

Parish Council Newsletter - Spring 2025

View From the Chair

Welcome to the April edition of the North Leigh Parish Council Newsletter.

Since the last newsletter, the Parish Council (PC) has commissioned a variety of projects, some of which have been completed already, and others are in progress, more details of these are in the newsletter.

As many of you will know we had to cancel the tree lighting event due to the bad weather at the start of December, which was unfortunate, however in spite of the winds the tree managed to stay up and illuminated during the Christmas period.

The feedback received by the PC was positive and we will have the same event this year, with some added features, subject to the weather permitting.

A new bench has been installed on Cuckamus Green, and the existing benches have had their slats renewed. Our thanks to Councillor Malcolm Shead for replacing the slats on the existing benches.

The attendance by residents at PC meetings has continued to increase and we have also seen a few of our younger residents attend, which is a trend that we would hope will continue. The PC would encourage any of our residents who have any issues to raise to come along to the monthly meetings.

The Planning Committee meeting on the 4th of December was also well attended. Please continue to raise your objections to the developments that are of a concern to the parish as each individual objection counts.

The PC has commissioned planters, and a village sign to be installed in North Leigh village using funds from the S106 monies. Further information regarding S106 monies is in a separate article.



View From the Chair—continued

The Parish Council does not employ any full time maintenance staff.

Parish Councillors have been dedicating their time to maintaining much of the fabric of the parish. I would like to extend my thanks to my fellow councillors for their help and support with this and the other activities that they carry out.

We look forward to seeing many residents at the Annual Parish Meeting on the 15th of April, where there will be many of the Parish Councillors present along with representatives of the various groups and societies that are active in the parish.

Andy Clements

Chair



Playgrounds

The Parish Council (PC) continues to be engaging with the relevant bodies to secure the lease for the adventure playground. In parallel with this process the PC is obtaining quotes from contractors to carry out groundworks to improve the state of the site.

Once the lease has been satisfactorily agreed the PC will be able to start asking for ideas as to how to improve the existing facilities and to add additional new facilities. To assist with this process the PC is hoping that the younger members of the Parish will be able to provide many suggestions as to suitable equipment. The Children's Playground has recently undergone some renovation and repairs to the zip wire and is now fully operational again.

Speedwatch and Potholes

The state of the roads within the parish and the speeds of vehicles within the parish are always two issues which concern the residents.

The encouraging news regarding the speed of vehicles is that 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 shown a marked reduction in vehicles exceeding the speed limit compared to the number of speeding vehicles recorded prior to the SIDs being installed.

The Speedwatch group is always looking for more volunteers, currently there are only sufficient members to conduct surveys in East End, and it would be useful if there were enough members to enable surveys to be carried out 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

Speedwatch and Potholes—continued

As you will read in Councillor Walker's piece in the newsletter, he is constantly pressuring the county council to make the improvements we need with regard to the condition of the roads in the parish.

We are fortunate that one of the parish councillors has been trained by Oxfordshire County Council Highways to be a highways "Superuser" and is 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.

It is to be noted however, that Parish Councillors do not routinely inspect the road network throughout the parish, which is the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council. 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", 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/)
<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/fix-my-street-super-users/>

The Parish Council Precept – How does it work?

The Precept is a tax, included within the local Council Tax, which enables the Parish Council to perform its functions.

Parish Councils can apply for some other funding such as grants and funding awards, generally for specific projects, but they do not receive funds directly from central government.

The Parish Council is legally required to agree a budget before it can set its Precept, and both must be agreed by the full Parish Council.

Once the Parish Council has forecast its budget requirements for the following financial year, it requests this funding from its 'local billing authority' – in our case, West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) – in the form of the Precept. WODC then converts the Precept into an amount per Council Tax payer that is added to the Council Tax bill (according to the property band) for all the dwellings within the Parish area.

At the December 2024 meeting of the Parish Council, the Council resolved a budget for 2025/26 of £80,506.25 and a precept of £71,106.

This compares to a precept for 2024/25 of £67,558.

With the current number of houses, the calculation of increase would be 3.08%.

