also be noted that dog fouling is not only a risk to children who may well be using the same footpaths, but livestock can also suffer serious illness and potentially miscarriages from exposure to dog faeces.

This has resulted in one landowner installing electric fencing to demarcate the footpath route which is clearly detrimental to the vast majority of considerate users of the footpath routes. There is no right to roam within the parish, you and your extended family have the right to use the footpath on foot, and if there are livestock in the field, regardless of how well behaved your pet is, they should be on a lead. Even if a dog doesn't catch the livestock, stress from being chased by dogs has been known to cause sheep to die and pregnant ewes to miscarry. A farmer has the right to shoot a dog found attacking or chasing their livestock – it's really not worth the risk.

Also, a reminder that dogs are **NOT** allowed in the recreation field by the Village Hall, Football field and Millennium Green.

Weed killer alternative

We're launching a trial of non-chemical weed control measures, designed to ensure that we can still manage public areas around the village appropriately, but hopefully without the detrimental impacts to insects and the wider food chain that chemical control measures can cause.

QEII Recreation Field Update

Whilst the planning application has now been formally submitted, initial indications are that we have some additional bureaucratic hurdles to cross in order to satisfy the various County/District council consultees. At the time of writing, it would appear that we will need to undertake some archaeological investigations as well having a risk assessment for land contamination completed.

Law surrounding virtual council meetings

During 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, a temporary amendment to the Local Government Act was introduced which permitted local authorities, including the Parish Council, to hold virtual meetings, which were publicly accessible. This law expires in May 2021 and, at the time of writing, the Government's position is that they are not expecting

to extend it, despite the roadmap not permitting "in person" meetings to take place. Consequently, we are keeping a close eye on the regulatory framework, whilst considering potential measures we may need to take should it not be possible for meetings to take place for a period of time.

A huge thank to Steve Willis who has been instrumental in loaning us the Heras Fencing needed to safeguard the dangerous ramps at the skate park. Whilst we appreciate the frustration that not all of the skate park is available, we are exploring all avenues to either repair or replace but this is being hampered by the effects of the current restrictions. It is hugely disappointing that one or more individuals think that they can simply dismantle the fencing and carry on to their hearts content.

Equally disappointing is the large collection of broken glass bottles that are being dangerously scattered across the skate park/MUGA areas. Not only do these present a danger to (primarily) younger members of the parish, they also pose a risk to our staff / volunteers having to tidy up afterwards. Graffiti has also become a growing issue over the past few months, and again, it is only thanks to dedicated volunteers that it is being swiftly removed on a near daily basis.

We've also seen a spate of damage within the community woodland, with "visitors" setting fires, destroying benches, tree stakes and the like. All of which are the result of many hours of voluntary work which is lost in a matter of minutes.

Whilst the current restrictions bring a huge amount of frustration to many of us, it seems to be the case that some individuals have too much time on their hands. It would be much better channelled into useful activities that contribute to the community rather than destroying it! I would urge parents to be very aware as to how their children are spending their "exercise" away from home, particularly if they have an interest in graffiti or come home smelling like a bonfire. If you see anyone destroying elements of the community please do challenge them, or report the matter to Thames Valley Police.

Peter Lewis

Chairman – Stanford in the Vale Parish Council
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Restart and Relaunch For Community Speedwatch In 2021

On behalf of Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner:

Speeding traffic is a regular and emotive concern for communities across Thames Valley and a pilot scheme being announced today is set to help tackle the problem.

As the restrictions are being lifted, local community groups will be able to resume their Speedwatch activities as soon as possible but this is only the first step in a revolution in roads safety across Thames Valley.

When restrictions are lifted, schemes will be able to restart their former activity to keep their communities safe by checking for speeding vehicles. At the same time, a pilot scheme will be launched to trial a new system, supporting and training volunteers, as well as capturing the data for community Speedwatch in order to better analyse data for potential police activity.

Matthew Barber, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, said: "I'm really excited about this new scheme and the additional support that we can provide to volunteers. Cutting speeding across Thames Valley can save lives and a strong community led Speedwatch scheme can make a real difference. Not only will the new scheme provide better backing for volunteers, comprehensive training, and new equipment, but it will also feed information directly into the police. Persistent offenders and hotspot locations can then be followed up for police enforcement. Together we can make our streets safer."

PC Lee Turnham, Thames Valley Police Community Speedwatch Co-ordinator, said: "Speedwatch has proven in the past to be a deterrent. People drive slower through areas as a result of community speed watch initiatives. The new platform will hopefully provide a community-led approach to reducing excess speed, allowing activity to be community driven. This exciting collaboration with Community Speedwatch Online will aim to reduce speed and make our roads safer within Thames Valley."

Read more here - <https://www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk/news-and-events/thamesvalley-pcc-news/2021/03/restart-and-relaunch-for-community-speedwatch-in-2021/>

Further information on the Community Speedwatch scheme can be found at: <https://www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/speedwatch/>.



PPC News

Spring is starting to show its smile around the Village and we are all cautiously stepping out of lockdown as we try to resume 'normal' life!

Thanks to Zoom, the PPC Trustees have continued their work on behalf of Stanford in the Vale with an expansion of our grant criteria in order to respond to the Covid impact on organisations and groups. This continues to be well received and the Trustees are on full alert for organisations, groups and people who might need a hand through these difficult times. Normal grant conditions will be resumed towards the end of the year.

Those of you who have allotments will shortly receive your renewal notices – please make sure you return the form to us quickly as we have a waiting list of about 15 people keen to snaffle a spot if you don't want it anymore! We are working closely with the Parish Council to identify and prepare more allotment space, so if you are one of those on the waiting list we would ask you to be patient just a bit longer. You can see more detail about what we are doing at www.ppcstanford.org

We wish you all a safe and incident free return to post pandemic life, hope that you have been able to get a vaccination if you wanted one and look forward to being able to 'bump' into you again!

Caryl Oliver
Clerk/Correspondent

Environmental Report

The parish council is looking at how to map the green spaces in the parish under its care as part of planning how best to conserve and maintain them. We'd like to hear from anyone who might be interested in helping us - whether you have background knowledge or experience in ecological surveys, tree surveys, or anything similar, or you would like to help us by volunteering to carry out a survey. If interested please contact Kevin Middleton - 01367 718395, kevinfmiddleton@gmail.com.

We are pleased to report that we now have a new bus stop at Shellingford Crossroads. This has been funded by Oxfordshire County Council, through their Councillor Priority Fund with additional funding directly from the county council. Our thanks to our county councillor who supported our application for funds.

Unfortunately, we have been experiencing continuing problems with people letting their dogs off the lead on footpaths when landowners have animals in their fields. We want to make sure that parishioners can access the countryside around the village, but we need to remember that both walkers and landowners have responsibilities. Please bear in mind if you are challenged about your animal's behaviour that fields are some people's place of work.

Dogs can seriously injure animals such as sheep and horses and, likewise, letting your dog off the lead near an horse can result in injury to your dog.

Please do get out and enjoy some of the local footpaths but please keep to the paths and keep dogs on a lead.

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