The Letcombe Register

	Issue 198					Jary 2022		
VILLAGE DIARY								
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun		
	1 Yoga w Beth 0945-1045 Village Hall (please book)	2	3 Pilates w Rachel 9.30 am Village Hall Yoga w Diana 11.15-12.30 Village Hall	4	5 Tennis Cardio 9 - 10am Junior Tennis Coaching 10 -2	6		
		Book Buffs 8.00pm Greyhound Inn			Football 3pm			
7 📴 📴	8 Yoga w Beth 0945-1045 Village Hall (please book)	9	Pilates w Rachel 10 9.30 am Village Hall Yoga w Diana 11.15-12.30	11	12 ^{Tennis} Cardio 9 - 10am Junior Tennis Coaching 10 -2	13 Communi 100 St Andrey		
vensong 3pm t Andrew's Voices of the Vale 7-9 pm Village Hall		<u>Film Club</u> 8pm Village Hall 'The Courier'	Village Hall			<u>Greyhou</u> Pub Qı 8 p		
vensong 3pm Andrew's	15 Yoga w Beth 0945-1045 Village Hall (please book)	Gardening Club AGM and 'Cacti of Chile'	Pilates w Rachel 17 9.30 am Village Hall Yoga w Diana 11.15-12.30 Village Hall	18	19 Tennis Cardio 9 - 10am Junior Tennis Coaching 10 - 2 Nature Reserve Work Party 1.20-4.30pm	20		
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vensong 3pm Andrew's Voices of the Vale 7-9 pm Village Hall			Village Hall		Football 3pm	Village Ho Fr Family Screenin 'Hug		
vensong 3pm Andrew's voices of the Vale 7-9 pm Village Hall								

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Message from the Parish Council

The Parish Council met on Monday 17 January via Zoom, and has confirmed that the next meeting scheduled for Monday 21 March will also take place over Zoom. It is easy to join us, just contact the Parish Clerk who will be happy to provide joining instructions.

Following confirmation of the provisional tax base from the Vale of the White Horse, the Parish Council has been able to set and agree its budget for 2022-2023 with no increase in the precept, for the sixth year running.

Explorative discussions have been taking place with the Village Hall and Recreation Ground Trustees, the WI and the Church to start to firm up a village event to mark the **Queens Platinum Jubilee**. The date has been confirmed as **Thursday 2 June**, **1pm 'til late**. The day will include tea, cakes and live music in the Village Hall and surrounds, a Village BBQ and drinks, based at the Social Club, activities for the children and a possible bonfire/beacon and fireworks to end the day. Whilst we have an enthusiastic small group of co-ordinators we would really welcome offers of help. Please contact me on 772900, or email jeannelapsley@gmail.com if you wish to become involved. More details will appear in subsequent editions of the Register – but please save the date **THURSDAY 2 JUNE**, **1pm 'til Late**.

The main work to the Burial Ground improvements has been completed, and the next phase will include landscaping, planting boundaries and the area around the new Lych Gate. The PC has agreed to continue the copper beech hedging around the boundaries and there will be roses and scented climbers planted at the Lych Gate. Phase three will see the installation of suitable bench seating, all of which we hope will provide mourners and visitors alike with a much improved experience.

Some of you may have recently been approached by a Broadband provider offering deals if you sign up. Please be aware that there are several providers and the current confusing situation is explained by Cllr Paul Batchelor elsewhere in the Register (page 14). Please ensure you have all details before coming to a decision.

Work has been undertaken to draw together all aspects of the village maintenance work that keep our environment so special. The PC, having sought input from all interested parties, including the VH & RG Trust, is preparing a specification with a view to seeking quotations for the work. Whilst we have several interested parties, if you know of anyone who may be interested please contact the Parish Clerk who will be happy to provide further details. We hope that formalising our requirements we can achieve a good value for money service.

