



Parish Council Newsletter - August 2025

View from the Chair.

Welcome to the Summer / August issue of the North Leigh Parish Newsletter. Many thanks to all those residents who attended the Annual Parish Meeting on April 15th in the Memorial Hall. The Parish Council was pleased to see an increase in the number of attendees and also the number of local clubs and organisations that took part in the evening. Hopefully, all of those who attended found it to be a worthwhile experience. Parishioners' attendance at events such as these and the participation of many of the groups who conduct activities in the parish goes a long way to fostering a strong community spirit and is greatly appreciated by the Parish Council.

The Community Café, of which there is more information within the Newsletter, has been a particular success and the efforts of a small group of volunteers to create this has been much appreciated by many of the residents within the parish. It is well worth a visit.

The VE Day anniversary event organised by the Memorial Hall committee with support from the Parish Council on May 9th was a great success, more information about that evening is also in the Newsletter.

We are very lucky to live in a parish which is generally safe and trouble free. Sadly however, there have recently been one or two incidents of what can only be described as anti-social behaviour. The first of these involved further damage being caused to the wooden bus shelter on Cuckamus Green. This is the fourth time that this shelter has been vandalised, and, after each occasion, the council has paid to have it repaired. The second was the lighting of several unattended fires on North Leigh Common. Given the recent hot and very dry weather this is a very worrying development, and the council will be exploring what it can do to try and discourage such activity. If you become aware of any similar issues, please contact the Parish Clerk or report it directly to the police.

View From the Chair—continued

Within the parish we are fortunate to have three automated external defibrillator (AED) machines (located at the Memorial Hall and Turner Hall in North Leigh and at Ingleside in East End) as well as a fourth in New Yatt. These devices are used on suspected heart attack victims to try and restart their heart. Evidence shows that the earlier a casualty is defibrillated, the greater the chance of their survival. With this in mind the PC recently organised two well supported AED machine training courses. If anyone missed taking part in these courses, and there is sufficient interest, more courses could be arranged.

Please contact the Parish Clerk if you are interested in taking part.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I wish you all an enjoyable summer.

Andy Clements

Chair

Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan Committee has been meeting on a regular basis since the last Parish Newsletter.

Those of you who attended the Neighbourhood Plan Update Meeting on Friday the 11th of July in the Memorial Hall will have had the opportunity to meet with the members of the Committee and hear about the progress that has been made with the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Neighbourhood Plan committee has been working with Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) to draft the Policies section of the Neighbourhood Plan. CFO provided an initial draft of the Policies on 14th May and the Committee met on 27th May to review the draft. There were two 2-hour Teams calls between the Committee and CFO on 23rd and 27th June at which we worked through our comments on the draft policies.

The Policies were presented to the Parish at a public meeting in the Memorial Hall on the evening of Friday 11th July.

The policies have all been based on the feedback provided to the Committee by the Neighbourhood Plan Survey that took place last year. From that survey the Committee has also produced a number of “Key Views” that reflect the character and surroundings of and within the parish, these will also form part of the final plan. The Committee is now working on the Design Guide to be included in the plan.

It is hoped that the first “reg 14”* draft of the Plan will be ready to send to WODC for their comments by the end of the year.

***Regulation 14** of the Neighbourhood planning regulations require the draft neighbourhood plan proposal to be the subject of a pre-submission consultation before it is submitted to the local authority for independent examination.

The Committee has been fortunate in that it successfully applied for the grants that were available to assist with the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan. These grants have provided most of the funding required to create the Neighbourhood Plan which has meant that the Parish has borne little of the cost of the Plan creation.

The minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan meetings as well as updates can be found on the Parish Council website.

Speedwatch and Potholes

The SIDs are continuing to have a positive effect on vehicles entering the parish in both North Leigh village and East End.

The most recent Speedwatch sessions that have taken place in East End have continued to show that the majority of drivers are complying with the speed limit, although, disappointingly, there are a few who wilfully drive at an excessive speed.

The Speedwatch group is constantly looking for more volunteers. At the present there are only sufficient members to conduct surveys in East End.

More members would enable surveys to be conducted at various points in North Leigh village.

If you would like to assist with Speedwatch surveys, please contact the Parish Clerk via email at:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

We are now fortunate that the parish has at least two of the residents trained to be a Highways “Superuser” and who are authorised to commission the repair of certain categories of potholes directly from Oxfordshire County Council’s contractors.