The Council has several exciting projects it is looking at for 2025/2026 such as:

- Completion of the Neighbourhood Plan
- Upgrade of the Adventure Playground
- Installation of a village sign
- Installation of planters at the entrances off of the A4095

Some of the funding for the above will be covered by s106 funds, but there is administration involved, legal fees, etc which would be part of the Council's funds.

The Parish Council Precept – How does it work? - continued

In addition to the new projects, services the Parish Council provides within the budget include:

- Management of North Leigh Cemetery
- Management of the Children's Playground on Park Road and the Adventure Playground off of Windmill Road
- Some grounds maintenance
- Village communication via the website, the Parish Council Facebook page, mailing list and newsletter.
- Maintenance of its assets which are listed on the Asset Register on the website (these include bus shelters and 2 defibrillators)
- Bin emptying at the Children's Playground, Adventure Playground and Cuckamus Green
- Donations
- Publicly available and dedicated email addresses for the Clerk and Councillors
- The Clerk who manages the Council's finances and operations
- Events to foster community engagement

Information on the Council's finances can be found on the website in the Finance section of the Parish Council section:

[Finance – North Leigh Parish \(northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk\)](http://northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk).

If you have any questions as to the finances of the Council, feel free to contact the Clerk, Allison Leigh, via email at:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk or via phone on 07796 039 496.

Village Sign & Village Planters

Last year the Parish Council (PC) asked residents to put forward ideas on how some of the money, given to the Parish by developers (S106 Monies), might be used by the parish. Following that consultation, the PC commissioned a decorative village sign to be erected at the junction of Park Road and Common Road.

A local artist is currently designing the sign, and the sign will then be manufactured by a specialist supplier.

Village Sign & Village Planters — continued

The PC is hoping the sign will be in place later this year and will provide a focal point in the village.

Funds provided by developers have enabled two village planters to be installed. These will be located at the Park Road and Common Road entrances to North Leigh village. The PC intends that the planters will be in place ready for planting up with a summer display. The North Leigh Gardening Society has kindly volunteered to plant up and maintain the planters on behalf of the PC.

Another suggestion put forward was a village map, and this option is also being considered by the PC.

S106 Monies

Section 106 (S106) agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer that provide for specific determined projects for the benefit of a parish to mitigate development. However, there are conditions to their use:

What can/can't S106 funds be used for?

- Funds must be used to mitigate the impacts of the development they were collected from and not on unrelated projects even if they are needed more in the town or parish. Funds must therefore be spent on what they were secured for and in line with the wording of the S106 agreement.
- Funds have to be spent by the PC on projects formally agreed by the PC within the timeframe set out in the S106 agreement. The deadline is typically 10 years from receipt, but this may vary between agreements. If the funds are not spent in time, the developer is able to request that the funds are returned to them.
- Funds should be for capital projects and unless otherwise specified in the agreement are not for ongoing running costs, maintenance, or minor repair work.

S106 funds should not be used as an alternative to precepts.

The Parish Council has already made use of S106 monies to pay for the refurbishment and improvements to the Children's Playground, and also for a village sign and planters as noted above.

North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan

Substantial progress has been made on the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) since the last newsletter.

The NP Committee secured a grant from Locality to provide funds for the work to be conducted on the Design Code.

The NP Committee has been working to create character assessment documents and gathering baseline evidence to provide the information required to form the Design Code, Objectives and Policies for inclusion in the NP.

The main NP document now contains the various sections that the NP Committee needed to provide and the consultants (Community First Oxfordshire, CFO) who have been engaged to work on the NP by the Parish Council are now drafting the Design Code. CFO are also creating the Policies that will be included in the NP.

Once this work is completed by CFO, there will be a Parish meeting to present the Policies and the Design Code to the residents.

Based on the feedback from this meeting, the NP committee are proposing to formalise a set of Policies, which will form a key element in the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan. The draft version of this is on course for completion and will be submitted in September to West Oxfordshire District Council for evaluation by their planning committee and other consultees.

It is essential to have evidence that the community is in support of these policies, and therefore the NP Committee and the Parish Council would encourage all residents of North Leigh to attend this event to review and comment on them.

