

## Parish Council Newsletter - March 2026

### View From the Chair

As we move into the early months of the year, and hopefully into some drier weather, I would like to reflect on what has been a busy and productive period for the North Leigh Parish Council and our wider village community.

First, my sincere thanks to everyone, especially our Clerk, Allison Leigh, who helped make our Christmas Tree Lighting such a success. It was wonderful to see so many residents come together, families, friends and neighbours, to celebrate the start of the festive season.

Events such as these remind us as to what makes North Leigh special: a strong sense of community and a willingness to get involved. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped organise and support the evening.

You will also have noticed progress on the new village sign. There has understandably been interest in how this has been funded. I would like to clarify that the monies allocated for this project were required to be spent on “art” as part of the relevant S106 funding arrangements. They could not have been redirected to highways, maintenance or other parish services. We are pleased to see this investment result in a feature that reflects the character and heritage of our village.

The Parish Council continues to work robustly on behalf of residents in response to proposals concerning the re-routing of construction traffic associated with the University Farm development. We have been clear in expressing our concerns about the potential impact on our roads, safety and quality of life. While these matters can take time to resolve, please be assured that we are actively engaging with the appropriate authorities and will continue to press for outcomes that protect the interests of North Leigh.

## **View From the Chair-continued**

I would also like to highlight the ongoing work of our Highways Super Users. This initiative enables trained representatives to report highways issues directly and efficiently, ensuring that concerns such as potholes, drainage and signage are properly logged and tracked. Their work makes a tangible difference, and we are grateful for the time and diligence they give on behalf of the community.

Our Annual Parish Meeting is approaching, and the Parish Council invites all residents to attend. This is your opportunity to hear about the work undertaken over the past year, to ask questions, and to share your views on the future of the parish.

The meeting will take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April at 7pm in the Memorial Hall, please do come along.

Finally, I would like to record our sincere thanks to Fran Jeffes for her service as a Parish Councillor. Fran has given her time and energy generously in support of the village, and we are grateful for her contribution to the work of the Council. We wish her every success for the future.

As ever, if you have matters you would like to raise, please do not hesitate to contact the Parish Council or attend one of our meetings. Your engagement helps shape the future of North Leigh.

With best wishes,  
Andy Clements  
Chair

## Update from the Neighbourhood Plan Committee

The North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan Committee has continued to make steady progress in developing a Neighbourhood Plan that reflects the priorities and aspirations of our community.

Over recent months, the Committee has been creating policies based on local evidence, to consider how any possible future development can best support North Leigh while protecting the character of the parish and surrounding countryside.

Striking this balance is at the heart of neighbourhood planning: ensuring that growth, where it occurs, is sustainable, well-designed, and aligned with the wishes of residents.

We have been working to ensure that the emerging policies are robust, evidence-based and capable of withstanding independent examination. This has entailed the committee conducting essential work with our consultants for the Plan to carry real weight in future planning decisions.

Community engagement remains central to the process. Feedback from the Neighbourhood Plan Survey has provided valuable insight into what matters most to residents — including traffic management, protection of green spaces, design quality, infrastructure and community facilities. The resulting plan has been solely based on that feedback.

The upcoming consultation process, commencing on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March will provide additional opportunities for residents to comment on draft policies before the document is finalised and submitted.

There will be a **Neighbourhood Plan Community Meeting in the Memorial Hall at 2 p.m. on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> of April** to discuss the consultation process and the next steps that need to be taken to produce a final version of the plan.

A Neighbourhood Plan, once adopted, becomes part of the statutory development framework. It gives the parish a stronger voice in shaping planning outcomes and helps ensure that decisions taken in the future reflect a clear, community-led vision. In addition, having a Neighbourhood Plan ensures that the percentage of monies due from any Community Infrastructure Levy is maximised.

**Please attend the meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, your input matters and that input has been the driving force behind the creation of the plan so far.**

## **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 Parish Council meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2026, the Council resolved a budget for 2026/2027 of:

£142,466 spend.

£ 63,200 income

The Council resolved a precept of £79,266. This compares to a precept for 2025/2026 of £71,106. With the current number of houses, the calculation of increase would be 8.77% for a band D household.

Some of the projects the Council embarked on in 25/26 which had not been budgeted for are:

Bollards on Park Road to assist with keep the verges and bus shelters free from damage.

