

## **Summary of Important Community Issues in Dorney Parish in 2017**

**2017 was a year of growing awareness and mobilisation for Dorney Parish residents, as they confronted several long-standing issues that impacted their quality of life.** Traffic and parking problems around Dorney Lake and within the village itself emerged as a central concern. The impending M4 Smart Motorway project loomed large, generating uncertainty and anxiety about its potential impact. The Parish Council's role in representing residents' interests and ensuring transparency in local decision-making processes came under increasing scrutiny.

### **Traffic and Parking: The Dominant Issue**

- **Dorney Lake: A Source of Mounting Frustration:** The popularity of Dorney Lake continued to grow in 2017, bringing with it an influx of visitors and escalating traffic and parking problems. Residents expressed frustration about blocked roads, inconsiderate parking on pavements and cycleways, and a perceived lack of action from both Eton College, the lake's owner, and the Parish Council.
- **The Dorney Traffic Working Group (DTWG): A Community Response Emerges:** A group of residents formed the Dorney Traffic Working Group (DTWG) to address the traffic and parking issues around Dorney Lake and within the village. The DTWG conducted surveys, collected data, and presented recommendations to the Parish Council and Buckinghamshire County Council, advocating for solutions to improve safety and reduce congestion.
- **Tensions with Eton College:** Tensions between residents and Eton College, which owns Dorney Lake, escalated as residents felt the college was not doing enough to address the traffic and parking problems generated by the lake's popularity. The DTWG engaged in discussions with Dorney Lake Management, seeking solutions such as expanded free parking for local residents, temporary parking restrictions during events, and keeping the lake open during the Christmas/New Year period to alleviate parking pressure on Court Lane.
- **Parish Council's Role Questioned:** The Parish Council's response to the traffic and parking concerns raised by the DTWG drew criticism from some residents who felt the council was not adequately representing their interests. The council's initial decision not to support the DTWG's recommendations for traffic calming measures in the village sparked debate and prompted calls for greater transparency and responsiveness to community concerns.

### **The M4 Smart Motorway: Uncertainty and Anxiety**

- **Project Details Emerge, Concerns Grow:** As details of the M4 Smart Motorway project, including the replacement of the Marsh Lane bridge, became clearer in 2017, residents expressed growing concern about the potential disruption and long-term impacts. The closure of Common Road for bridge repairs offered a glimpse of the inconvenience residents anticipated. Anxieties about noise, vibration, the loss of mature trees, and the potential for increased traffic and pollution after the project's completion fuelled discussions.
- **Parish Council Seeks Information and Engagement:** The Parish Council sought to engage with Highways England and Buckinghamshire County Council to gather information about the project timeline and ensure that residents' concerns were

considered. Council members expressed frustration with the lack of clear communication and coordination from the responsible agencies.

### **Broadband: A Continuing Challenge**

- **Slow Speeds and Frustration:** Dorney residents continued to grapple with slow broadband speeds, hindering their ability to work from home, access online services, and keep up with the digital world. Frustration grew as BT's plans for fiber optic broadband rollout in Dorney were delayed until 2018, leaving residents reliant on outdated copper wire connections.
- **Exploring Alternatives:** Residents and the Parish Council explored alternative solutions, including the possibility of connecting Dorney to the fiber optic network at Dorney Lake, but these options faced technical and logistical challenges. The lack of progress on improving broadband infrastructure in Dorney underscored the digital divide facing rural communities.

### **Community Life and Events**

- **Dorney Horticultural Society: A Hub of Activity:** The Dorney Horticultural Society continued to play a vital role in village life, hosting a range of events throughout the year, including a Spring Buffet, a visit to the Royal Horticultural Society Garden at Wisley, and the annual Dorney Horticultural Show. These events provided opportunities for residents to socialise, share their gardening expertise, and celebrate the village's rural heritage.
- **Dorney Parish News: A Platform for Debate and Information:** The *Dorney Parish News*, a long-standing community publication, continued to serve as a platform for sharing information, discussing local issues, and fostering community engagement. The magazine featured articles on topics ranging from traffic calming to broadband to the history of Dorney, providing residents with a valuable source of local news and perspectives.

**2017 was a year of heightened awareness for Dorney Parish residents.** As they faced mounting challenges related to traffic, parking, and infrastructure, they began to mobilise and seek solutions. The formation of the DTWG and the increasing scrutiny of the Parish Council's role signalled a growing desire for residents to actively shape their community's future. The looming M4 Smart Motorway project and the unresolved broadband issues highlighted the challenges facing rural communities as they sought to balance progress with the preservation of their unique character and quality of life.