The proposal for 20 mph speed limits throughout Oxfordshire villages and identified built up areas is still being considered by the PC, but as yet true costs to the Parish have yet to be clarified. This will remain on our agenda for our next meeting and we will keep you updated via the Register.

Further work is planned for the Millennium Green, namely the pruning of the Apple trees and the removal of the 'clearance' materials before the spring is upon us. There are already indications of the annual display of snowdrops throughout the village and as ever, thanks go to Anne Williams for her considerable input over many years.

Now is the time to make your views heard – the Vale of the White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils have just commenced a consultation on a Draft Joint Design Guide to try to improve the quality and sustainability of new housing development. The guide provides a series of steps and design principles that will be considered when deciding on all future planning applications – whether it's a resident looking to build an extension or a developer building a large housing site. The consultation is now open and runs until 11.59pm on Tuesday 1 March 2022 – see the link below.

<u>Joint Design Guide consultation - South Oxfordshire District Council (southoxon.gov.uk)</u> Please add your views to the consultation.

Finally if there are any issues you wish to raise with the Parish Council please contact the Parish Clerk or your local Councillor.

Keep safe

Jeanne Lapsley Chairman Letcombe Regis Parish Council.

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237	Helen WATTIE	£5						
Speci	Special Draw:							
114	Oliver HORRIDGE	£25						
72	Emma MACKILLIGIN	£20						
13	Diane MONNERY	£15						
6	Sarah STAUNTON-LAMB	£10						
11	David GOODCHILD	£10						
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[Mention The Letcombe Register when you call]





Letcombe Brook Project - 2021 Year End Report

Wildlife Highlights

Covid-19 continues to have an impact on our lives, and it's been another strange year for the Letcombe Brook Project but the wildlife on Letcombe Brook continues to carry on its busy lives and we have been lucky enough to capture glimpses of the many creatures that frequent the brook.

Water voles Despite being unable to work with BBOWT, LBP managed to get the water vole survey of the whole brook



completed during 2021. This was quite a challenge with some sections very wild or silt-laden! The good news is that signs of voles were found on all sections of the brook from its confluence with the Childrey Brook upstream to Wantage Mill. Some sections had very few signs whilst others appear to be supporting very healthy colonies. No confirmed signs were found upstream of Wantage however and my theory is that the Old Mill provides a barrier to voles repopulating the upper stretches. Mink seem to have completely eradicated voles in the upper section some years ago. You don't often get to actually see voles whilst surveying as they hear you coming but I sat out on the banks on other occasions and managed some nice photos (left). Disturbance by dogs in the brook continues to

be a concern and we continue to monitor for the presence of the problematic American mink.

Otter



During the year otter activity has been recorded along the full length of the brook and we found many signs of their presence whilst carrying out the water vole survey. I finally got a glimpse of one in the river near Mably Way during December which was a real highlight for me! The above picture is from a trail camera that was set next to a regular sprainting spot up at Letcombe Bassett.

We continue to gather sightings on our trail cameras but they are all night time clips which indicates the otters are highly nocturnal on the Letcombe Brook. In Scotland they are much more active during the day and some individuals do seem to be less cautious but that doesn't seem to be the

case here. I am aware of one daytime sighting in East Hanney but don't expect to come across one whilst walking along the brook.

Birds



Kingfisher on Letcombe Brook by Stephen Burch

Kingfishers remain active along the brook and I became aware of one nest between Wantage and Letcombe Regis. I also had regular sightings in East Hanney and the BBOWT reserve in Letcombe but did not see them so much in Grove this year. Good spots to watch for them include the Cressbeds at Letcombe Bassett, around the lake area at Letcombe Valley Reserve, Grove Green and the iron bridge at East Hanney. Please remember they are a fully protected bird and it's illegal to disturb nesting activity. If you do become aware of a nest (situated in a burrow in the bank) please move immediately and carefully away from the area and notify me of its location.

