

November & December 2025

Many thanks for the welcome I have received over the last month having been recently elected to be your councillor on the Vale of White Horse District Council.

I have attended a few parish council meetings already and it has been a pleasure to meet with you and listen to the activities going on in the various villages and where I can help. I look forward to attending those parish councils I haven't yet over the coming weeks.

On Wednesday 10th December I attended my first full council meeting and shortly will have confirmed which committees I will sit on and where I will be the council's representative.

Proposed reservoir consultation

I attended the recent community information event at The Beacon in Wantage hosted by Thames Water on the current proposals for the reservoir near Abingdon. Although clearly a lot of work has gone into the proposal, there are still many questions around the size, environmental impact and the growing costs.

I also attended a drop in event for Councillors at the East Challow Village Hall where I met several of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust senior leadership team and they shared their broader canal restoration plans focussing specifically on the update to the canal-related element of the SESRO proposal since the proposals in 2009 - the channel to the west and north of the proposed reservoir and a surface channel under the A34 to the River Thames have been changed to a channel only around the reservoir with no mention of taking the channel under the A34 to the River Thames. The short version is that the implications of this would make it much harder to restore the canal and would remove an important flood alleviation measure. The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust highlights features that, if they are included as an integral part of the reservoir proposal, will enable their work to restore the canal to continue. More information can be found here:

<https://wbct.org.uk/south-east-reservoir-strategic-option-sesro-statutory-consultation/>

With only a few more weeks to go, now is the time to raise any questions or concerns. To take part in Thames Water's public consultation on this proposed South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO), you can [have your say on Thames Water's consultation webpages](#) and [read more about the proposals](#) before the imminent 13 January 2026 deadline.

Rural communities survey

I know that many of the issues that come up in our villages relate to the very nature of our villages being rural. The Rural Services Network's [Delivering for All survey](#) takes just 8–10 minutes to share your experiences. The survey covers housing, healthcare, transport, digital connectivity, planning and net zero, all areas that affect everyday rural life. Responses are anonymous and will directly inform RSN's work with Government, MPs and Select Committees. By adding your voice, you'll help build the evidence needed to secure fairer funding, better services, and stronger recognition of rural challenges and opportunities.

Fibre broadband

I am now included in the various emails between Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and West Challow and Childrey parish councillors to support obtaining better fibre broadband to both villages.

Sewage discharges

Barry Gooch and other Future Flood Resilience volunteers are continuing work to reduce raw sewage discharges in Wantage, Grove and West Challow. They plan for a site visit with Thames Water in early January and will then provide an update that I will pass on.

Disabled facilities grant

A reminder that there is the Disabled Facilities Grant to help disabled and vulnerable residents make their homes safer, more comfortable, and better suited to their needs. It is a means-tested grant providing financial help for home adaptations such as installing ramps and stairlifts for easier access, fitting level-access showers, or improving heating and insulation. The grant is up to a maximum of £50,000 to help those who need it most.

To apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant, the first step is to contact an Occupational Therapist to see if you're eligible. For more information on applying for grants and loans please see the dedicated website page [Vale](#).

East Challow

I understand from OCC Cllr Emma Markham that some residents in the Vale have requested support for a larger route 68 bus operating during school start and finish times. This bus runs from Faringdon to Wantage, however, this bus only has a capacity of 20 seats. Children in the Vale want to use this bus to attend the King Alfred school in Wantage but are unable to and cannot afford the cost of a school bus pass (roughly £1k a year) and so are relying on private car journeys to get to school, causing increased traffic and congestion. Emma has spoken with Pullmans who operate the bus and with OCC who subsides this bus route, however it was highlighted that a larger bus cannot be used due to a tight junction in East Challow.

If a small amendment can be made to the route in East Challow, just for school start and stop times, then a larger bus can be used. I understand the current bus would typically be full when passing through East Challow, so residents wanting to use the bus at these times cannot use it as it is full, so an adjustment of the route should not negatively impact any residents of East Challow and could benefit them as well as all the other villages between Wantage and Faringdon. I am awaiting further information on what the new route would be and will then share with you to get your thoughts.

West Challow

When I spoke to officers before Christmas about the planning application for the proposed travellers site near Challow Station they hoped to make a decision before the break but this unfortunately came and went. A new Target Decision date has been published of 27th February 2026. I have visited the site and listened to residents and will continue to do so.

Over the Christmas holidays while out walking alongside the canal it was lovely to see the work on the weir that was discussed at the first parish council meeting I attended early in December. Congratulations to all involved in this.

Childrey / Sparsholt / Kingston Lisle / Letcombe Regis / Letcombe Bassett - Nothing to report

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