



## Charlbury Town Council News

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### Charlbury Market

The Town Council's Food Team helped local chef Chloe Horner to organise the new Charlbury Market. It ran for five weeks in September/October 2022 as a trial and is now taking a break. Charlbury Market is a local food market on Saturday mornings, with a small collection of stalls selling locally-grown and locally-prepared food. Feedback from stallholders and those attending has been very positive, including: supporting local businesses; enabling people to buy a range of locally-produced good quality food in one place; bringing more footfall to the town centre; creating a friendly, social and accessible event. The group has been gathering more feedback and will be meeting with other community organisations to scope out potential restart of the market in Spring 2023.



### Local buses: use 'em or lose 'em?

The Government has requested that all local authorities work with their bus operators to ensure financially sustainable services going forward, with operators required to identify all services as either commercial, marginal or non-commercial. Following this exercise, both bus routes S3 and X9 serving Charlbury were declared as non-commercial by their operators. This puts the future of our buses in jeopardy.

The County Council has identified funding for the services in order to give them time to return to self-sufficiency over the next two years. Therefore, contracts have been awarded for continuation of these services at their current level until August 2024.

The County Council does not have a budget for ongoing support of non-commercial services, and continuation of these routes beyond August 2024 cannot be guaranteed if patronage has not increased to a sustainable level. It's a question of use them or lose them.

The Town Council is looking at ways of promoting bus services locally to give them the best possible chance of survival. We are looking to see if 'real-time information' displays are possible at bus stops and we will engage with other communities on the bus routes. Let us know if you have ideas for how to encourage people to use buses more regularly.

You can check the local bus routes and times at [oxontime.com](http://oxontime.com) and [bustimes.org](http://bustimes.org).

### **Bell Hotel**

The Town Council secured Asset of Community Value status for The Bell earlier this year. Unexpectedly, in August we were told that owners Greene King planned to sell the Bell. Under the powers, an Asset can have a sale delayed to give the community a right to bid, as has been seen with around 10 pubs across Oxfordshire. A public meeting was held in September by the Town Council to discuss this. After the meeting, we were told that a business running several local pubs was negotiating to buy The Bell, which has not been put on the open market. At the time of going to press, though, the situation regarding The Bell was less than clear, so the Town Council will establish the current situation and protect this vital community asset.

### **Traffic**

A Town Council online survey on extending **20mph speed limit** throughout the town was held in September/October 2022. Of 169 responses were received, 77.5% were in favour of the extended 20mph speed limit, and 22.5% against it. As a result of our survey, the County Council will shortly formally consult the town on details of the scheme.

Safety on The Slade is a concern, especially around the entrance to Crawborough and the Primary School. With potential financial support from the County Council and at a cost estimated at £15,000 from Town Council funds, we put out another online survey in November 2022 asking residents if they would support the replacement of the current pedestrian refuge at the top of Crawborough with a zebra crossing. At the time of going to press, respondents were firmly in favour of a **zebra crossing** here and if the final results are in favour, the County Council will consult the town formally on this proposal.

Work to make the **Enstone Road crossroads** slightly safer for pedestrians by reducing the road width (and thereby traffic speeds), and to improve sight lines for traffic leaving the Slade, are now complete. The Town Council has also approved funding for a **build-out on Banbury Hill** which would require drivers who are entering the town to give way to traffic leaving. This is an effective way of slowing cars as they enter town.

Much more work is needed around the town to make the roads and footways safer for cyclists, pedestrians and users of mobility scooters. The County Council's process for making this happen involves towns and villages creating their own **Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)**. Because of the Town Council's proactivity in seeking safer walking and cycling measures for the town, we are lucky enough to have a County Council officer whose specific role this autumn is to help us to develop an LCWIP for Charlbury, and residents will be engaged during its creation.

### **Charlbury Children's Bike Rally**

This year, the Town Council's Journeys Team took on the running of the Children's Bike Rally (12th September 2022). As well as the traditional short route touring the town's five places of worship, we added a ten-mile loop to give some of the older children a bit more of a challenge.



The route wiggled up past the school and through Ticknell Piece to Ditchley Road, then wound through the wonderful grounds of Ditchley Park before coming back down Ditchley Road into town. This longer route was made possible by Ditchley leaving the front and back gates open for us, and moving the cattle from part of the route to keep us all safe. Over 65 children and 40-odd accompanying adults did the ride, and we raised hundreds of pounds. The proceeds were shared between the Charlbury School Association and Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. More importantly perhaps, it gave children and parents a chance to enjoy riding around some of the lovely countryside that surrounds us without fear of cars tearing past at speed.

The Journeys team wishes to thank Ditchley for letting us cycle around the estate, and the many church volunteers who acted as marshals along the short and medium routes in the town – and above to thank the rally’s founder Basil Eastwood, without whom the rally would not exist at all.

The rally was followed by a picnic and Bike Gymkhana on Wychwood Paddocks (the school playing field), while riders had their bikes fixed and tweaked for free by the Windrush Bike Project ‘bike doctors’! For the grown-ups, there was a selection of e-bikes to try out.

### **Car club survey**

Over 160 people took part in the Town Council’s car club survey earlier this year. A car club would allow people from in and around Charlbury to book a shared car by the hour or day. We wanted to find out how many people would be interested in using a car club, what types of vehicle they would use and when they would want them. There were high levels of enthusiasm, with 140 people saying they were definitely or maybe interested. For context, car club cars typically need around 40 users to be viable.

The distribution of desired usage was also helpful, with 24% of people wanting to use the cars during weekdays (biggest demand is usually evenings and weekends). Over 70% of people would be happy to use a car within a 10-minute walk from their home. More than 120 people said that if a car club car could work, they would either avoid buying a second car or be able to sell their own car. That’s a staggering 300 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> saved, or around 2,400 flights to Rome per year. We are currently looking at options for making a car club a reality in Charlbury.

### **Low-carbon homes**

The Town Council’s Buildings Group wants to look at ways to help community buildings and individual householders to install retrofit and low-energy alternatives by looking at the following areas:

- Producing whole-house retrofit plans for 10 different house types in Charlbury – this means an assessment of a home’s current emissions and modelling to show how retrofitting could improve its energy usage – and we have just secured funding for this work.
- Raising awareness by engaging the planning system so there would be no unwanted barriers if people do choose to retrofit.
- Enabling the supply chain by encouraging local trades to train in the relevant skills.
- Understanding and communicating what financial help is available to help with retrofit for homes.

### **Fallen leaves, snow and ice**

At this time of year, fallen leaves can become slippery and cause a hazard, particularly to elderly and frail people. If you are able to clear leaves from pavements near your home that would be appreciated. As winter approaches, ice and snow may also be a possible hazard. If this happens please try to clear your own “patch” and look out for vulnerable neighbours - thank you.

## **Permissive paths**

Permissive paths through Nine Acres Recreation Ground will be closed all day on Thursday 5th January 2023 in accordance with recommended practice to ensure that the access retains its permissive status. Similar closures of permissive paths through Wigwell will occur on the same day by order of the Wychwood Forest Trust. Residents with gates opening onto to Oxpens Allotments, Nine Acres Recreation Ground and Wigwell are also reminded that these do not constitute a Right of Way. The permissive path between Hundley Way and Banbury Hill Farm (and the Old Shed) will be closed on Sunday 8th January 2023.