

PARISH REPORT AUGUST 2019

TACKLEY CROSSING

Network Rail held a drop-in session with proposals on the various options to enable them to close the Tackley crossing. Everybody agrees with the closure on safety reasons however there are some differences over the preferred option. I think we can all agree that options with the stairs towering over residents' gardens are simply not acceptable. It would be good when Network Rail return in the autumn if there is a preferred option.

BURFORD HGV LIMIT

When the original weight limit proposal came forward I was against it due to the possible displacement of HGVs which could impact on Bladon and Woodstock. The recent proposal was for an experimental order which can be stopped at anytime should there be an adverse impact on other locations. I have successfully added monitoring of air quality into the experimental order as it would not be right if air quality elsewhere is reduced due to the ban.

There are several issues that need to be put in place before the experimental order comes into effect mainly around signage. The proposal is being funded by Burford Town Council and if successful could be a template for similar schemes across the county.

GROWTH DEAL FUNDING

The decision by the new Liberal/Green coalition at South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) to defer endorsing the emerging Local Plan has serious implications for the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid which would provide £218 million of vital infrastructure for the Didcot area.

The preferred options of the coalition at the council meeting on 18th July were to either revise or withdraw the emerging Local Plan however the decision was deferred. Should either of these options be taken then the probable outcome is the collapse of the HIF bid with the consequent severe impact on the Didcot area infrastructure. This would then probably mean South's existing Local Plan would come under pressure and large-scale speculative planning applications might come forward on inappropriate sites. Neighbourhood Plans that many town and parish councils have spent time working on will continue to provide some protection, but there is a real danger that developers might seek to exploit the situation as there would be no new Local Plan for Neighbourhood Plans to align with.

Problems are not confined to SODC; if there is no HIF then the Vale Local Plan could also fail.

This could mean that within months of new administrations in South & Vale taking office, both Local Plans might fail due to the loss of £218 million for vital infrastructure in Didcot. A further consequence could then be the failure of the £215 million Growth Deal which contains £60 million for much needed affordable homes.

The only way to protect both Local Plans and deliver £433 million funding for Oxfordshire is for South Oxfordshire DC to confirm it will not withdraw the emerging Local Plan but will satisfy its ambitions by seeking a review at an appropriate time in the future.

I am working with members and officers at SODC to find a solution.

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COUNTRYFILE LIVE

Countryfile Live returns to Blenheim for 4 days at the start of the month. There will be delays and congestion as the visitors arrive and depart, I know that the organisers work hard to keep these to a minimum. This is good publicity for Blenheim and Woodstock with many visitors returning throughout the year.

COLOCATION OF POLICE AT WOODSTOCK FIRE STATION

The local police team will now share facilities with the Fire Brigade at the Fire station. This sort of co-location makes sense and is something I am working on across all areas of the public sector in Oxfordshire.

CHARGING POINTS

The electric car revolution is set to continue in Oxfordshire thanks to a successful county council bid for a slice of a £37m government fund. Oxfordshire is set to host two major initiatives to provide more charging points for electric vehicles (EVs) across the county.

The projects have been awarded funding from Innovate UK as part of the government's £37 million investment into British engineering to transform electric charging infrastructure, revolutionising the experience for the record levels of EV drivers on UK roads.

Park and Charge will see up to 300 chargers installed in residential 'charging hubs' using car parks located in residential areas where properties don't have their own off-street parking.

The second project, VPACH (Virgin Park and Charge), will use existing Virgin Media cabinets to reduce the cost of installing roadside EV chargers and minimise the amount of street clutter needed for power supply.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth

07956270 318

ian.hudspeth@oxfordshire.gov.uk