

Summary of Important Community Issues in Dorney Parish in 2021

Pandemic and Lockdown

- **COVID-19 continued to dominate life in Dorney throughout 2021**, with lockdowns, restrictions, and the vaccine rollout shaping community activities and concerns.
- The Parish News regularly provided updates on the pandemic, government guidelines, and vaccination information, reflecting the community's focus on navigating this unprecedented situation.
- The closure of Dorney Village Hall due to COVID-19 restrictions impacted many local organisations and activities.
- **Residents expressed a mix of resilience, anxiety, and hope** as they adapted to the "new normal" and looked forward to the easing of restrictions.
- The **mass vaccination program** brought a sense of optimism, but also highlighted the need to remain vigilant and adhere to safety measures.
- The **impact of lockdown on mental health and well-being** was acknowledged, emphasising the importance of community support and connection.

Parish Council and Local Governance

- **Parish Council Elections** took place in May, with significant interest from residents in local issues and a desire for change.
- **Six of the seven incumbent councillors chose not to re-stand**, leading to a largely new council with fresh perspectives and energy.
- **Transparency and accountability** in council decision-making were key themes, with residents advocating for greater communication and consultation.
- **The Parish Council precept increase generated debate**, with some residents questioning the justification for the rise.
- The **transition to the new Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority** created some confusion and required residents to adapt to new structures and representatives.

Traffic, Parking, and Infrastructure

- **The completion of the Court Lane roundabout** at Dorney Reach was welcomed by some, but also raised concerns about potential traffic flow issues.
- **Parking problems around Dorney Lake** persisted, particularly during events, leading to discussions about parking management and enforcement.
- **The ongoing construction of the M4 Smart Motorway** caused disruption and raised concerns about safety and the effectiveness of the new technology.
- **The need for road maintenance and repairs** was highlighted, with residents reporting potholes and uneven surfaces on various roads in the parish.

Community Life and Activities

- The **Dorney Horticultural Society** was unable to hold its annual show or meetings due to the pandemic, but expressed hope for a return in 2022.
- The **Dorney Drama Guild** faced challenges due to lockdown restrictions and the cancellation of the pantomime, impacting its financial stability.
- **Dorney School** navigated the challenges of remote learning and adapted its curriculum to support pupils during the pandemic.
- The **Thames Valley Adventure Playground** remained open for limited hours, providing a valuable resource for families during lockdown.

- **The role of social media platforms, particularly Nextdoor**, in connecting residents and facilitating community support was highlighted.

Environment

- **Concerns about dog fouling on Dorney Common** persisted, with potential risks to cattle health and the environment.
- **The appearance of a large "lake" on Dorney Common** raised questions about water management and the impact of heavy rainfall.
- **Efforts to maintain Roundmoor Ditch and address weed growth** were undertaken to improve water flow and mitigate flooding.
- **The impact of climate change** was acknowledged, with discussions about the need for sustainable practices and reducing carbon emissions.

Overall Themes

- **Resilience and adaptability** were defining characteristics of the Dorney community as residents coped with the ongoing pandemic and its wide-ranging impacts.
- **A desire for change and improvement** in local governance, infrastructure, and community services emerged as key themes.
- **The importance of protecting Dorney's rural character and environment** was emphasised as residents resisted development proposals perceived as threatening to the village's unique identity.
- **A renewed sense of community spirit** was evident, with residents seeking connection, support, and shared experiences amidst the challenges of 2021.