Grey wagtail were regularly seen along the brook and I watched one feeding on newly

hatched damselflies in Willow Walk Nature Reserve during the summer. Yellow wagtail were spotted at a few locations close to the brook and the Ridgeway. It seems likely that they breed somewhere near Letcombe

Regis with juveniles spotted in that area, including the cricket pitch.

Another bird I did see on the BBOWT reserve and at Willow Walk in Wantage was a water rail. You tend to hear these more than you see them as they like to skulk about it reedbeds. A nice surprise to find one out in the open, but it was soon startled and ran for cover, I had to crouch quietly for some time before managing

to get this photo. Woodcock were also seen at a couple of locations, no doubt taking advantage of the soft margins of the brook in search of food.



Spotted flycatcher were seen both in Grove and Letcombe Regis but remain a rare bird to see in this area. More surprisingly a pied flycatcher was located briefly in the BBOWT reserve during the spring migration period, perhaps on its way through to the Forest of Dean or somewhere similar.

No sign of the great bustard yet this winter, perhaps it has returned to the main drove at Salisbury Plain? Do look out for it though, it did seem to like Letcombe Regis!

Reptiles and Amphibians

Reptiles remain a rare sighting in the brook corridor but grass snake and common lizard were recorded during 2021. Juveniles



in Letcombe Bassett (see pic below) would appear to suggest successful breeding is occurring so let's hope they spread out along the brook corridor. A slow worm was also recorded very close to the brook at Grove, again once common but now not something you see in this area very often.

Frogs and toads tend to prefer ponds to rivers but the Letcombe does seem to be an important area, particularly for toads, which can be seen in large numbers in Letcombe Regis during their migration back to ponds during late February and March. Many were squashed on the road at Warborough Rd and Bassett Road in Letcombe

Regis during this period last year so it would be good to set up a "toad patrol" to help them return to their ponds in one piece (More info on that to follow on the Letcombe Brook Facebook page). They seem to be using the lake at the head of the Warborough Road and the one at Richmond to spawn in as that seemed to be the main directions of travel. Although some toads spawn in backwaters and slow margins of rivers, they much prefer a lake or pond and may well use some of the other ponds in the headwaters of the Letcombe Brook. Look out for breeding activity this coming spring. This good-sized toad was found in the BBOWT reserve



whilst scything the grassland. Toads tend to flatten themselves against the ground and remain unscathed when the scythe passes overhead. I don't think a lawnmower or tractor mounted topper would give the toad such a good chance of survival.

Fish

Brown trout are present all the way along the brook but populations are impacted by the many obstructions present which



prevent movement to better spawning areas, mixing of populations and movement away from low-flow areas or pollution. Modification or removal of these obstructions remains a major aim of LBP and the EA.

2021 turned out to be a very busy year so we didn't find time to carry out any further investigations into Letcombe Brook's fish populations and distribution. We hope to be able to during 2022 as we would love to know if we have any brook lamprey or eels in the Letcombe. Both of these species are pretty secretive being either nocturnal or choosing to live their early years buried in silt. Bullhead (pictured right) and brown trout are well distributed along the length of the brook but we have only found stone loach and gudgeon down at East Hanney so far. We are hoping our project work to remove or

bypass barriers such as mill sluices and waterfalls will enable more species of fish to colonise greater sections of the brook.

Dragonflies and Damselflies

Beautiful demoiselle (pictured below) continue to spread along the brook with several seen in Willow Walk, Wantage and

more down between Grove and East Hanney. Please let us know if you see any in other areas!

The new SUDS (ponds put in as part of urban drainage systems) put in at both Grove and Wantage seem to be supporting good populations of dragonflies. It would be great to be able to create other areas of wetland in the brook corridor, so many have been lost in the past due to land drainage schemes.

Other species recorded on/near the Letcombe so far are:

Dragonflies- southern hawker, brown hawker, four-spot chaser, broad bodied chaser, emperor, common darter, ruddy darter.

Damselflies – azure, common blue, large red, blue-tailed, banded demoiselle, beautiful demoiselle (pictured above).