Refurbishing the cemetery pathways, completed 24/02/2026, using self binding path gravel in order to provide a visually softer and arguably greener pavement.

Tree maintenance works

## **The Parish Council Precept - continued**

The Council has several exciting projects it is looking at for 2026/2027 such as:

- A MUGA at the Adventure Playground
- Managing of planters at the entrances off of the A4095

Some of the funding for the above will be covered by S106 funds, but the administration involved and legal fees, etc would be from the Council's funds.

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 and Insurance 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

Assistance to North Leigh Library

Please note that the Parish Councillors, who assist with many tasks within the parish, are all volunteers and give their time free of charge.

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](#)

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

[parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk) or via phone on 07796 039496

## **Update from NLPC Planning Committee**

It has been a busy start to the New Year for the Parish Council Planning Committee.

Firstly, an application has been submitted relating to University Solar Farm to vary the construction traffic route to revert to the original route through North Leigh.

This route is clearly unsuitable and was unanimously rejected at the Lowlands Planning Committee meeting last May.

Thank you to all the people who attended the meeting in January regarding this and to all the residents who have objected on the Planning Portal. It is so important for people to register their objections.

The Applicants have failed to provide any new evidence to support their application and therefore the Parish Council asked WODC for this application to be rejected.

An application was made last year to change the use of the Woodman to residential. Quite a few people attended the Parish council meeting to express their concern at the loss of an important community facility, and some expressed an interest in the community getting together and either purchase or lease the Woodman.

The Council's position was to ask for the application to be deferred for 6 months to give the community time to see if they were able to take this forward. The Application was rejected by WODC a new application submitted which was again rejected. An Appeal has now been made and should be determined later this year. The Planning Portal at WODC provides the link for comments.

At the present time, the Parish Council is not aware of a community group getting together but there is still time.

Finally, and as expected a new application has been submitted by Lion Court Strategic Homes for the development of up to 80 dwellings in Land off Common Road. Albeit, the number has been reduced from the previous application, but it still stands out as over development in the wrong place. The Parish Council will strongly oppose this application, and we hope it is rejected by WODC.

## **From District Councillor Sarah Veasey**

[Sarah.veasey@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.veasey@westoxon.gov.uk)

In the course of my role as your District Councillor, the number of the residents in our Parish with whom I interact is always increasing. Hearing your views and opinions and being able to represent those at the District Council level is a major part of my role.

Please continue to contact me at

[Sarah.veasey@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.veasey@westoxon.gov.uk)

with any issues or concerns you may have and I will endeavour to assist you.

## **WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL (WODC)**

### **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

Local Government Reorganisation is a central government initiative to restructure and simplify the layers of local government. Locally this would mean abolishing Oxfordshire County Council and the 5 local District Councils (including West Oxfordshire District Council) and replacing them with a single "unitary" authority which would be locally accountable and responsible for providing all local services. The Secretary of State invited councils to submit proposals by 28th November 2025 and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has received 3 proposals:

[Proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire - GOV.UK](#) as follows:

1) A Single Unitary Council (1UA) proposed by Oxfordshire County Council:

[One Oxfordshire | One Oxfordshire](#)

This option proposes:

**An Oxfordshire Council:** comprising Cherwell, Oxford City, Oxfordshire County, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, and West Oxfordshire

.From District Councillor Sarah Veasey -

## Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) - continued

2) Two Unitary Councils (2UA) proposed by Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Oxfordshire District Councils and West Berkshire Council:

### [Home | Two Councils](#)

This option proposes:

- **An Oxford and Shires Council:** comprising Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire

**A Ridgeway Council:** comprising South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, plus West Berkshire Council

3) Three Unitary Councils (3UA) proposed by Oxford City Council:

### [3Councils](#)

This option proposes:

- An **Oxford Council:** covering Oxford city and its Green Belt,
- A **Northern Oxfordshire Council:** merging West Oxfordshire and most of Cherwell and

A **Ridgeway Council:** covering part of South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse and potentially extending to West Berkshire (although West Berkshire Council are not currently supporting this option)

All 3 proposals address potential cost savings, strategies for housing, infrastructure, economic growth, the provision of services and local governance and the impact that the different configurations of council will have on these parameters.