This meeting will be on **Friday the 11th of July**, and there will be two sessions the first of which will start at 18.30 – **SAVE THE DATE.**

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

I am enjoying my role as your District Councillor and getting to know many residents around the Parish. Please do get in touch on the above email if you have any issues or concerns that I might be able to help you with.

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL (WODC)

Botley West Solar Farm proposal

It is disappointing that this proposal has been defined as a "Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project" (NSIP) and as such it will not come to WODC's Planning Committee for decision but will be considered directly by the Planning Inspectorate. The Planning Inspector has now accepted the proposal for examination.

However, WODC qualifies as an "interested party" and in this capacity considered its technical response to the Botley West Solar Farm proposal at a meeting of the Development Control Committee held on 24th February. WODC has now submitted a "Relevant Representation" highlighting key issues of the project for consideration by the Inspector.

As part of the debate, I spoke at this Development Control Committee meeting to express my concerns about the impact of Botley West on the unique setting of the Oxfordshire Cotswolds and the Blenheim World Heritage site, the loss of visual amenity due to the permanent screening hedges that will disrupt the landscape, the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land with associated loss of food security, the loss of biodiversity and the increased risk of flooding.

As a Parish Councillor I am sitting on the working group that is evaluating the community benefit for this project which has initially been set at an extremely low level.

TRAFFIC CONCERNS

A number of residents have expressed concerns regarding traffic, parked cars obstructing the S7 bus route and also the S7 bus mounting the kerb and churning up the grass at certain places in the village. I am working with County Councillor Liam Walker to consult with the OCC Highway Maintenance Team later this month regarding the possibility of installing bollards and possibly changing the road markings at these sites.

From District Councillor Sarah Veasey—continued

PLANNING

Lioncourt Strategic Land proposal, Common Road

In the Autumn, OCC opined that an Environmental Impact Assessment was not needed for this proposal. Lioncourt Strategic Land then submitted a planning application for up to 115 houses on the Common Road site.

More than 100 residents together with the Parish Council have submitted objection comments to the application on the WODC planning portal, and statutory consultees have also objected. Thames Water has requested a Grampian Clause blocking occupation of such a development as they cannot currently supply clean water at pressure, sewer capacity or sewage treatment to the site. The NHS has also objected on the grounds of not being able to provide GP practice capacity for these additional residents. There are also concerns given that part of the Scheduled Monument, Grim's Ditch, runs through the site. The application is currently under consideration by WODC's delegated planning officer and the application is likely to come to the Lowlands Planning Committee for consideration in late Spring 2025. The considerable harms of this application will need to be weighed in the planning balance and a tilted balance towards approval is likely given that WODC cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and also because the new housing targets for West Oxfordshire have been increased by more than 30% by the current Government.

In the event that this application is approved by WODC, the Parish Council is requesting S106 funding to address the lack of recreation facilities in the village for older children.

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 (WOLP 2041)

Higher housing targets for West Oxfordshire being set by the new Government, together with a revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) effective from December 2024, have resulted in delays to the timeline for WOLP 2041 whilst WODC assimilate this new information. The shortlisted sites for the Plan are likely to be announced by WODC in Late Spring 2025. I will continue to monitor the impact of this on North Leigh.

From District Councillor Sarah Veasey—continued

NORTH LEIGH COMMUNITY CAFE

Congratulations to Malcolm Shead, Jonathan Jeffes, Derek Thomason, David Gooday, Steve Braeger, and their fantastic team of volunteers on the highly successful and well attended launch of the North Leigh Community Cafe on 5th March. It is a great initiative to bring people together in the village and I enjoyed chatting with friends old and new.

The cafe will run each Wednesday in the Memorial Hall from 10am - 12 noon where volunteers will serve complementary hot drinks, biscuits and savoury snacks to residents.

LITTER PICK

On 9th March I joined in with the Parish Council Annual Litter Pick, which was organised by Parish Councillor Carol Frost, more than 50 residents attended including teams from the Cubs, Beavers, Scouts, Rainbows and Girl Guides plus their leaders. The group managed to collect of 15 bags of rubbish for removal which will make the village look much tidier for Spring

THAMES WATER SEWER ISSUES

I am continuing to monitor the work being done by Thames Water at Numbers 35-50 Windmill Road to replace the 1950s pitch fibre sewer pipe which has collapsed. This work is expected to be completed by end March 2025.

