

Summary of Important Community Issues in Dorney Parish in 2023

Planning and Development

- **Orchard Herbs site:** Throughout 2023, the unauthorised commercial activities and proposed hotel development on this site remained a **major point of contention** for the Dorney community. The Parish Council engaged in extensive efforts, including correspondence with Buckinghamshire Council, the local MP, and neighbouring Parish Councils, to seek enforcement action and prevent further development deemed unsuitable for the Green Belt and detrimental to the village's character.
- **Eton College's Boveney Court Farm development proposal:** Plans for new housing at Boveney Court Farm, submitted by Eton College, generated significant opposition from Dorney residents. The Parish Council submitted a robust response to the proposal, highlighting concerns about increased traffic, impact on the Conservation Area, and potential harm to Dorney Common. Ultimately, planning permission was refused, though the possibility of an appeal by Eton College remained.
- **Dorney Neighbourhood Plan:** The Parish Council made **considerable progress** in developing the Neighbourhood Plan, a key tool for shaping future development in the Parish. A questionnaire was distributed to all residents, gathering valuable feedback on community priorities. Public meetings were held to discuss the plan's vision and objectives, with residents actively participating in shaping its direction. By the end of the year, the plan was nearing completion, with a final meeting planned for early 2024 to seek community endorsement before submission to Bucks Council.

Traffic and Safety

- **Road maintenance:** The condition of several roads within the Parish, particularly those heavily used by HGVs and agricultural vehicles, was a recurring concern. Residents reported numerous potholes and uneven surfaces, prompting the Parish Council to persistently press Buckinghamshire Council for repairs and resurfacing. By year's end, Village Road had been resurfaced, marking a significant improvement.
- **Speeding traffic:** Concerns were expressed about speeding vehicles, especially on Common Road and Marsh Lane, where the safety of cattle and pedestrians was at risk. The Parish Council investigated the possibility of reducing the speed limit on Common Road and explored other traffic calming measures.
- **Dangerous parking:** Instances of inconsiderate parking, particularly near the entrance to Oak Stubbs Lane and outside the Pineapple Pub, were reported, highlighting the need for improved parking management in those areas.

Community Facilities and Services

- **Dorney Village Hall:** Discussions commenced regarding a potential transfer of the Village Hall charity to the Parish Council. The rationale for this proposition included addressing the dwindling number of available trustees and ensuring the hall's long-term sustainability. A decision was pending further advice and assessment.
- **Dorney Playground:** The playground remained a valuable community asset, but maintaining it presented challenges. Fundraising efforts were undertaken to replace aging play equipment. A shortage of volunteers to assist with playground duties was also reported, highlighting the need for greater community support.

- **Dorney Lake access:** Residents expressed their desire for greater access to Dorney Lake, particularly during the summer months when it was closed to the public. The Parish Council aimed to arrange meetings with Dorney Lake management to explore possibilities for controlled access for residents.

Environment

- **Water quality and sewage:** Concerns were raised about sewage discharges into local waterways, prompting discussions about holding Thames Water accountable for improving water quality. The Parish Council actively engaged in monitoring the situation and advocating for cleaner rivers.
- **Flooding:** Instances of flooding were reported, including on Lake End Common and around Dorney Lake. The Parish Council investigated potential causes, including water management practices, to seek solutions and mitigate future flooding.
- **Wildlife protection:** The need to protect local wildlife was highlighted, particularly in light of deer fatalities due to vehicle collisions. The Parish Council considered installing wildlife warning signs in key locations to raise awareness among drivers.

Community Engagement and Participation

Throughout 2023, Dorney residents demonstrated active engagement in local affairs. The Parish Council held regular meetings open to the public, providing a forum for discussing community issues and seeking solutions. Residents' groups, including the Dorney Horticultural Society, organised events and contributed to village life. Public consultations were held on key planning matters, enabling residents to voice their opinions and influence decisions.

Overall Themes

- **Preserving Dorney's distinct rural character and resisting unsuitable development** remained paramount concerns for the community.
- **Improving road safety and addressing infrastructure needs** were ongoing priorities for the Parish Council.
- **Engaging residents in local decision-making** through consultations, meetings, and volunteer opportunities was crucial for fostering a cohesive community.
- **Balancing the needs of residents with the preservation of Dorney's environment** was essential for the Parish's long-term well-being.