Residents are being consulted on these proposals and the consultation runs until 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026 and can be found at this link:

[Consultation on Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - Citizen Space](#)

**.From District Councillor Sarah Veasey -**

### **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) - continued**

Central government will respond to these proposals in Summer 2026, after the May 2026 local elections. They may select one of the 3 proposed options above or another solution. Once an option has been confirmed, it is anticipated that shadow council elections will be held in May 2027 and the elected shadow councils will then be responsible for the transitional arrangements for establishing the new unitary council(s). The new unitary council(s) are then expected to take over from May 2028.

This Local Government Reorganisation process is closely linked to regional devolution plans which propose the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority for the Thames Valley region (including Oxfordshire). A directly elected mayor would coordinate strategic issues across their region such as housing, transport and economic growth.

### **PLANNING**

#### **West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 (WOLP 2043)**

Following on from the consultation on the “Preferred Policy Options” in Summer 25, and the “Preferred Site Options” in Winter 25, the consultation responses are now being evaluated, and a summary report will be published in due course. More information on the Local Plan 2043 can be found here:

[Local Plan 2043 - preparation of a new plan - West Oxfordshire District Council](#)

I am very pleased to note that in the list of sites shortlisted for WOLP 2043, NO SITES in North Leigh Parish are proposed for inclusion in the shortlist. Thank you to all residents who participated in the public meetings held by the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Committee in 2024 and shared your views regarding future development and infrastructure here. I strongly represented these views at WODC which has supported the case for no further development in North Leigh at this time.

**From District Councillor Sarah Veasey**

**PLANNING –continued**

Whilst planning applications are still coming forward in North Leigh, once the Plan (2026/7) is adopted it will be an important protection against further development. Planning applications submitted here will be looked on less favourably if they are not on the adopted shortlist, especially if WODC is able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply under the WOLP 2043.

I have consistently lobbied the Planning Department at WODC over the last 2 years to make them aware of the disproportionate level of unsustainable housing development that has been approved in North Leigh in recent years combined with a total lack of improvement in the supporting infrastructure. WOLP 2031 envisaged only “limited” development in medium sized villages, but in practice this has not been the case. I have repeatedly asked for a mechanism to be included in the new Plan 2043 that would limit the amount of housing that could take place over the term of the Plan in medium sized villages such as ours and this is now under consideration.

**COMMUNITY**

**Christmas Celebrations**

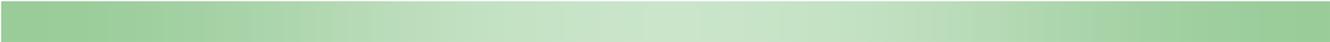
Congratulations to North Leigh Parish Council, particularly Clerk Allison Leigh and fellow councillors, for organising a successful Christmas Tree Lighting event. The tree, located on Cuckamus Green, provided a festive focal point throughout the season.

With an appearance by Santa, strong participation from local community groups and a substantial sum raised for charity (New Yatt RDA), the event has established itself as a valued local tradition.

It was also an honour to be invited to read one of the lessons in the Carol Service at St Mary’s Church, North Leigh.

**Quicken Copse, Green Lane**

I am in contact with the Wychwood Forest Trust who are the new custodians of Quicken Copse in Green Lane, North Leigh. This is a beautiful copse given by Chris Groves for local residents to enjoy in perpetuity. I would like to understand how the site will be maintained and managed going forward.



**From District Councillor Sarah Veasey**

**COMMUNITY– continued**

**Thames Water Sewer Issues**

As we emerge from one of the wettest winters on record, there have been numerous incidents of rainwater infiltration of the sewer network with sewage spilling from manholes around the village, most notably on Church Road near to the Turner Hall and in the fields leading up from the church. I continue to raise incidents with the Thames Valley contact at Thames Water holding them accountable.

Please continue to report any sewer manhole leaks concerns to me directly. Please note that other rainfall issues, such as blocked roadside gullies, can be reported to OCC on Fix My Street: [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com)

**Potholes**

The roads around North Leigh parish are in an atrocious state, worsened by the constant rain and water erosion over these last months. Potholes can be reported on [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com) and I continue to work with my OCC colleague Cllr Liam Walker on this issue.



## **Update from County Councillor Liam Walker**

### Taking Action on West Oxfordshire's Potholes

I want to update residents on the ongoing issue of potholes across West Oxfordshire, as I know many of you have contacted me about the state of our roads. As Chair of the Place Scrutiny Committee at Oxfordshire County Council, I made sure highways maintenance was added to our agenda so we could directly question the senior officer responsible for road repairs. It was important that this issue was addressed publicly and properly scrutinised.