A “Superuser” is able to identify the pothole with white paint, report it on the “FixMyStreet” portal, and authorise the repair to be completed without having to first wait for the pothole to be examined by a member of the OCC Highways team before the repair is commissioned. A number of successful repairs have been expedited using this process.

Parishioners are encouraged to report potholes that need to be repaired via “Fix my Street”, as these reports are then sent to the “Superuser” who will conduct an inspection and will, provided they meet the criteria, commission a repair.

Anyone may volunteer to be a “Superuser”, no special skills are required, for those of you who may wish to do so the following links will assist you:

[Meet the latest volunteers helping to speed up road repairs](#)

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/fix-my-street-super-users/>

Memorial Hall VE Day Event

The Memorial Hall provided an appropriate setting for an event to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of VE Day.

The event was arranged by members of the Memorial Hall Committee with support from the Parish Council.

With pictures of the celebrations that took place on VE Day and bunting from the British Legion the Hall hosted over a 100 people that attended the event.

People of all ages came to participate and there were a good number of parishioners who had memories of that day 40 years ago. Those memories featured in many cross-generational conversations that took place on the evening and the hum of talking voices provided a wonderful atmosphere. The bar and buffet provided the refreshment to fuel those conversations.

The highlight of the evening was a performance by the Wood Green School Swing Band that included many songs and tunes from the 1940s, which inspired a few people to take to the (very limited) floor space to dance. Two thoroughly entertaining and vibrant sets provided terrific entertainment for all those in the hall and the level of applause indicated how much everyone enjoyed the band. The event also demonstrated how fortunate we are to have the Memorial Hall as a parish asset. In addition to events such as the VE Day Anniversary Event it is a versatile space that has the facility to host dance classes, indoor bowls, film nights, cafes, youth groups and not least a shop, as well as providing a venue for important parish meetings such as the Neighbourhood Plan update and the Annual Parish meeting.

If you wish to hire the Memorial Hall to host your own event such as birthday parties, wedding receptions etc please use the below link:

<https://northleighmemorialhall.com/bookings/>

From District Councillor Sarah Veasey Sarah.veasey@westoxon.gov.uk

As your District Councillor, I have been very busy dealing with the concerns and issues of residents in our Parish. Please do get in touch on the above email if I might be able to help you with any issues.

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)

Botley West Solar Farm Proposal

The Development Control Committee of WODC met on 2nd June 2025 to consider, in respect of the 840MW Botley West Solar Farm, a “Written Representation” by WODC and a “Local Impact Report”, a joint submission by the authorities who will be potentially hosting the solar panels: Cherwell District Council, the Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

As a member of the Development Control Committee of WODC I supported the Written Representation from WODC which is proposing that the project is to be reduced in size by approximately 50%.

Planning

Quarry Solar Farm, Hailey

The application for this 24MW solar farm in Hailey came to the Lowlands Committee in April 2025 when a decision was deferred due to concerns about the routing of all construction traffic through North Leigh. It had been proposed that 54ft articulated lorries carrying the panels would drive through North Leigh, initially 24 trips per day, for a period of 9 months with the need for temporary traffic lights to be installed.

When the application returned to Lowlands Committee in May 2025, the main transport route proposed was still through North Leigh but with some other alternatives suggested but not recommended. I was able to advocate successfully for the application to be amended so that the construction traffic will now be routed elsewhere and will not pass through North Leigh.

From District Councillor Sarah Veasey - continued

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 (WOLP 2041)

Work has continued at WODC on this latest draft of the Local Plan, to replace West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. A consultation on the “Preferred Policies” which will shape the new Plan was launched on 26th June 2025 and closed on 8th August 2025.

There will be a second consultation later in the year when the “Preferred Locations for Development” are announced. This is when the shortlist of development sites is announced from all the sites put forward for WOLP 2041 last year. Residents will have the chance then to comment on these shortlisted sites. I will continue to monitor the impact of this on North Leigh and make residents aware of the shortlist and schedule for the consultation in due course.

Traffic

Due to the ongoing concerns expressed by residents about traffic, parked cars, the bus routes and speed of traffic through North Leigh, Oxfordshire County Councillor Liam Walker, the Parish Council and I continue to explore options for bollards, additional speed signs and possibly amendments to the road markings to address these issues.

Community

It has been a pleasure to attend many of the community facilities and events that have been taking place in the Parish.

