
STANFORD IN THE VALE PARISH COUNCIL



NEWS UPDATE FEBRUARY 2025

Chair's Report

Public work of art project

Over the past 25 years, Stanford in the Vale has grown considerably and continues to grow, with many new families being welcomed into the village. The parish council is keen to ensure that those making the village their home, as well as visitors and those whose families may have lived here for generations, have access to the history of the village.

With this in mind, we have been exploring ways of reflecting the village's long heritage and making it accessible to as many people as possible. The parish council has recently been awarded funding for a "Wayfinder Trail". The idea of this trail is to place stones (from one of our local quarries), in key locations around the village, each inlaid with a mosaic, depicting a historical event from the village's past. The project is funded by a so-called Section 106 Agreement between the district council and local developers that provides funding to pay for community and social infrastructure.

We are planning for each stone to have a QR code, linked to the Parish Council website, where further information about the stone's location will be available, and a map of the village showing where each stone is located.

If you would like to know more about this project, we have arranged a session at the Small Village Hall in Hunters Field on Friday 14th February between 9am and 11.30am, where you can meet Rob Turner, the artist chosen to deliver the project. Information on Rob's work can be found at <http://robturners.blogspot.com/>.

Flooding & Highways

Over recent weeks we have been pushing for greater engagement from Oxfordshire County Council's Highways team over a wide range of issues that are directly affecting residents. This includes general highways maintenance issues as well as drainage. We have raised safety concerns in relation to the River Meadow development, occupied ahead of the planned reduction in the 40mph limit on that section of A417, and over the conditions of local footpaths. We have also been pressing for action on specific areas, such as the repeated flooding incidents affecting Bow Road and the A417 in the vicinity of Park Lane, as well as the ongoing frustrations around the continuous flooding at Challow (by Mellors Garage). Whilst progress is distinctly slower than we believe is reasonable, there was a glimmer of

hope that the cause of the intermittent flooding issues affecting Bow Road had been identified and works were due to begin earlier in January. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, those works had been delayed and we do not yet have a revised start date.

In relation to ongoing issues affecting the A417 at Challow, we are trying to secure wider support from neighbouring district and county councillors in order to push for a holistic solution, rather than the current situation where individual departments are only looking at small elements of the problem.

Ward Boundaries

The "Local Government Boundary Commission" was reviewing the existing ward boundaries for Vale of White Horse District Council during the course of 2024. When their draft proposals eventually emerged, they were suggesting merging Stanford in the Vale with Faringdon, with three district councillors to cover the entire ward (these proposals were based purely on population, little else). Having reviewed the commission's own criteria, we made strong representations, citing the disparity between the services and needs and concerns of a market town like Faringdon with those of Stanford in the Vale, as well as the challenge for appropriate representation when electing future councillors in such an unbalanced ward. Somewhat miraculously, the Boundary Commission took all these points on board and agreed that their proposed amendments were nonsensical, leaving the existing Stanford ward unchanged and represented by a single District Councillor. We firmly believe this is a much better outcome to ensure our voices continue to be heard and that the particular needs of rural communities such as ours are met.

Jubilee Gardens

As mentioned in our last newsletter, we have an ongoing project to revitalise Jubilee Gardens (the small area of garden adjacent to the toddlers' play area, near the pre-school). Work has now started with some preliminary clearing of the area, which you may have noticed if you use the play park. Once the design is complete we'll be looking at planting out in spring. We expect to be organising a working day to do this and if you would like to volunteer to help with the planting, please contact Cllr Kevin Middleton for further details.

QEII Field

As many of you may be aware, the parish council has a long-term plan to develop the QEII Field on Cottage Road (opposite the football club) to provide new leisure facilities for the village, including additional sports pitches, tennis courts and, ultimately, a pavilion for community use. By the time this newsletter goes to print we hope to have completed the archaeological survey of the field, which should be the final obstacle to being granted long-awaited planning permission for the first phase of work, which will comprise levelling the field and preparing the ground for pitches.

Skate Park updates

Our recent inspection of play equipment has categorised the skate park start ramp, half pipe and platform transition as high risk and consequently unsafe for use. We are actively investigating a replacement park and have a dedicated group of councillors exploring funding avenues and design options, including making any new park more accessible to beginners and those with disabilities. We had ideally hoped to replace the existing equipment with a new park without any loss of facilities. However, the rapid state of deterioration of the existing park has made this impractical. We are therefore arranging for the removal of the unsafe equipment as soon as possible. Clearly this will leave a gap in our facilities and over the coming months we'll be looking at accelerating our plans for a new park.

Parish councillors also recently held a meeting with Thames Valley Police's local neighbourhood policing team to discuss reports we have received of anti-social behaviour in the skate park, centred around the teen shelter. The parish council is planning to replace the teen shelter as our first step in refurbishing the park. We believe that investing in the park and upgrades to equipment and facilities will in itself act as a deterrent, but we also want to make sure that any new shelter does not become the focus of similar problems. We will be taking into account the feedback received from the neighbourhood policing team when considering aspects such as the visibility of the shelter, its location and lighting.