During that meeting, the Council admitted there is currently a 35% backlog in pothole repairs. The explanation given was the prolonged wet weather we have experienced in recent months.

Whilst I fully recognise we've had significant rainfall, I made clear that poor weather cannot become a permanent excuse. There are established repair methods that can be used in wet conditions, and other areas continue to carry out durable repairs despite similar challenges.

What I find particularly frustrating and what many of you have raised with me is the number of poor-quality repairs that fail within days or weeks. Repeated patching of the same potholes is not acceptable. It wastes money and causes continued inconvenience for residents.

At the recent budget meeting, we also put forward a fully costed amendment to allocate an additional £1.3 million for pothole repairs. That funding could have fixed around 20,000 extra potholes across Oxfordshire, including many here in West Oxfordshire.

Sadly, this proposal was voted down by the County Council administration.

Please be assured that I will continue to press for better-quality repairs, greater transparency on the backlog, and more investment in our highways. Our villages deserve roads that are safe, reliable, and properly maintained and I will keep the pressure on until we see real improvement.

Cllr Liam Walker

County Councillor - [Liam.Walker2@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Liam.Walker2@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## **The Memorial Hall**

The Memorial Hall continues to be used by many of the parish clubs and societies as well as by groups from outside the parish. The level of utilisation of the hall provides a useful income to maintain the fabric of the hall and fund regular maintenance. If you or your group use the Hall, please spread the word, as increasing the number of bookings will help with the finances.

The age of the building means that there are future capital projects to be undertaken and these costs will eat into the hall finances and reserves.

The resolving of the external wall issue will, depending on the works to be carried out, be a substantial financial outlay. In order to provide the finance for the repairs the Hall Committee will be looking to hold a number of fund-raising events.

Supporting these events will help ensure the hall remains in good condition, fit for purpose and continues to provide the parish with a much-needed facility.

The Saturday film nights continue to be popular with villagers and the recent film showing of "I Swear" demonstrated that the organisers of the film night can spot a winner! "I Swear" received six nominations at the 79th British Academy Film Awards, winning three, including "Best Actor in a Leading Role" for Robert Aramayo.

The Hall Committee would benefit from more members, if any parishioner who would be interested in joining the committee and would like to find out more of what being a member of the committee entails, please contact:

The Committee Secretary at:

[sjdickinson72@btinternet.com](mailto:sjdickinson72@btinternet.com)

## **The North Leigh Community Café**

Can you believe it!

Wednesday 4th March 2026 was the first anniversary of the opening of the North Leigh Community Café.

When we came up with the idea of a community café we had no idea how popular it would be but a year on and with an average attendance of 50+ each week there seems to be no turning back!

The café is open every Wednesday morning 10.00 – 12.00 in the Memorial Hall and is run on an entirely voluntary basis by North Leigh Parish residents for the benefit of the whole community. The Community Café is a safe, warm and friendly place where everyone is made welcome, whether you're new to the parish or have lived here forever!

There is a bottomless supply of tea, coffee and hot chocolate, as well as toasted tea cakes and hot sausage rolls and all dietary needs can be catered for. There is free wi-fi available for anyone to use so it is also an ideal place for anyone working from home that wants to spend an hour or two at the café.

There is no set charge, with customers simply donating what they can afford.

During our first year of operation we held several themed events, which we plan to continue in 2026.

Our first Christmas Lunch was a huge success with 64 customers, entertainment provided by the North Leigh Primary School Choir, a surprise visit from Pudsey Bear, and Christmas Carols led by the Café Crooners Choir. Estelle Manor kindly provided us with Christmas Crackers, Mince Pies and Chocolate Logs.

There will be plenty to celebrate this year including the World Cup and Wimbledon as well the MacMillan Coffee Morning, at which we raised over £600 for the charity last year.

We have already enjoyed our first surprise visit this year with the schoolchildren parading their Dragon and masks in celebration of the Chinese New Year.

Our beautiful sail flags featuring our mascots Terry the Teapot and friends are displayed outside the café whenever we are open. These were purchased with a community grant courtesy of West Oxfordshire District Council.

## **The North Leigh Community Café - continued**

During the past year we have also received generous support from North Leigh Parish Council, Oxfordshire Community Voluntary Actions Connected Communities Fund and Witney Lions.

We are so grateful to all these organisations for supporting the café.

