

District Councillor Update: **Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers**

Ward member for Goring and South Stoke

June/July 2023



Dear Goring residents,

Please see below my latest set of updates. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I hope you all manage to get some rest over the summer holidays.

Didcot Garden Party launch day

Didcot Garden Party launches on **Saturday 22 July**. As a parent I understand how challenging holidays can be for families especially given rising costs and unaffordable childcare during the summer months. This is why at South Oxon we have been running the Didcot Garden party with free and low-cost activities on an annual basis, to help make the summer special for children of the district.

You can visit the [latest news page on the South website](#) for more information. You can also download the free brochure with details of all the free and fantastic events, performances, sports and activities taking place across the summer.

Councillor Community Grants Funding

A new round of funding from the Councillor Community Grant scheme has launched in South Oxfordshire, to help local charities and organisations across the district.

As part of the scheme, every ward in South Oxfordshire has funding to support local projects that directly benefit local residents. Organisations can now apply for grants from £250 up to a maximum of £5,000 from each ward councillor where the project is located.

Before applying, applicants are encouraged to get in touch with their local councillor to discuss their project and visit our website for further information and details on eligibility. Applications are made online and are open until midday on Friday 20 October 2023.

The last round of funding, which closed earlier this year, awarded £179,824 to help 99 projects across the district. Recipients ranged from biodiversity and wildlife projects, to those improving mental and physical health and wellbeing, improvements to community buildings and recreation areas, and more.

You can find out more about the Councillor Community Grant scheme on our website at www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants or by contacting the Community Enablement team at: grants@southandvale.gov.uk

Rural England Prosperity Fund

More than £1.2m is being made available to help improve the rural economy across our districts. We've secured funding from the government's Rural England Prosperity Fund, which can be used to provide a boost to projects such as creating rural business hubs, setting up community energy schemes and diversifying farm businesses beyond agriculture.

Any organisation with legal status will be able to apply for the funding when it opens in the Autumn this year. This will include:

- Public sector organisations;
- Higher and further education institutions;
- Private sector companies;
- Voluntary organisations;
- Registered charities.

Before the application process begins, the Economic Development team wants to understand which organisations might apply and for what type of project, and so is asking anyone interested to send an Expression of Interest in the run up to the funding scheme opening later this year.

There are more details on the scheme on the SODC Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) page.

South Oxfordshire Bathing Water Status

Organisations across South Oxfordshire are planning to apply for bathing water status on the River Thames at Wallingford and Henley, which, if awarded, should result in a safer, less polluted environment for swimmers, river users and wildlife. Although not in our own ward, this would have a hugely positive impact for so many of us locally.

SODC is aiming to work with Wallingford Town Council to make a joint application to the government department responsible for granting bathing water status – the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). It is also supporting a bid for bathing water status being made by Henley Town Council. Both applications will be supported by environmental charity Thames21.

Thames21 will use data gathered from the 2023 bathing season in the applications. This will include the numbers of those using the river as well as water samples taken by Thames21 and local trained volunteers. Thames21 plan to publicise the water quality data on an online story map on their website during the bathing season.

If bathing water status is awarded, Thames Water would be legally required to treat waste outflows to a much higher standard, meaning they could not release water into the river without ensuring the removal of bacteria which is harmful to the health of people and wildlife.

It would also mean that during the bathing season, from May to September each year, the Environment Agency would be required to monitor the water quality and publicise the results.

SODC and Wallingford Town Council applied for bathing water status at Wallingford Beach in November 2022, supported by Thames21 but that application was turned down. In a letter to councillors, the Minister for environmental quality and resilience, explained that the Wallingford application was rejected because too few bathers use the area.

As Cllr Freddie Van Mierlo, SODC Cabinet member for climate change and nature recovery, said: “It was extremely disappointing that the Secretary of State for Environment rejected the application for bathing water status at Wallingford last year, despite strong local support and work by South Oxfordshire District Council. The idea that Wallingford Beach should be rejected because it is not being used enough is perverse logic. There will be more bathers when there is confidence in the water quality. The suggestion from Defra appears to be that something will only be done if swimmers are willing to brave dirty water first.

“If the government is unwilling to support cleaner waters in South Oxfordshire, the council will move ahead towards that goal, working with Thames21 and our council partners.”

Make a Splash at Riverside

The newly refurbished splash pad at Riverside Park and Pools in Wallingford will be ready to welcome visitors from Saturday 8th July. Opening times are 9am to 6pm, and it is free to use with no bookings required.