If you do witness any anti-social or potentially criminal behaviour in the skate park, please report it to Thames Valley Police by calling 101 for non-urgent incidents or 999 if you believe you are witnessing a crime in progress. While there are limits to the resources of the neighbourhood policing team, they can't take any action if incidents are not reported, and the more that any undesirable behaviour is brought to the attention of our local policing team the greater the chance is of police resources being directed our way.

Bird boxes on Church Green

A number of bird boxes have recently appeared affixed to trees on Church Green. While we welcome any initiative to promote nature and biodiversity, these things

usually work best when done with the cooperation and support of the parish council, particularly where public open spaces are involved. One of the boxes was attached to a tree which was felled just a few weeks later, leading to the loss of the box and a wasted effort all round.

We would be pleased to hear from whoever put the boxes up if you would like to work with us on any future projects in the parish relating to birdlife or nature in general.

Village bus stops

Parish councillors recently held a constructive meeting with the county council to discuss the provision of village bus stops. The immediate priorities to be funded by the county council are stops on the High Street (near Spencer's Close) and Upper Green, refurbishment of the shelter on Church Green and a potential new shelter for the stop at the corner of High Street and Hunters Field. To respect the sensitivities of the village conservation area, the stops at High Street/Spencer's Close and Upper Green will have grasscrete standing areas and any new shelter at High Street/Hunters Field will be timber-built.

Separately we are aware that the bus shelter on Cottage Road is in need of repair. We are exploring options for refurbishment with the county council, alongside shorter-term repairs that can be carried out by the parish council. Longer term, we feel there may also be merit in a new stop at the top of Cottage Road, near to the junction with the A417, making use of the existing layby. We are also aware that the bus service has not necessarily kept pace with the increase in size of the village and the lack of a service in the evenings and on Sundays is a particular problem for those without their own transport. While we have no formal powers in this respect, we have representation at the county council's parish transport meetings and intend to use this as a forum to press for an improved service.

Millennium Green Trust AGM

The Millennium Green Trust (of which the parish council is the sole corporate trustee) will be holding its annual general meeting at **6.50pm on Wednesday 5th February in the Stanford School Hall**. All parishioners and members of the public are welcome to attend.

Additional Information

Your parish council

- Parish, town and community councils in England and Wales have a number of basic responsibilities in making the lives of local communities more comfortable. Essentially these powers fall within three main categories: representing the whole electorate within the parish, delivering services to meet local needs and striving to improve quality of life in the parish.

- Stanford in the Vale Parish Council by convention does not operate along party political lines. All councillors are unpaid volunteers. Our parish clerk is employed for 15 hours per week
- The parish council lobbies district & county councils over issues in the parish and scrutinises and comments on planning applications. The district council decides most planning applications.
- The parish council is responsible for the upkeep of a number of areas within the village:
 - Village greens
 - The play area next to the village hall
 - The QEII field
 - The skate park and MUGA
 - The Millennium Green
 - Mowing some areas of the village on behalf of the county council
 - Litter picking – we employ a litter picker for several hours per week

and adult social care; see:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

- Your District Councillor is Sue Caul (Lib Dem):
sue.caul@whitehorsedc.gov.uk



WELCOME TO 2025!

This will be the first Stanford in the Vale New Year for many of the new friends and families who have moved into our growing

Village in the last 12 months. We look forward to seeing you all enjoying the benefits of being a part of our Community.

For those of you who are new, Stanford in the Vale has a unique advantage over many other Villages in that we have the Public Purposes Charity (PPC). As a result of some wise investment by a small group of foresighted Villagers, PPC has the income to spend money on projects, organisations and facilities in our Parish. This has included needed repairs for the Church, equipment for the Primary and Pre-School, funding for sporting groups, amateur dramatics, guides and scouts and many Parish Council initiatives. PPC also manages the allotments in the Village.

PPC is managed by a small group of Trustees who ensure that each grant provides benefits to the fabric of the Village and falls within the guidelines required of us by the Charities Commission. PPC does not seek to raise funds from the Public but simply delivers on grant applications for capital expenditure to our collective benefit.

At present, the opportunity exists to welcome new Trustees and it would be great to see some new faces on board! The Trustees meet in person about three or four times a year, keep in touch on activity by email between times and probably need to allow less than an hour a week. If you feel like you might be interested in giving money to those making our Village a better place to live and can spare a few hours a year then please contact us and ask more about becoming a PPC Trustee. For those of you who are already engaged with other activities, then you might like to consider whether PPC can help your group or organisation with essential equipment or support. Check out some of the projects we have supported and see the grant guidelines at: <https://ppcstanford.org/projects> See the website at www.ppcstanford.org and wishing you all a safe, happy and prosperous 2025.

Caryl Oliver

Clerk/Correspondent

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Other useful contacts

- Your Member of Parliament is Olly Glover (Lib Dem): olly.glover.mp@parliament.uk
- Your County Councillor is Juliette Ash (Con): juliette.ash@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- Your County Council is a coalition of Lib Dem-Green Party alliance as a minority administration. They are responsible for schools, roads and footpaths, transport and travel, recycling facilities, children's services