Invasive Species

Himalayan (Indian) Balsam -We continue to remove this along the brook as its an invasive non-native and can lead to erosion of the banks and reductions in native species.

Please do remove any you find or let us know where it is if you are not able or willing. Many thanks again to the Hanney volunteers for their many hours of hand-pulling balsam, it is paying dividends as it now takes them about half as long as it used to!

Mink - Non-native American Mink remain a huge threat to the water voles on Letcombe Brook, one female can wipe out a



complete colony in no time as she can fit into the burrows. For this reason we continue to monitor for them using mammal monitoring rafts (picture on left). Although we did not find any last year they can travel long distances when looking for new territory so we must remain vigilant. Our work makes up part of a larger water vole recovery project run by your local Wildlife Trust (BBOWT).

Signal Crayfish – I continue to see large numbers of these in the Wantage section of the brook but few elsewhere although they are more active at night-time so perhaps are present more widely than would seem. There still seems to be no way to deal with them as they are just so prolific. Trapping only catches the larger ones which are cannibalistic, thus the smaller ones get a better chance to survive and soon gain size. A WildCru (Oxford Uni) research project spent several weeks removing 6,181 signal crayfish from two hundred metres of the River Windrush – this resulted in their average catch per trap reducing from 8 to 6 – so illustrates how many were still left! Apparently signal

crayfish densities can reach 10 or 20 per square metre of riverbed!

Other species

Bats The brook is an important feeding corridor for several bat species including common and soprano pipistrelle and daubenton's bat. No doubt other species such as brown long-eared, noctule (pictured) and serotine are also present at times. The high levels of insects emerging from or attracted to the brook are an important food source and some of the larger trees along the brook act as roost sites. Good places to watch (or listen!) for bats include the BBOWT reserve at Letcombe, Wantage Mill to Betjeman Park area and Willow Walk in Wantage. We hope to be able to hold a bat walk this year and use our new Echo Meter 2 bat detector to find out more about local populations along the brook corridor. Look out for events advertised on the Facebook Page and website.

We found further evidence of **Water shrew** on the brook up at Letcombe Regis and Bassett. Surprisingly our trail camera picked up their nocturnal activity, even catching 2 of them having a scrap in front of a tunnel entrance! We also found remains of caddisfly cases crunched up in front of small tunnel entrances — a good sign of water shrew activity as they dive to catch aquatic invertebrates from the bed of the river and take them back to the bank to eat.



Volunteering Activities

Activities have again been heavily impacted by Covid-19 but we managed quite a few work parties in 2021. Work parties were



held at Letcombe (Millennium Green and BBOWT Reserve), Wantage (Limborough Rd and Willow Walk) Grove (Grove Green, Mably Way, Kingfishers) and East Hanney. Riverfly monitoring resumed and we managed to get one extra volunteer trained to take on 2 sites at Grove. No big events were held but we did manage to run some river dipping events for families back in the summer holidays and some education sessions which a couple of volunteers helped with. We will be looking for further help with education sessions particularly during 2022. Volunteers also helped with the Thames WaterBlitz water quality monitoring and carried out lots of litter picking

Also many thanks to the students that are continuing with river wardening surveys as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme activities.

Funded Projects

LBP were successful in securing funding from the Environment Agency's WEIF funds for another 2 projects. Funding paid for feasibility studies at Dandridges Mill in East Hanney and the Old Mill, Wantage where we are investigating the possibility of creating fish passage and improving river function.

Cont....