The refurbishment work, which started in May, has introduced lots of new and exciting features including:

- Water arches
- Raised features
- Tap Tap activators children can use to trigger water sequences
- Play zones for children of different ages and abilities
- A whoosh shower
- Sky drenchers... and more!

As well as the bright and colourful new features, the council has focused on the health and safety of children and families in the design of the splash pad. Uneven paving slabs have been removed, repairs have been carried out on the promenade and perimeter area of the site and a new disabled access pathway has been installed from the splash pad to the car park to make access easier for those in wheelchairs and those using buggies and pushchairs. The new surface of the splash pad is made of a rubber crumb with UV protection to prevent algae forming which will reduce the chances of slips and falls when children are running around. The splash pads, which will use water from the river and rainfall, will also minimise water and power use, which will also mean it reduces its carbon emissions.

South Oxfordshire District Council, which owns the site, used £296,450 of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money, which comes from developer contributions to the local area to finance the project.

Help for residents to reduce energy bills

Retrofitting is the process of making changes to existing buildings which help reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. It makes homes and buildings more energy efficient and cheaper to run.

We've put together a helpful [briefing on retrofitting homes and community buildings](#), that explains the basics of retrofitting and where residents and organisations can get help, including financial help, to implement this. The team is also inviting local community organisations to an online forum on improving energy efficiency in community buildings from 6-7pm on Tuesday 11 July. This will include speakers and practical information for groups, please forward to your local networks who may wish to attend. Please email climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk to register and the Climate and Biodiversity team will send you the meeting link. There is another forum planned for residential retrofitting advice in October this year.

Rubbish Updates!

It's important that residents are aware that if they have problems with waste not being collected, or if they notice situations whereby Biffa operatives are putting electrical recycling into general waste trucks (for example), please report directly to Biffa, either by phone on 03000 610610, or at admin.southoxford.biffa.co.uk. They can then investigate and resolve for you. If you have already done this and the issue continues, please escalate to the Council's waste team at waste.team@southandvale.gov.uk, or by calling 01235 422146.

Anyone producing or transporting controlled waste must ensure it is disposed of legally and that a record is kept of what the waste is and where it's going. It would be helpful if we could remind our residents of this responsibility in parish magazines/communications, with the advice that if you see a fly-tip or suspect that someone is involved in fly-tipping, please report via southoxon.gov.uk/flytipping, or call 03000 610610.

Have Your Say on Air Quality

Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils have put together a new plan of action for the next four years to improve air quality in the districts and now they are asking residents to have their say on the proposals.

The current plans have been in place for eight to nine years and have been reviewed to ensure that the current pollutant levels are taken into account and that the right plans are in place to deal with the current obstacles. This has led to a new Joint Air Quality Action Plan for both districts, and the council would like to hear what local organisations and residents think of it.

The good news is that in the last five years most places have seen a consistent reduction in one of the main pollutants which is measured, Nitrogen Dioxide.

The councils would like residents' views on the action plan and have devised a survey to collate opinions.

The [survey is available here](https://survey.southandvale.gov.uk/s/AirQualityActionPlan) (or <https://survey.southandvale.gov.uk/s/AirQualityActionPlan>). It opens on national Clean Air Day (15 June) and runs until 27 July.

Homes for Ukraine – call for landlords

In Oxfordshire, many arrangements between hosts and Ukrainian nationals are coming to an end. Alongside Oxfordshire County Council and the other districts, we are launching a campaign aimed at encouraging landlords to come forward for more information about housing Ukrainians. They may be current landlords or people considering becoming landlords.

Many Ukrainians in Oxfordshire will have settled in local communities and found work, so identifying a range of affordable properties across the county is very important to allow them to start rebuilding their future with more independence.

Please help to spread the word by sharing with your local networks. Landlords can contact the central housing team by emailing oxfordshirehousingcapacity@southandvale.gov.uk or calling 07858687569 or 07849574859. For more information, visit our [South Oxfordshire Homes for Ukraine webpage](#) and

Don't miss out on EV deals

There is currently an introductory offer for those planning to join the [EV car clubs in Oxfordshire](#). Co-Wheels, which runs many of the car clubs in our districts and across the county, has a deal which offers no joining fee and £10 towards your first hire. Find out more on the [Oxfordshire County Council's website](#).

I hope you find these updates helpful

Sincerely,

CLlr Maggie Filipova-Rivers

