

Summary of Important Community Issues in Dorney Parish in 2022

Planning and Development

- **Orchard Herbs Site:** The unauthorised use of this site for commercial activities like concrete production and airport parking, in violation of Green Belt restrictions, continued to be a **major source of frustration and concern** for residents. Despite ongoing enforcement efforts by Buckinghamshire Council, the issue remained unresolved, prompting calls for stronger action to restore the site to its intended use.
- **Eton College Development Plans:** Eton College's proposals for housing developments in the vicinity of Dorney, particularly the Boveney Court Farm site, raised concerns about the impact on Dorney's rural character, traffic, and the Green Belt. Residents actively engaged in consultations, voicing their objections to large-scale development that they perceived as detrimental to the village's identity and environment.

Traffic and Safety

- **M4 Smart Motorway:** The completion of the M4 Smart Motorway project was significantly delayed, causing ongoing disruption and inconvenience for Dorney residents. Repeated closures of motorway bridges for repairs and maintenance added to frustrations. The effectiveness of the new "digital motorway" in improving traffic flow and safety remained to be seen.
- **Speeding Traffic:** Concerns persisted about speeding vehicles, particularly on Common Road where cattle grazed, posing a risk to both animals and pedestrians. Calls were made for a reduced speed limit and other traffic calming measures to improve safety in this area.
- **Cattle Grid Maintenance:** The condition of the cattle grid on Village Road was a recurring issue, with complaints about its noise and effectiveness in preventing cattle from straying. The Parish Council sought solutions from Buckinghamshire Council to address this longstanding problem.
- **Parking Issues:** Inconsiderate parking in various locations, including near the Pineapple Pub and on Boveney Road, caused inconvenience and safety concerns. The Parish Council explored options for improving parking management to address these problems.

Community Facilities and Services

- **Burnham Health Centre:** Access to appointments and the overall performance of Burnham Health Centre continued to be a source of dissatisfaction for many residents. The Parish Council, along with the local MP, engaged with the centre to seek improvements and address community concerns.
- **Refuse Collection:** The transition to a new waste collection contractor and changes to collection schedules resulted in significant disruption and frustration for residents. Missed collections, particularly for green waste, led to numerous complaints and highlighted the need for improved communication and service reliability.
- **Dorney Lake Access:** Residents expressed their desire for greater access to Dorney Lake for recreational purposes, especially during the summer months when it was closed to the public. The Parish Council aimed to initiate dialogue with Dorney Lake management to explore potential solutions and secure controlled access for residents.

- **Playground 4 Dorney:** The Playground faced challenges in securing a new committee to oversee its operations and fundraising. However, a new team of volunteers stepped forward, ensuring the continuation of this vital community asset.
- **Dorney Village Hall:** The Village Hall underwent refurbishment, making it a more welcoming space for community events and activities. The appointment of a dedicated manager streamlined operations and enhanced the hall's functionality.

Environment

- **Thames Water Dorney Rewilding Project:** Plans for a rewilding project on land owned by Thames Water adjacent to Dorney Common were met with mixed reactions. While some welcomed the potential biodiversity benefits, others raised concerns about the lack of direct communication from Thames Water with residents and the potential impact on the area.
- **Jubilee River Safety:** Following a number of swimming-related fatalities in the Jubilee River, the Environment Agency installed signage warning of the dangers and prohibiting swimming, highlighting the need for continued public awareness campaigns about water safety.
- **Extreme Weather:** Dorney, like much of the UK, experienced extreme weather events in 2022. Storm Eunice in February caused damage, including the felling of a large poplar tree. The prolonged heatwave and drought in the summer resulted in parched landscapes and a hosepipe ban, impacting gardens and raising concerns about water conservation.

Community Engagement and Participation

Despite the challenges of 2022, the Dorney community demonstrated a strong spirit of engagement and resilience. Residents actively participated in Parish Council meetings, voicing their concerns and contributing to discussions on local issues. The revival of the Dorney Annual Show, after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, was a testament to the community's spirit, with enthusiastic participation from residents of all ages.

Overall Themes

- **Protecting Dorney's rural character and environment** emerged as a dominant theme in 2022. Residents actively resisted development proposals perceived as threatening to the village's unique identity and the integrity of the Green Belt.
- **Holding authorities accountable** for addressing local concerns was another key theme. Residents pressed Buckinghamshire Council and Thames Water to resolve issues related to unauthorised development, infrastructure maintenance, and environmental protection.
- **Fostering a strong sense of community** remained vital. The revival of events like the Dorney Annual Show and the emergence of new volunteers for the Playground underscored the community's resilience and commitment to shared spaces and activities.