Additional funding for the "Love the Letcombe Project" has enabled us to carry out further habitat improvement works at several sections along the brook. We have continued to focus on pollarding bankside trees to allow more light to reach the brook and its banks. The work we carried out last year was very successful with riparian habitat recovering quickly in sections of Willow Walk, Grove, Letcombe and East Hanney. The fish pass created in 2020 at Lower Mill is looking fantastic and has already been colonised by

water voles. We are not sure how many fish have found it yet but trout have been spotted using it. Thanks to the funds received we were able to

provide education sessions for several of our local Primary Schools. In total we engaged with 280 local school children and got them out investigating their local river and learning about the wildlife supported by this precious resource and how they can help look after it. It was also great to carry out some partnership work with the Vale and Downland Museum who organised some river dipping sessions on the brook in Wantage (see pic) which we provided and thoroughly enjoyed. Other ongoing projects include riverfly monitoring, invasive species control, supporting Duke of Edinburgh students and monitoring for pollution.



Thank you Funders!

We would like to say a big thanks to our regular funders of the project — Letcombe Regis Parish Council, Wantage Town Council, Grove Parish Council, East Hanney Parish Council and Vale of the White Horse District Council. Williams F1 have also become a regular contributor to the project and we also received donations from Heritage Concern Foundation, Cumber Family Charitable Trust, Postcode Society Trust, Mr and Mrs J A Pye's Charitable Settlement and The Adrian Swire Charitable Trust. TOE (Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment) and the Environment Agency also funded specific project work. We could not carry out the work we do without this generous funding.

Looking Ahead

We plan to start construction work on a fish bypass around Dandridges Mill in 2022 and to carry out further feasibility plans on other obstructions in the brook. Our general habitat improvement work under the Love the Letcombe Project will continue along various sections of the brook. We aim to get even more school children out exploring their local river, hopefully some of them may become future guardians. We continue to tackle invasive species and to record as many wildlife sightings along the brook as possible and would encourage you to help with that aim. Using iRecord is an easy way to record wildlife sightings and the data is shared automatically with TVERC, our local Biological Records Centre which is really important. Do let us know if you see anything exciting or unusual!

Please do let us know if you spot a potential problem or something that concerns you such as dead fish, pollution or an obstruction in the brook that could cause a flood risk. If you would like to help with some litter picking during your exercise walks do let me know and I can provide you with some equipment.

2021 proved to be a tricky year for events but if we get on top of Covid we will try and put on some small-scale events such as guided walks, river dipping or bat walks. We will be supporting BBOWT's Wildlife Discovery Day at Letcombe in July if it gets the go-ahead. Keep an eye on the Letcombe Brook Facebook Page, follow us on Twitter and keep an eye on the website for updates.

We hope to take part in the next WaterBlitz survey organised by EarthWatch as we are keen to keep an eye on water quality in the Letcombe Brook and its tributaries. We may also be able to carry out further water quality testing thanks to some funding from the EA to purchase equipment, this will compliment nicely the riverfly surveying carried out by our fabulous volunteers.

Rivers and chalk streams in particular received quite a lot of publicity during 2021 due to concerns about water companies dumping untreated sewage into them. This is an issue that concerns us greatly and is undoubtedly having a very negative impact on many of our rivers. You can be sure we continue to work as hard as we can to look after our fabulous chalkstream and protect it from the many threats it faces. Pollution can come from many sources, not just sewage treatment works as illustrated (right). This was the result of a housing developer washing down a construction site.

Keep in touch, be safe and enjoy our fabulous river and the community green space alongside it.

All the best, Mark Bradfield, Project Officer www.letcombebrook.org.uk

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Friends of the Letcombe Valley Community Nature Reserve

W ork parties continue in the BBOWT Community Nature Reserve on Saturday, 19th February from 13:20 to 16:30. Please meet near the lake noticeboard for the tasks and safety briefing. Tools will be provided, and refreshments too mid-afternoon, but please take your own work gloves.

