

## **Dorney Parish in 2009: Navigating Change, Embracing Community, and Preparing for the Olympics**

The year 2009 was a pivotal one for Dorney Parish, marked by a growing awareness of the approaching 2012 London Olympics and the implications of hosting a global event at Dorney Lake. The *Dorney Parish News* provides a fascinating window into village life during this period, revealing a community actively engaged in local affairs, striving to preserve its unique character, and grappling with the challenges and opportunities presented by the Olympics.

### **Dorney Lake and the Olympics: From Local Amenity to Global Stage**

- **Construction Begins:** While the 2012 Olympics were still three years away, construction work to prepare Dorney Lake for its role as the rowing and canoe sprint venue commenced in September 2009. This included replacing the Finish Line bridge, constructing a new bridge connecting the main lake and the return channel, and upgrading the Drove way to accommodate construction traffic.
- **Access and Transport Plans:** As the scale of the Olympic operation became clearer, concerns about traffic congestion and access to Dorney during the Games emerged. The Parish Council actively engaged with Olympic organisers to ensure that residents' needs were considered in transportation plans.
- **Seeking a Positive Olympic Legacy:** Beyond the immediate impact of the Games, the Parish Council and residents recognised the potential for the Olympics to leave a positive legacy for Dorney. This included advocating for improved broadband infrastructure in the village, which was already lagging behind.

### **Community Life: A Tapestry of Events and Initiatives**

- **The Dorney & District Horticultural Society (DDHS):** The DDHS continued to be a vibrant presence in village life, organising the Annual Horticultural Show, garden visits, talks by guest speakers, and a Harvest Supper. The society's efforts also contributed to Dorney's entry in the Buckinghamshire Best Kept Village competition.
- **Village Hall Refurbishment Plans:** Recognising the need for a larger and more modern village hall, the **Dorney Village Hall Management Committee (DVHMC)** began exploring options for refurbishment or a potential new build. Fundraising efforts were initiated to support the project.
- **Dorney Youth Club:** The Dorney Youth Club actively engaged young people in the community, organising events like the annual Fete. The club also provided opportunities for swimming, badminton, and other activities.

### **Key Issues and Concerns**

- **Traffic and Parking:** Inconsiderate parking and traffic congestion were recurring problems, particularly around the school and on roads leading to Dorney Lake. The Parish Council explored measures to address these issues, including the installation of bollards and discussions about yellow lines.
- **The "Ward Herbs" Site:** An ongoing planning dispute concerning the Ward Herbs site continued to occupy the Parish Council. A public inquiry into the matter was held in February 2009.

- **Broadband Frustrations:** The slow and unreliable broadband speeds in Dorney were a source of growing frustration for residents. Hopes that the Olympics might bring improvements were tempered by the realisation that immediate action was unlikely.

### **The *Dorney Parish News* as a Community Forum**

The *Dorney Parish News* served as a vital platform for sharing information, expressing opinions, and reflecting the diverse perspectives within Dorney Parish. The magazine's blend of community announcements, Parish Council reports, and letters to the editor provides a rich tapestry of village life in 2009.

**2009 was a year of transition for Dorney Parish.** The impending Olympics began to cast a tangible shadow over village life, bringing with it a mixture of excitement, anticipation, and some trepidation about the potential impact. Amidst these preparations, Dorney's residents continued to nurture their community, celebrate their traditions, and engage in the issues that shaped their village.