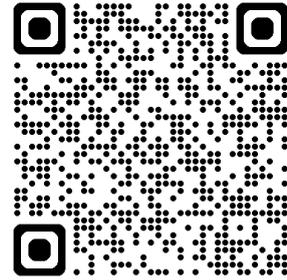


February 2026

You can now view this report (and previous ones) at <https://steady.page/en/a-view-from-the-ridgeway/>

Many thanks to parish councillors in Childrey for the suggestion of creating a version that could be printed for noticeboards but also with a QR code as a quick way for folks to access an online copy with all the links.



Garden Waste Permits

Garden waste permits **expire on 31 March**. If you wish to keep receiving the service buy a new permit early to avoid any interruption and ensure you benefit from the full years' worth of scheduled garden waste collections from 1 April through to 31 March 2027.

The quickest and easiest way to buy a new permit is to do so online at southandvale.gov.uk/gardenwastepermit but you can also call 01235 422422 if needed.

When you receive your new permit sticker, keep your current permit on your garden waste bin until after your final March collection. The new permit should then be placed on the bin lid ready for April collections.

Fancy some free compost this March?

You are invited to bring your own bags and spade to collect up to three bags per household of free, nutrient-rich compost at special giveaway events this March while supplies last.

- **Saturday 7 March**, 9am to 11am - Howbery Business Park, Benson Lane, Wallingford, OX10 8BA
- **Sunday 8 March** at 9am to 11am - White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre, Abingdon, OX14 3PJ

The councils' Waste and Recycling team will be on hand to share composting tips and answer questions.

This is compostable material recovered from the waste process and is part of the councils' [Rethinking Waste – Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy 2024](#)

Parking fees frozen

Car parking fees for the 2026/27 year will stay the same.

The council reviews its car park fees annually as part of its budget process.

Joint Local Plan (JLP) 2041

Local plans set out how development will be planned and delivered over time to meet the current and future needs of people living and working in a particular district. The South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils submitted their Joint Local Plan 2041 to the Secretary of State back in 2024 for independent Examination. Fast forward to 2026...

The JLP Procedural Meeting took place on Thursday 12 February where Council officers met with government planning Inspectors to discuss the way forward for the Examination in light of announcements surrounding the Duty to Co-operate. They asked about timings for additional documents to be submitted and hearings to take place. The Council proposed an indicative timeline, with short term dates for submission of documents and for the Inspectors to issue MIQs (matters, issues and questions) for participants to prepare statements on prior to the hearings. The Council stated its preference to complete hearings in June and July 2026.

The Inspectors confirmed that under the government's transitional arrangements, the JLP will be examined against the 2023 version of the National Planning Policy Framework, not the NPPF 2024 version, and not the draft NPPF 2025 that the government is currently consulting on.

As part of the agreed actions from the meeting, the Inspectors have written a letter to the Council setting out the next steps. You can see the timeline and read the latest letter on the [Examination webpage](#).

Local Government Reorganisation

The government has launched a consultation on possible changes to how local councils are organised across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. They're looking at replacing the current county and district councils with single, all-in-one councils that would run local services. As part of this, residents are being asked for their views on three different proposals. Your feedback will help shape the government's decision later this year about which option to take forward.

The proposals can be found at:

- Two-unitary proposal - www.twocouncils.org (our district council's preferred option)
- Single unitary proposal – www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oneoxfordshire
- Three unitary proposal – www.oxford.gov.uk/three-councils

All websites comment on the other two proposals and why their preferred option is best.

To take part in the consultation visit:

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/oxfordshire>

The consultation is open from 5 February to **26 March 2026**. There is an online survey or you can write directly to the government with your views.

District Council Budget for 2026-27

We've set our balanced budget for 2026/27. It focuses on protecting the local services relied on every day, invests in our community facilities (e.g. upgrades to Wantage Leisure Centre) and manages your public money responsibly during a period of rising costs for all.

Fibre broadband

Oxfordshire County Council officers have provided me with some useful information regarding our area's position in terms of Gigabit capable broadband provision. Of the 1,669 premises in the Ridgeway Ward 54.5% have existing Gigabit capable broadband and 45.5% do not yet have Gigabit capable broadband. It is incredibly variable from parish to parish. There is an interesting further breakdown regarding where there are plans by commercial providers and where there are not. I will share this with parish councils so we can work together to try to help residents who want access to fibre broadband. The OCC officers are being helpful but it is clear this is going to continue to be slow as it is part of a much wider national process.

Climate Action Fund

The Climate Action Oxfordshire website has [a new article on the Community Resilience Grant scheme](#) which helps Oxfordshire's community groups adapt to a changing climate. The article focuses on Stonehill Garden in Abingdon which has used funding to purchase huge water containers to keep plants alive during hot summers. Other groups have also benefited including Bioabundance, Wallingford, Greener Henley, Hendreds Environment Group, Her Land, One Planet Abingdon, Steventon Parish Council and Sustainable Didcot.

If this has inspired you or you know of groups who need financial help for a climate resilience project then similar grants will be available via the Climate Action Fund later this year. To make sure you don't miss the opportunity [sign up to receive the Community Grants Newsletter](#)

The Beacon in Wantage

In case you missed it, you can sign up to become a Friend of The Beacon for free here: <https://beaconwantage.co.uk/join-us/become-a-friend-of-beacon/>

And also for early-career performing artists The Beacon Ignite Programme is open for applications now! This is part of a year-long pilot offering free rehearsal and development space to early career theatre makers, dancers, spoken word artists, and more.

You can find out more and download the application here:

<https://beaconwantage.co.uk/join-us/beacon-ignite/>

Have your say on culture in southern Oxfordshire

A survey has been launched to help plan more arts, culture, and creative activities (such as music, dance, theatre, painting, or visiting museums) and support funding to bring these opportunities to communities and make the area an even better place to live.

The survey takes about 10 minutes, and participants have a chance to win 1 of 2 £50 shopping vouchers.

The deadline for comments is **Sunday 29 March**. More information is available via this survey link <https://www.surveyhero.com/c/9pjwrdch>

Cllr Hannah Griffin
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(2 March 2026)