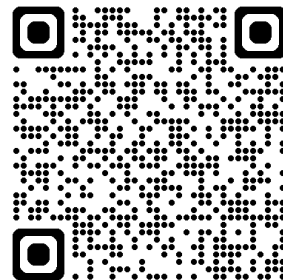


**March 2026**

VOWH District Councillor Report  
for Ridgeway Ward

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



### **Council planning and land charges system changes**

The current planning and land charges system is being replaced. The systems will be unavailable from 9th April with the new planning system coming on line 23-24th April (assuming everything goes to plan). See [Vale of White Horse news page](#) for more details including a timeline, the various services impacted and the alternative arrangements.

### **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

As the government consultation on local government reorganisation (LGR) for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire draws to a close, thanks to everyone who came along to recent events to find out more and has taken the time to submit their views to the government on the three proposals for this area. You can read the [council's own response here](#)

Now that the consultation has closed, the process moves firmly into the hands of the government. It will consider all the responses for all three proposals before making a decision on the way forward. We expect to hear the outcome in the summer – most likely in July before the parliamentary summer recess.

### **NHS Integrated Care Board change**

As of Tuesday 31 March the NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) will close as a statutory organisation, and from Wednesday 1 April it will be known as the NHS Thames Valley Integrated Care Board covering Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and all of Berkshire.

### **Long term planning - Spatial Development Strategies (SDS)**

The government had also launched a consultation of its proposal for new regional strategic planning areas. SDSs are high-level spatial plans looking ahead at least 20 years and are about planning for growth on a larger than local scale – such as housing, infrastructure and growing economies. These plans concern new SDS areas across England and local councils were invited to comment. In March the council sent off [their response](#) to the consultation. See [the government's website](#) for more information (scroll down to the Group 3 section including maps of the proposed SDS for our area).

### **Electric Vehicle and renewable energy event**

If you want to learn more about EVs, you are in luck. Oxfordshire County Council have organised an event in Abingdon Market Square on **Saturday 25 April between 10am and 3pm** where there will be around 17 different vehicles to view including TESLA, Jeep, MG, Lotus as well as e-bikes and renewable energy companies. (A similar event is planned for Didcot in September.)

### **Climate Action Fund**

As mentioned in my previous report, if you are part of a local group planning a project that helps tackle climate change, improve resilience to heatwaves, flooding or droughts, or helps

restore nature in our district then this fund could help. It has funding of between £250 and £10,000 for such projects. Previously it has funded a wide variety of proposals from secondary glazing at a local museum to a floodplain meadow restoration. Applications will be open from **5th May**. [More information is available on the council's website](#).

### **Lottery fundraising for local organisations and initiatives**

If you fundraise for an organisation you may be interested in the free White Horse Community Lottery. See [Vale of White Horse community support page](#) for more information.

### **District Council funding advice**

There will be funding advice sessions where you can talk to people about eligibility criteria for various grant funding and discuss your projects at The District Community Centre, Great Western Park, **Didcot on 15 April from 11am until 4pm**. Colleagues from Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA), and Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF) will be on hand to give advice on their grants, volunteering, and governance arrangements.

Places are limited, so please [book an appointment for Didcot for 15th April](#) if you would like to attend. If you can't make the event in Didcot, the event is also being repeated at Holton Village Hall, on 6 May from 12.15pm until 6pm - [book an appointment for Holton on 6th May](#). If you can't make either of these sessions, but would like advice, please email [grants@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southandvale.gov.uk) to arrange a time to speak to them.

### **Farmer Gow's & Pennyhooks Farm**

As part of my role as Food and Farming Champion, I was delighted to attend the official Grand Opening of Farmer Gow's new, all-natural playground in March. It was a lovely occasion and also recognised two staff, Mark for 25 years of service and to Dale for 15 years. It was great to hear about how Mark's role has grown over the years and now involves leading the farm's mobile education visits. It was also a joy to hear about how Dale started out at Farmer Gow's on a work experience placement and how he now leads school visits to the farm and supports young people doing their own work experience. I was also fortunate to meet the wonderful folks behind the Pennyhooks Farm Trust and was shown around the farm and facilities. Pennyhooks is a small organic beef farm situated in Shrevenham and specialises in offering autistic adults opportunities to lead a meaningful working life. Their expertise and approach is inspirational.

### **Future Volunteering Opportunities – Riverfly Monitoring**

The Letcombe Brook Project is currently seeking additional volunteers to support monthly river health checks along Letcombe Brook. Riverflies - the larval stage of species such as mayflies - are important indicators of water quality and overall river health. Monitoring their populations helps identify pollution and other environmental issues. Volunteers are each allocated a site to visit once a month. Full training in sampling techniques and data recording is provided through a certified course. Anyone interested in learning more about their local river while taking part in practical conservation work is encouraged to get in touch via the [Letcombe Brook Project website](#).

### **Makers and Craft Fair @ The Beacon**

On **Saturday 18 April between 11am and 3pm**, 30 local artists will be setting up stalls in the Ridgeway hall for a celebration of local art and handmade goods. Including jewellery, textiles, pottery, painting and more, the breadth of local talent will be represented.

You will be able to browse and buy from the makers' stalls but also learn some creative skills at two workshops, which will be running during the event. At 11am, beginners can learn the [essentials of crochet](#), and at 1.15pm all levels of abilities can learn some [embroidery stitches](#) to decorate a felt egg decoration. The Beacon Makers Fair is free to attend, but workshops must be booked in advance. Read more about the fair and book on [The Beacon website](#).

### **National Theatre is coming to Wantage!**

Four incredible plays filmed live at the National Theatre in London are coming to the big screen at The Beacon!

**NT Live: The Audience – Thursday 9 April at 2pm (Relaxed and Captioned) and 7.30pm** For 60 years, Queen Elizabeth II (Helen Mirren) met with each of her 12 prime ministers in a private weekly meeting, known as The Audience. See glimpses of the woman behind the crown and witness the moments that shaped a monarch.

**NT Live: All My Sons – Thursday 14 May at 2pm (Relaxed and Captioned) and 7.30pm** Bryan Cranston (Breaking Bad) and Marianne Jean-Baptiste (Hard Truths) feature in this acclaimed new production of Arthur Miller's classic play about one family, the heart of the American dream.

**NT Live: The Playboy of the Western World – Thursday 4 June at 2pm (Relaxed and Captioned) and 7.30pm** Nicola Coughlan (Bridgerton) joins Éanna Hardwicke (The Sixth Commandment) and Siobhán McSweeney (Derry Girls) in John Millington Synge's riveting play of youth and self-discovery.

**NT Live: Les Liaisons Dangereuses – Thursday 9 July at 2pm (Relaxed and Captioned) and 7.30pm** Marquise de Merteuil is a master in the art of survival. Alongside the magnetic Vicomte de Valmont, they turn seduction into strategy and weaponised desire. Stars Lesley Manville (Phantom Thread) and Aidan Turner (Rivals).

Cllr Hannah Griffin

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(6 April 2026)