As the days lengthen slightly, early flowers emerging from winter dormancy bring the promise of renewed brightness and the anticipation of nature's spring spectacle. Whilst the hazel catkins adorn the hedgerows, on the

grassy banks and amongst the fallen leaves of the woodland areas the early snowdrop shoots and primroses have been appearing above ground all through

snowdi Januar the wo and gli celand CC BY

January. This month look in the damper areas along the woodland paths for the yellow, star-shaped flowers and glossy green, heart-shaped leaves of the Lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*), (photo credit: Penny Mayes CC BY-SA 2.0). The Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*) also thrives in a similar habitat and has a yellow flower

but deeply lobed, lime-green leaves that form a collar around each flower, (photo

credit: HP Gruesen CC0). Both these early flowering plants are members of the buttercup family and provide

an important nectar source for queen bumblebees and other pollinators emerging from hibernation, and other early insects. Another early flower to spot along paths and under hedgerows is the low growing Sweet Violet (*Viola odorata*) with blue-violet or white, delicately scented flowers. *Please remember to stick to the footpaths when exploring the Community Nature Reserve as trampling on a wildflower can damage its leaves and seriously affect its chances of survival*



Gorgeous colours are not restricted to flowers; fungi come in an astonishing range of hues as well and lichens and mosses coat tree branches in shades of green. Lichens are formed of a symbiotic relationship between a fungus

and another organism called a photobiont because, whether algae or cyanobacteria, they produce simple sugars by photosynthesis. Fungi are heterotrophic requiring these simple sugars as an external food source of carbon whilst the photobiont may benefit from optimal living conditions in the lichen structure built by the fungus and from mineral nutrients provided by fungal digestion. The interior of lichens is richly infused with complex secondary fungal chemicals, found nowhere else in nature, and it is thought likely that these compounds play a role in protection from UV radiation, desiccation, and from grazing by herbivores. The very first lichens probably originated before land



plants, when most of the biodiversity of Earth was in the sea, and their long period of evolution has resulted in a highly diverse and complex group making identification tricky.

Fungi, distributed throughout most land habitats, are a separate biological kingdom from plants and animals. They vary in size from microscopic yeast to underground fungi extending over many square miles. 95% of all plant



species have fungal partners underground that provide nutrients the plant roots cannot capture alone in exchange for sugars from the plant. The fruiting bodies of various fungi that decompose dead plant material above ground, releasing nutrients to be recycled in the ecosystem, may be seen this month in the Reserve, such as Ear fungus on dead elder twigs and *Tremella mesenterica*, a parasitic jelly-like fungus,



commonly called Yellow Brain or Witch's Butter (Reserve photo credits: Gillian Taylor).



TRAFFIC REGULATION NOTICE **ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT, 1984**

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 14(2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984, that the Oxfordshire County Council

TEMPORARILY PROHIBITS THE USE OF AND WAITING ON THE HIGHWAY BY ALL MOTOR VEHICLES

LOCATION:

Kingston Lisle / Sparshot / Childrey, B4507 jct B4001 to

jct Blowingstone Hill

REASON:

To facilitate patching works

DURATION:

Starting on 07 February 2022

The anticipated completion date is 11 February 2022 (date included). This will operate between 09:30 and

15:30

(Traffic Regulation Notices cover a maximum of 5

consecutive days.)

ACCESS:

Limited access will be maintained for emergency service

vehicles and for frontages within the closed section of

road, subject to the progress of the works

The "No Waiting" restriction means that wherever there are in place yellow "No Waiting" cones, you will not be able to park vehicles on the highway.

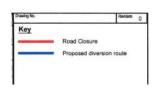
SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: via B4507, Ham Road, A417, A420,

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Road, B4000, B4507 and vice versa

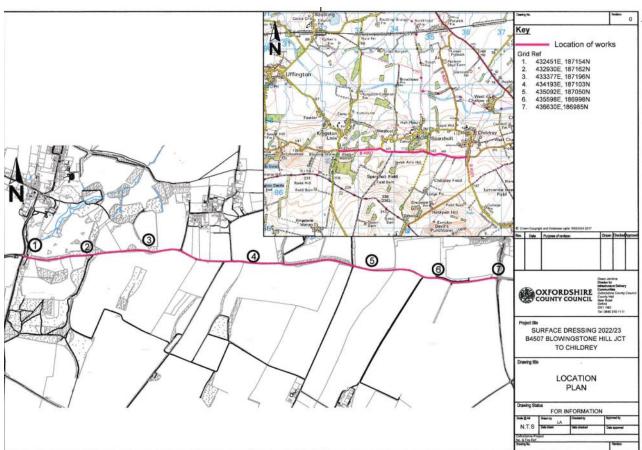
Paul Fermer, Assistant Director of Environment and Place