We are currently exploring the possibility of providing transport to and from the café for people living in the parish who are unable to get to the café under their own steam.

If you are, or you know of, someone living in the parish in that situation please call us on 07503 205653 or email [northleighcommunitycafé@gmail.com](mailto:northleighcommunitycafé@gmail.com) and we will see if we can help.

Likewise, if you are a business based in North Leigh and would like to be involved with or support the community café then please do give us a call or drop us an email. We would love to hear from you.

And finally. If you haven't yet paid the café a visit, please do give it a try. You will be met by one of our wonderful team of volunteers who will look after you. We guarantee you will make new friends; have great fun chatting to other customers; enjoy the table quiz; and most importantly of all you will become part of the North Leigh Community Café family.

Very best wishes from everyone in the café team.

Facebook @ NorthLeighCommunityCafé

email - [northleighcommunitycafé@gmail.com](mailto:northleighcommunitycafé@gmail.com)

Mobile – 07503 205653

## North Leigh Youth Project

While so many youth clubs have closed in recent years North Leigh Youth Project continues to meet at the Youth Centre behind the Memorial Hall in the centre of the village.

With 2 youth workers it offers opportunities for young people from year 5 upwards to meet socially and engage in positive fun activities in a purpose-built centre.

This would not be possible without our Management Committee of around 6 people who give their time and experience to oversee the running of the Club.

In order to share out more equably the various necessary tasks we are looking for new members to join this Committee. Ideally, we are looking for people to convene meetings, take minutes and for other minor roles. But whatever your skills we would love to hear from you. Please take a minute to think about whether you could give just a little of your time to help in this way.

We meet about 4 times a year, usually on Zoom and hold an AGM in the Youth Centre once a year.

The young people of North Leigh benefit hugely from their time at our Youth Project and we want to ensure that it continues to thrive and offer these opportunities into the future. For more information please contact.

Pat Brown at [patandjohnb@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:patandjohnb@yahoo.co.uk) Tel: 01993 703029/07903313178

### Could You Be a Scouts Trustee?

The 1st North Leigh Scout Group is looking for a new **Trustee** to join the Executive Committee and help support the fantastic opportunities we offer to young people in our community.

You don't need to have been a Scout, and you don't need specialist experience — just a willingness to get involved, offer your perspective, and help keep the group running smoothly.

Trustees meet a few times a year and work together to oversee things like finances, governance, safeguarding, and supporting our brilliant volunteer leaders.

If you'd like to make a real difference to local young people, develop new skills, and be part of a friendly team, we'd love to hear from you. If you would like more information please contact Lisa on [LisaH-Scouts@outlook.com](mailto:LisaH-Scouts@outlook.com)

## Update from PCSO Helen Keen

**Have Your Say:** A recent “Have Your Say” event was held at the Memorial Hall, where residents raised concerns about inconsiderate parking on Windmill Road and Perrotts Close.

A gentle reminder to all drivers:

Please remember to park at least 10 metres from junctions and keep pavements/pathways clear for pedestrian use, including those with pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility aids.

Thank you for helping keep our village safe and accessible for everyone.

Stay informed:

Sign up to **Thames Valley Alert**, a free service sending local crime updates, incident notifications and safety advice by email, text or voice message. (Alerts are for information only — please use 999 or 101 to report incidents.)

## How to Contact Thames Valley Police

Emergency: Call 999

Non-emergency: Call 101

## Nor’lye News

The Parish Council (PC) has been producing its newsletter since its first edition in 2021, however we are very aware that there is still a void which hasn’t been filled since the Nor’lye News ceased to be produced.

Feedback from parishioners has suggested that the PC revive or create a new Nor’lye News.

It is hoped that over the next issues the Parish Council Newsletter will transition into a replacement for the Nor’lye News.

In order for this to be achieved, the PC would welcome any volunteers who might be interested in taking on the project of getting the Nor’lye News back up and running again.

The PC volunteers has already received three responses from parishioners who would be interested in helping to achieve this aim.

If you are interested in taking part in the production of the new publication, please contact the Parish Clerk at:

[parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk)

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## **Dates for your Diary**

### **Neighbourhood Plan Community Meeting:**

In the Memorial Hall at 2 p.m. on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> of April

### **Film Night:**

In the Memorial Hall Saturday 18th April

### **Annual Parish Meeting:**

In the Memorial Hall at 7pm on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> of April