I have enjoyed meeting residents and having the opportunity to speak with them at the Community Café. It has also allowed me to discuss their concerns in a relaxed setting. The café is a popular addition to the neighbourhood, and I would encourage you to go along and enjoy their hospitality.

Two other notable events that I attended which were great fun were the VE Day event and the Community Choir Family & Friends Afternoon 29th June. The performances at both events were very entertaining and I would like to thank all those involved in putting these two events together.

New Scout Site in North Leigh

I am very pleased that the Witney Buttercross Scout Group have purchased a site in North Leigh (fields behind the allotments) to be used as a Scouting outdoor hub and camping venue. This site will also be made available to the North Leigh Scouts, Cubs, Guides, North Leigh Primary School and other interested adult-supervised groups for learning outdoor skills. The start of an exciting adventure!

News from County Councillor Liam Walker

Firstly, I want to say a sincere thank you to everyone who supported me in the recent local elections. I'm incredibly proud to have been re-elected as your County Councillor and to continue working hard for North Leigh and our wider community. It's a real privilege to represent this area, and I'm committed to keeping up the momentum on the issues that matter most to residents.

One of the local concerns I've been focusing on recently is parking and verge damage on some of the tighter bends in the village. After listening to feedback from residents, I've been working with the parish council to explore the possibility of installing bollards in key areas. This would help protect our grass verges and improve safety for both drivers and pedestrians. It's still early days, but I'll keep you updated as discussions progress.

On a wider issue, Oxfordshire County Council is now consulting on a proposed Congestion Charge Scheme for Oxford. Residents can view the plans and share their views through the Council's *Let's Talk Oxfordshire* website. I have serious concerns about this proposal. While the intention is to reduce congestion, I don't believe the scheme will achieve that. Instead, it risks hitting local motorists with extra charges and placing an unfair burden on residents and businesses who rely on access to the city.

I also recently submitted a formal question to the Cabinet Member for Highways regarding the much-delayed Eynsham Park & Ride site. The County Council has now confirmed that work is ongoing to secure the necessary planning permissions and funding to move this forward. However, the site is now unlikely to be open before 2027, which is disappointing given the length of time this project has already been on the table.

As always, I'll continue to raise your concerns at County Hall and do my best to get results on the issues that affect our community. If there's anything I can help with, please don't hesitate to contact me directly.

Cllr Liam Walker

County Councillor for Hanborough & Hailey Division

Liam.Walker2@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Update From Calum Miller

One year on from being elected to represent you in North Leigh, I continue to work hard, with the support of my small team, to represent you in Parliament and to ensure that the issues you raise with me are addressed. Since setting up the office and hiring the team we've replied to over 10,500 email enquiries and picked up a wide range of casework. We have assisted flood victims, followed up with problems in housing, education and health to name just a few. My small team and I work to represent all the 102,000 people (approximately) across our constituency of Bicester and Woodstock. So far, my first year as your MP has been a privilege and a steep learning curve. One of the best things about my job is meeting more people in communities like North Leigh, and elsewhere.

Congratulations to all councillors elected to the County Council on 1 May.

My visit to the North Leigh Community Café on the 23rd July was thoroughly enjoyable. It was wonderful to see what can be achieved by a small number of volunteers within a community to create a welcoming space for all to enjoy. Meeting so many of the residents of the North Leigh Parish was a great experience and I hope the café continues to thrive.

My small team of staff and I work hard to represent you, and we are always here to help, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Please do email me at calum.miller.mp@parliament.uk if there is something I can assist you with, or there is an organisation I can help, whether that is something I can raise at Westminster on your behalf or something I can do at a local level.

Botley West Solar Farm - Status

The government Planning Inspectorate (PINS) began the formal examination of the applicant's (i.e. PhotoVolt Development Partners) Development Consent Order (DCO) application on 13th May. The examination will take at least 6 months before PINS publish their recommendation to government to either refuse, agree or modify the scheme. Ed Milliband, Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero, will have the final say, whatever the PINS recommendation is.

The PINS website for Botley West:

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010147>

Or simply type into Google: PINS Botley West

Status

WODC have submitted a robust and forensic Written Representation to PINS.

The report examined numerous issues, but particularly Historic Environment, Landscape and Visual Amenity, Flooding and Aviation Safety.

The report concluded that 2,230 acres should be removed from the scheme, leaving only 740 acres to contain panels.

WODC and Cherwell and Vale of the White Horse councils have submitted a joint Local Impact Report (LIR) to PINS, considering whether the scheme is compatible with or contrary to local planning policies.