Date: 07 December 2021











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Woolstone / Compton Beaucamp / Uffington, B4507 LOCATION:

REASON: To facilitate patching works

DURATION: Starting on 17 February 2022

The anticipated completion date is 23 February 2022 (date included). This will operate between 09:30 and

(Traffic Regulation Notices cover a maximum of 5

consecutive days.)

ACCESS: Limited access will be maintained for emergency service

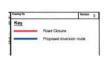
vehicles and for frontages within the closed section of road, subject to the progress of the works

The "No Waiting" restriction means that wherever there are in place yellow "No Waiting" cones, you will not be able to park vehicles on the highway.

SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: via B4507, Ham Road, A417, A420, Majors Road, Longcot Road, High Street, B4000, Station Road, B4000, B4507 and vice versa

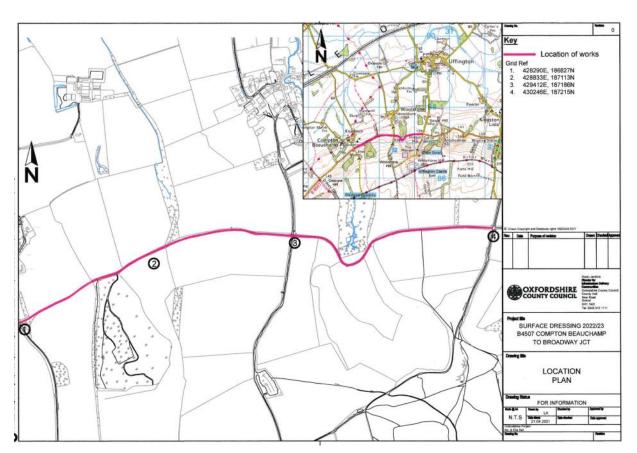
Paul Fermer, Assistant Director of Environment and Place

Date: 18 November 2021











TRAFFIC REGULATION NOTICE **ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT, 1984**

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 14(2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984, that the Oxfordshire County Council

TEMPORARILY PROHIBITS THE USE OF THE HIGHWAY BY ALL MOTOR VEHICLES

LOCATION: Letcombe Regis, Courthill Road

REASON: Emeregncy direct burry cable and pole installation

DURATION:

Started on 31 January 2022 The anticipated completion date is 14 February 2022 (each day from 08:00hrs to 17:00hrs)

(Emergency Traffic Regulation Notices cover a

maximum of 21 days)

ACCESS: Will be maintained for emergency service vehicles and for frontages within the closed section of road, subject to

the progress of the works

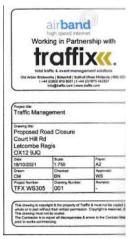
SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: The alternative routes for traffic are via a combination of Courthill Road – Windmill Hill – Ickleton (B4507) – Manor Road (A338) and vice-versa.

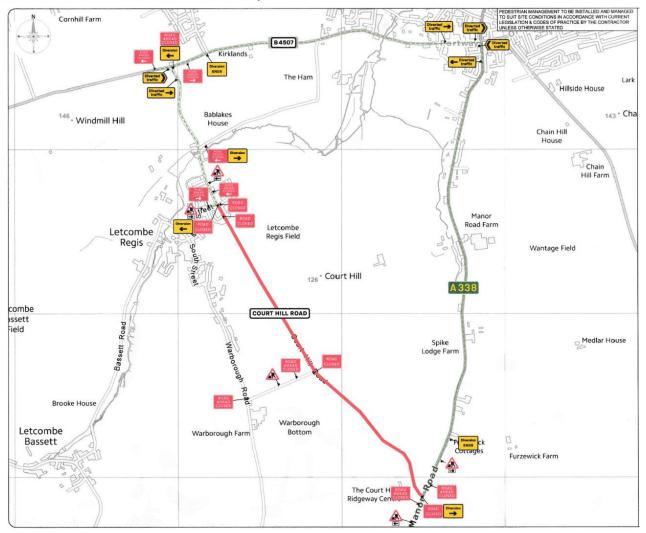
Pener.