Please continue to report any sewer or manhole leakage issues to me as I keep a record of issues in North Leigh and liaise with Thames Water regarding the actions being taken to resolve them.

FLY TIPPING

I have noticed several incidents of fly tipping around North Leigh in recent months. If you notice fly tipping you can report it, or check if it has already been reported, by using this WODC link:

<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/fly-tipping>



From County Councillor Liam Walker


The past few months have been incredibly busy, and I want to take this opportunity to update you on some of the key issues affecting North Leigh and the work we are doing to address them.

One of the most persistent concerns raised by residents has been the condition of our roads, particularly the ongoing issue of potholes. I fully understand the frustration that poorly maintained roads cause, and I continue to push for these to be fixed—and fixed properly—to ensure longer-lasting repairs. Rest assured; I will keep the pressure on the county council to secure the improvements we need across the parish.

Another significant issue has been the proposed housing development on Common Road. Following a flyer that Cllr Sarah Veasey, other local councillors, and I distributed around the village, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all residents who took the time to submit their comments on the application. Your voices are incredibly important in shaping the future of our community, and I appreciate everyone who engaged in this process.

We are also actively exploring measures to improve parking and road safety around the school and the Memorial Hall. This is a key concern for many, and we are looking at various options, along with the potential installation of bollards in certain areas in the village to prevent vehicles from driving over and churning up the grass verges. We want to ensure that our village remains a safe and pleasant place for all.

As always, I encourage residents to reach out with any concerns or suggestions. Your input helps drive the work we do, and I remain committed to representing North Leigh to the best of my ability.



Parish Groups

The following groups are just some of the groups, clubs and societies taking place within North Leigh Parish.

For more information on more groups please see:

<https://northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk>

under the section '**Societies**'.

North Leigh Community Café, A Place to Meet, Chat and Work.

There is now a popular weekly Community Cafe in the Memorial Hall on Wednesday mornings between 10:00 – 12:00, everyone is welcome. Bring your friends, family and neighbours; you'll be assured a warm welcome, a good cuppa, cake and biscuits and hot savouries for those who don't have a sweet tooth.

There's a workspace and free wi-fi for anyone wanting somewhere sociable to use as a work/meeting place. Complimentary newspapers are also provided (courtesy of the village shop), and our popular table quiz (courtesy of quiz master Derek), so please do join us every Wednesday from 10 o'clock in the Memorial Hall.

If you'd like to volunteer to help please pop along any Wednesday morning for a chat or contact the organisers via e mail at

northleighcommunitycafe@gmail.com.

Exciting Times at North Leigh Youth Project!

The Youth Centre has been thriving with activities like arts and crafts, sports, skateboarding, and Dungeons & Dragons, helping young people grow in confidence and teamwork.

We welcome our new Youth Leader, Megan O'Neill, and thank Zach and Becky for 11 years of dedicated service. With annual costs over £20,000, we rely on support through the 100 Club, donations, and fundraising.

Every contribution helps our youth thrive! For more details or to support us, contact Pat Brown at **01993 703029**.

North Leigh Short Mat Bowls Club. The club meets at the Memorial Hall on Thursdays, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 noon, for informal roll-ups—newcomers welcome! There's also an internal club league on Thursday evenings.

For more details, contact Wendy Goddard at walg1@btinternet.com

North Leigh History Group: Explore the Past!

Founded over 20 years ago by local resident Diana Power, the North Leigh History Group meets eight times a year from September to May. Meetings, open to all, are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 PM in the North Leigh Memorial Hall, Park Road.

Each session features an illustrated talk on fascinating topics in local or national history. Recent talks have covered *The Death of Nelson*, *Eynsham Hall*, *The Names of Oxfordshire Pubs* and *The Mitford Sisters*.

For more information, contact Diana Power (Secretary) at **01993 882301** or Robert Kyte (Treasurer) at kyterobert@gmail.com.

Baby and Toddler Group

Meeting currently once a month on a Friday in Turner Hall from 10-11:15am.

