

## Summary of Important Community Issues in Dorney Parish in 2019

**2019 was a year of escalating anxieties for Dorney Parish residents.** The long-anticipated M4 Smart Motorway project finally got underway, bringing with it significant disruption and raising concerns about its impact on the environment and village life. Traffic and parking woes around Dorney Lake worsened, fuelling tensions between residents and Eton College, the lake's owner. Uncertainty about the future of local government and the prospect of increased flights from Heathrow Airport added to the unease. Against this backdrop, residents looked to the Parish Council for leadership, but many felt their concerns were not being adequately addressed.

### **The M4 Smart Motorway: Disruption and Environmental Concerns**

- **Construction Begins, Disruption Intensifies:** Work on the M4 Smart Motorway, particularly the replacement of the Marsh Lane bridge, dominated conversations throughout 2019. Residents in Dorney Reach, closest to the construction, bore the brunt of the disruption, complaining about noise, vibration, dust, and the loss of mature trees.
- **Concerns About Transparency and Communication:** Many residents felt the Parish Council was not effectively communicating with Highways England or advocating for residents' interests during the construction process. The Parish Council expressed frustration with the lack of information and coordination from Buckinghamshire County Council, the lead agency on the project.
- **Environmental Impacts Questioned:** As construction progressed, anxieties about the project's environmental impact grew. Residents questioned the wisdom of expanding motorways in the face of climate change and worried about the loss of green spaces and the potential for increased traffic and pollution.

### **Dorney Lake: Traffic, Parking, and Tensions Rise**

- **Parking Problems Reach Boiling Point:** The popularity of Dorney Lake led to an influx of visitors, exacerbating existing traffic and parking problems, particularly during events. Residents complained about blocked roads, inconsiderate parking, and safety hazards. Frustration mounted as Eton College, which owns Dorney Lake, resisted calls to reduce or eliminate parking charges, which residents believed encouraged visitors to park on surrounding streets.
- **Parish Council Seeks Solutions:** The Parish Council explored options for addressing the parking chaos, including double yellow lines along Court Lane. However, progress was slow, and the process was further complicated by the M4 construction and the need for coordination with Buckinghamshire County Council.
- **Tensions Between Residents and Eton College Grow:** The parking situation at Dorney Lake became a symbol of broader tensions between residents and Eton College. Some residents felt the college was prioritising its own interests over the needs of the community and was not doing enough to mitigate the negative impacts of the lake's popularity.

### **Local Governance in Flux: Uncertainties and Anxieties**

- **Unitary Council Proposal Raises Concerns:** Proposals to merge Buckinghamshire County Council and South Bucks District Council into a single unitary authority generated uncertainty and anxiety within Dorney Parish. Residents worried about the

potential impact on local services and representation, and some questioned whether Dorney might be better served by aligning with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

- **Parish Council Faces Criticism:** The Parish Council faced criticism from some residents who felt it was not effectively representing their interests on these crucial issues. Calls for greater transparency, communication, and community engagement grew louder as residents sought a more active role in shaping Dorney's future.

#### **Heathrow Airport Expansion: Adding to the Anxieties**

- **Increased Flights Before Third Runway Fuel Concerns:** Heathrow Airport's announcement of plans to increase flights by 25,000 per year from 2022, well before the proposed third runway, heightened anxieties about noise and air pollution. Residents were urged to participate in the airport's consultation and express their concerns, highlighting the potential impact on Dorney's environment and quality of life.

#### **Community Life: Resilience and Engagement**

- **Dorney Horticultural Society Show Thrives:** Despite the anxieties and challenges, community life in Dorney showed signs of resilience. The Dorney Horticultural Society's Annual Show enjoyed a resurgence in participation, with a significant increase in exhibitors and entries. The show's success highlighted the enduring appeal of traditional village events and the strong community spirit within Dorney.
- **Dorney Parish News Encourages Debate and Participation:** The *Dorney Parish News*, under its new editor, sought to play an active role in fostering community engagement, encouraging residents to express their views and participate in discussions about the issues facing the village. The publication provided a platform for debate on topics such as the M4 Smart Motorway, Dorney Lake, and local governance, helping residents to share information and connect with each other.

**Overall, 2019 was a challenging year for Dorney Parish, marked by escalating anxieties about the M4 Smart Motorway, Dorney Lake traffic, local government changes, and Heathrow expansion.** Residents faced significant disruption and uncertainty, and tensions sometimes flared as residents sought greater responsiveness from those in positions of authority. Amid these challenges, however, the community also demonstrated resilience, engaging in local events and discussions and working to shape Dorney's future.