Their report notes that of the 20 issues examined, 11 would have a negative impact, 9 would have a neutral impact and none would have a positive impact.

The 4 PINS examiners are very well briefed and are clearly on top of all the massive amount of data that the applicant has provided.

During the initial 3 days of hearings, the examiners' questions showed that the applicant had not prepared sufficient evidence or data on many topics examined and discussed.

PINS examiners have posted 92 pages of questions derived from their reading of the applicant's DCO application and the 3 days (so far) of public hearings on the PINS Botley West website, almost all questions being for the applicant.

There will be many more questions during the next 6 months and more specific open hearings.

Botley West Solar Farm Status - continued

Botley West and the campaign to stop or greatly reduce its footprint (Stop Botley West) are receiving national coverage. Recent articles in The Daily Telegraph and Mail Online have discussed the legality of the use of Blenheim Estate's land for a solar farm in the light of the original grant of the land from The Crown to the first Duke in 1705 and other later legal caveats imposed.

Community Café

Your Community Café Needs You!

The café organisers have been absolutely delighted with the response they have received to the opening of the new community café. The café, which is open to everyone in North Leigh, is run by a fantastic team of volunteers who all play a pivotal role in its success—as do our ‘customers’.

On a typical Wednesday morning we welcome over 40 people to the café, many of whom have become regulars.

Our customers tell us they really appreciate the friendly and welcoming atmosphere, the table quiz, the laughter, the hot sausage rolls and the ever-changing list of “specials”.

Best of all they tell us they appreciate the companionship and sense of belonging that has developed over the past four months.

Here are just some of the comments we've received:

“Love the sausage rolls”. “Love the tablecloths - it really felt like it was a cafe”.

“Really pleased something is happening in North Leigh - have lived here for 35 years”.

“Cafe is a brilliant idea - will definitely be back”.

“Thank you so much to all the North Leigh Cafe Team for a wonderful morning. A super social occasion and a delightful local author Penny Hampson, who kept everyone riveted as she told us about how she researches her work and creates her stories.”

How does the cafe work? There are tables for 4 or 6, although some regulars pull-up extra chairs. It's table service with a choice of hot and cold drinks, sweet and savoury snacks including sausage rolls and toasted tea cakes.

Community Café continued

There's the ever-popular quiz where attendees regularly try to 'out-do' the quiz master, much to the amusement of everyone involved.

Each week we also try to offer some 'specials", for example a refreshing fruit punch, chicken skewers, ice creams or scones with cream and jam or jam and cream if you're from Devon!

However, the organisers aren't resting on their laurels, and their ambition is for many more residents to visit the café, at least once, to experience it for themselves. We realise this is an ambitious challenge, which is why we really do need your help please.

Why not stop off for a cuppa if you are visiting the shop, pop in after dropping off the kids at school, invite a neighbour or friend to come along with you, or simply come on your own and see if it's for you.

We realise it can be daunting to walk into the hall for the first time which is why our volunteers are there to meet and greet and give you a warm welcome.

You will never be left alone, unless of course you want to have a quiet time reading the complimentary newspapers or make use of the hall's free wi-fi.

For those of you that use social media you will be able to read more about the café on our Facebook page (North Leigh Community Café) where you will also get to read about the antics of our café mascot "Terry the Teapot" and his friends

We recognise that the café may not appeal to everyone—but we also know there are people in the village who are unsure whether they'd enjoy it or simply lack the confidence to walk through the door for the first time, choosing instead to stay at home.

Whatever you can do to help us spread the good news about the café we'll be incredibly grateful, and if you're brave enough to try the café yourself for the first time in the weeks to come, you'll be assured a very, very warm welcome.

The Community Café was visited by the local MP, Callum Miller on the 23rd of July when he made a second visit to North Leigh Village.

We are open from 10.00 to 12.00 every single Wednesday. Please pay us a visit.

Very best wishes from the North Leigh Community Café Team.

North Leigh Youth Project

The North Leigh Youth Project provides a safe and secure environment where local young people can socialise with their peers and do fun activities under supervision. It enables young people to flourish, to grow in self-confidence, respect one another and form firm relationships.