"It's time to play, make friends, learn and develop with guided songs and movement, free play, themed activities and a short story at the end."

Baby weighing scales available. Advertising of meeting dates also in memorial hall.

Contact: thebabytoddlergroup@gmail.com

North Leigh Gardening Society

Meets in the Memorial Hall 4th Tuesday of most months (except January, August, and December) for talks or visits on topics like seasonal plants, bulbs, and propagation.

Members enjoy discounts at local nurseries and on seeds ordered annually in November. Open to anyone interested in gardening, flower arranging, cookery, or handicrafts, the Society hosts Spring, Summer, and Autumn shows, with the summer show open to all local residents.

Membership: £10 per household.

Come along or

Contact: Steve Kennett – 01993 880425 – stevekennett1@outlook.com

North Leigh Guides

Girlguiding is for girls aged 4–18. In North Leigh, Guides (10–14) meet Mondays, 7:00–8:45 p.m., at the Youth Centre in Spring/Autumn and outdoors in Summer for activities like hiking and games. Guides make friends, try adventurous activities (climbing, sailing, rafting), and develop teamwork. They can also attend camps, trips, and residential weekends.

For more info, contact Wendy Goddard at walg1@btinternet.com.

1st North Leigh Scout Group.

The 1st North Leigh Scout Group has been helping young people develop life skills like teamwork, leadership, and confidence for over 100 years. Run entirely by volunteers, the group offers:

- Beavers (ages 6–8): Wednesdays
- Cubs (ages 8–10½): Mondays in North Leigh and Hailey
- Scouts (ages 10½–14): Thursdays

Activities include outdoor adventures, skill-building, and community service.

For more information, visit www.1stnorthleighscouts.org.uk

or contact Lead Volunteer Alison Kennett at: alisonkennett549@gmail.com.

St Mary's Church, North Leigh, Church Road, OX29 6TX

Sunday Worship:

1st Sunday: 9am Holy Communion (BCP) & 10am Café Church (informal, family-friendly, with coffee & croissants).

2nd-5th Sundays: 10am Holy Communion (in church & often on Zoom).

Midweek Service: 1st Wednesday of the month – 10am Holy Communion with prayers & quiet reflection.

Other Services & Activities: Weddings, funerals, baptisms, Bible study, and Christian faith discussions.

Monthly Seniors' Lunch at Turner Hall, email seniorsnorthleigh@gmail.com for details.

Turner Hall available for bookings – contact Diana Craig at:

diana.craig@btconnect.com or 01993 881084.

For more information or Zoom details contact:

Margaret at vicar@northleighchurch.org or call 07354 445256.

Visit www.northleighchurch.org for updates.

North Leigh Memorial Hall.

Run by seven trustees, the Memorial Hall hosts village groups, events, and private functions. It also houses the village shop, library, and Youth Centre.

We organise the annual Festive Fair, a key fundraiser, and a monthly Film Night, aimed at bringing the community together. More attendees would be great!

If you'd like to help run the Hall, contact Wendy Goddard at

walg1@btinternet.com

Yoga

Natalie Kidd Meylan teaches hatha flow yoga at the Turner Hall, Church Road, North Leigh on Tuesdays at 12-12.45pm. All abilities are welcome to this gentle class; go at your own pace or add challenges. She also offers a monthly yoga session for families to come together to move and learn techniques to help with self-regulation for times when children/families may need it.

Bookings can be made here: <https://bookwhen.com/inspirestudioyoga> or email Natalie for more info: natalie.meylan001@gmail.com.

Bellringing is an activity like no other – a unique mix of gentle physical exercise with mental agility that is a deep part of our history.

The St Mary's bellringers practice on a Friday evening between 7.30 - 9.00 pm and also visit other village towers on different days.

Discover the world of bellringing by contacting:

Alison Merryweather Clarke on **07527 398557**- suitable for anyone aged 9 - 90+!

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 15th: April Annual Parish Meeting in the Memorial Hall

Friday 9th May: VE Day Commemorative Event organised by the Parish Council and Memorial Hall Committee.

Friday the 11th of July: Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Meeting

