

Summary of Important Community Issues in Dorney Parish in 2014

The year 2014 was marked by a mixture of celebration and concern in Dorney Parish. The successful completion of the Village Hall refurbishment brought a renewed sense of community spirit, while residents grappled with the challenges of inadequate broadband infrastructure, persistent traffic and parking issues, and the looming prospect of the M4 Smart Motorway project.

Village Hall Refurbishment: A Triumph for Community Effort

- **Grand Opening in February:** The long-awaited refurbishment of the Village Hall was finally completed in early 2014, and the community celebrated with a grand opening dance on February 8th. The project, which had spanned several years, transformed the hall into a bright, clean, and welcoming space for a variety of activities.
- **New Amenities and Possibilities:** The revitalised hall boasted new amenities, including a new roof, repaired drains, updated electrical systems, a modern kitchen, and, perhaps most importantly, new toilets. These improvements not only enhanced the functionality of the space but also created opportunities for a wider range of community events and gatherings.

Broadband: A Persistent Source of Frustration

- **Slow Speeds Hamper Residents:** Residents in both Dorney and Dorney Reach continued to struggle with slow broadband speeds, hindering their ability to work from home, access online services, and participate in the increasingly digital world.
- **Parish Council Investigates Options:** The Parish Council actively investigated options for improving broadband infrastructure, including exploring the possibility of connecting to the fibre optic cable installed for the 2012 Olympics at Dorney Lake. However, these efforts faced technical and logistical challenges, leaving residents frustrated by the lack of progress.
- **Disappointment with Openreach:** Openreach, the division of BT responsible for broadband infrastructure, presented limited options to the Parish Council, suggesting either accessing government funding through Bucks County Council, pursuing a privately funded solution, or considering alternatives such as satellite internet.

Traffic and Parking: Growing Concerns

- **Dorney Lake Popularity Exacerbates Problems:** The increasing popularity of Dorney Lake, with its various events and recreational activities, brought a steady stream of visitors to the parish, exacerbating existing traffic and parking issues. Residents complained about congested roads, inconsiderate parking, and safety hazards.
- **Parking Chaos on Event Days:** The situation became particularly acute during events at Dorney Lake, with residents reporting blocked roads, cars parked on pavements and verges, and a general sense of chaos.
- **Tensions with Eton College:** Frustration grew with Eton College, the owner of Dorney Lake, as residents felt the college was not taking sufficient responsibility for addressing the traffic and parking problems generated by the lake's activities.

M4 Smart Motorway Project: Uncertainty and Apprehension

- **Initial Plans Spark Debate:** As details of the proposed M4 Smart Motorway project, including plans to replace the Marsh Lane and Village Road/Lake End Road bridges,

emerged in 2014, residents expressed concern about the potential disruption and long-term impact on the parish.

- **Parish Council Seeks Clarity:** The Parish Council engaged with Highways England to gather information and ensure that residents' concerns were considered in the planning process.
- **Concerns about Noise and Disruption:** Residents worried about increased noise pollution, construction traffic, and the impact on local roads and businesses during the project's implementation. The closure of Common Road for bridge repairs served as a reminder of the potential for disruption.

Community Life: Celebrating Heritage and Striving for Improvement

- **Best Kept Village Competition: A Catalyst for Action:** Dorney's participation in the Buckinghamshire Best Kept Village Competition highlighted both the community's strengths and areas for improvement. While the parish received a Certificate of Merit, the judges' comments revealed concerns about the impact of traffic and noise.
- **Remembering World War I:** The centenary of World War I prompted residents to reflect on the parish's history and honour those who served. The Parish Council supported efforts to commemorate the war, including plans for a small gathering, the planting of poppy seeds, and the possibility of erecting a memorial stone. A local resident, Geoffrey Atkinson, organised a reading of wartime material and songs, which was well-received by the community.
- **Dorney Horticultural Society: A Flourishing Tradition:** The Dorney & District Horticultural Society continued to play a vital role in community life, hosting a variety of events throughout the year, including a steak pie supper, a cheese and wine evening, garden visits, and the annual 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 Vital Platform for Community Dialogue

- **A Forum for Diverse Voices:** The *Dorney Parish News* served as a valuable forum for residents to express their views on a wide range of local issues. Letters to the editor, opinion pieces, and reports from Parish Council meetings allowed residents to engage in discussions about broadband, traffic, the M4 Smart Motorway project, and other topics that impacted their lives.

2014 was a year of contrasts for Dorney Parish: the joy of celebrating the newly refurbished Village Hall was tempered by ongoing frustrations with inadequate broadband, mounting traffic and parking problems, and anxieties about the impending M4 Smart Motorway project. The community's active engagement in local issues, as reflected in the pages of the *Dorney Parish News*, demonstrated a shared commitment to shaping the future of their village.