We are the only open Youth Club with a purpose built Youth Centre in the vicinity of Witney. Government cuts to Youth Services have seen many youth clubs close with disastrous results for young people and communities. The increasing violence we hear about in schools and the prevalence of mental health problems among young people highlight the need for youth clubs to guide and help young people through their formative and very impressionable years. The Youth Project provides this very valuable function in the parish of North Leigh equipping our young people to become responsible and caring members of our community.

However, such a project needs funds - not just to set up but to maintain. It is a project that is constant and on-going; there is no point getting it up and running if it has to close a few years later because funding has dried up. Because it has become extremely difficult to obtain funds to maintain projects we are appealing for sponsorship funding. It costs at least £20,000 per annum to pay our youth workers, maintain the Youth Centre and provide activities for our young people. So, whether you are an individual or run a small business do please consider whether you could make an annual contribution to our funds. You will be helping the young people of North Leigh enormously.

Please contact Pat Brown on 01993 703029
or Dave Broughton at dave5687@gmail.com
if you would be able to help or for any further information.

North Leigh Guides

In North Leigh we have a Guide unit, for girls aged 10 – 14, which meets weekly on Monday evenings. During the Spring and Autumn terms, the meetings take place in the Youth Centre, which is located behind the Memorial Hall, but in the summer term we are out and about each week.

By the end of this term, we will have spent four evenings at North Leigh Common, lighting fires in metal colanders, cooking and playing games, and been on three hikes with picnics, two along the Blenheim Community Path and one in Pinsley Wood.

We try to give the girls as many exciting opportunities as possible; this term we have had a weekend at PGL Liddington, near Swindon, where the girls climbed, abseiled, built and used rafts on the lake, and enjoyed other adventurous activities.

We have sailed at Farmoor reservoir, tried bowling at Hanborough Bowls Club and been swimming at Woodstock Outdoor Pool.

Our activities have been supported by a generous grant from Witney Lions' Dream Scheme, and we would like to record our thanks to them.

For further information, please contact Wendy Goddard walg1@btinternet.com

1st North Leigh Scout Group

The Summer Term is probably the one that we enjoy the most because we get to spend most of our sessions outside doing the things we love to do.

Recent activities include many woodland activities, such as den building, making bug houses, lighting fires, and cooking food and marshmallows on the fires. We have also been enjoying earning badges for things such as gardening, scientific experiments, navigation, cycling, emergency aid and creative challenge activities, as well as many other fun activities, such as talent contests, scarecrow workshops and walks, silly sports, martial arts, rounders and making boats from recycled materials and racing them on a local river. We have had a recent visit to Crocodiles of the World and all of our sections have been to visit a local farm where we have seen lambing, natural ploughing by pigs and demonstrations of sheep dogs rounding up sheep. Of course, we also love our hikes and are shortly embarking on several summer camps.

We are looking forward to our Annual Group Day in September, where we all meet together, including many of our parents, at the Youlbury Activity Centre for some adventurous activities and challenging games.

1st North Leigh Scout Group—continued

The 1st North Leigh Scout Group continues to provide fun, adventure, and valuable life skills to young people in our community. We have a Scout Troop (ages 10½–14), 2 Cub Packs (ages 8–10½) and a Beaver Colony (ages 6–8). We are extremely lucky to have an incredible group of leaders, young leaders and trustees, all volunteers, to support our Group. Of course, we would be nothing without our young people, who display true scouting values by being loyal, kind, friendly, respectful, cheerful and brave and who inspire us all. We are extremely proud of them all.

The group is always focused on growing our leadership team, expanding opportunities for outdoor adventure, and continuing to deliver a programme that builds confidence, resilience, and a strong sense of community. Ask any of our current volunteers and they will tell you that volunteering is great fun and very rewarding. We are always looking for new volunteers, not just with the sections but also as Trustees. If you would like to join in the fun, please do get in touch!

For anyone wishing to learn more about the Group and for contact details, please see our group website:

<https://www.1stnorthleighscouts.org.uk>

Housekeeping

As has been mentioned above, occurrences of petty vandalism continue to take place in the parish which is disappointing.

The Parish Council does conduct regular checks on the two playgrounds and repairs any damage. If on your walks throughout the parish see any items such as bus shelters or playground equipment that require attention, please inform the Parish Clerk. Similarly, if you see any acts of vandalism taking place, please inform the police. The cost of repairing any damage has to come from the parish funds, and that money could be better used for other projects and necessary maintenance.

Dates for your diary:

Next Memorial Hall film night: **Saturday 20th September**

Christmas Tree Lighting: **Saturday 6th December**