Assistant Director of Communities

Date: 26 January 2022









The Letcombes Conservation Group

adly, avian flu has reappeared this winter as migrating wild birds bring the virus back to this country and mix with bird populations in farms and wildlife sanctuaries. This season, the first outbreak in a captive population was near Wychavon in Worcestershire on 27 October. At least 65 outbreaks have been recorded in the UK since then, with outbreaks also taking place across Europe and Russia. A conservation success story to reverse the decline in Barnacle geese on the Scottish and English border has received a huge setback in recent months after 4,000 barnacle geese died as a result of bird flu. RSPB staff estimate that across the UK up to 10% of the geese population have perished recently in outbreaks of bird flu. In early November 2021 an avian influenza prevention zone was declared across Britain to try and limit the spread of the virus. Housing measures for domestic birds have since been strengthened, with bird keepers required to keep all their birds away from wild birds, regularly disinfect enclosures and equipment, and minimise contact between themselves and their animals. Bird flu is monitored across the world, with countries reporting cases to the World Health Organisation due to ongoing surveillance to ensure those bird flu viruses of concern that could mutate to infect humans are investigated and do not cause a pandemic. The RSPB stresses the importance of regular cleaning of bird feeders with a mild disinfectant, removing any old food, and spacing feeders apart as much as possible during the avian flu outbreak to minimise transmission in wild birds.

On a more cheerful note, National Nest Box Week takes place on 14th - 21st February organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). It aims to be a celebratory event to encourage more people to help birds by putting up nest boxes ready for the breeding season as alternatives to disappearing natural nesting sites such as hedges and trees



that have declined in gardens (photo credit: Piqsels CCO 1.0). The repair of older houses, alongside modern building styles and regulations, has reduced the number of nooks and crannies where birds can build nests. If you buy a nest box, choose one made of wood at least 15mm thick, or from a special wood/concrete compound. The temperature range experienced inside metal, plastic or ceramic boxes is too extreme for chicks. If the wood is treated, the preservative should be water-based and non-toxic. The box interior needs to be at least 130 square centimetres and the ideal sized hole for garden birds is 32 millimetres for house sparrows, nuthatches

and redstarts, 28 millimetres for Great tits, Dunnocks and, if you are lucky, Pied flycatchers, while 25 millimetres will restrict the box to Blue, Coal and Marsh tits. Making a nest-box would be a good mid-February activity under adult supervision; a downloadable guide for different sized wooden boxes is available at bto-nest-boxes-essential-

guide.pdf produced by BTO. A simpler nest box can be constructed from a frost-proof terracotta pot with the drainage hole filed to a suitable size and then securely held to a piece of wood by nails and strong wire. The pot can be removed each winter for cleaning after the nesting season like all nest boxes. Step by step instructions are available at How to make a bird box | Natural History Museum (nhm.ac.uk). Nest boxes are best placed high up in quiet, sheltered locations, facing north-east for protection from south westerly rain and from sunshine. If the location is a tree, using wire protected by hosepipe is a better alternative to driving a nail into a living tree. The



chances of the nest box being used increases if the surrounding garden has a variety of plants for shelter, food sources from insects attracted to flowers and from berries, as well as offering water in a bird bath or pond, As soon as birds are nesting, they are legally protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and must not be disturbed.



Women's Institute

ome and join us for an interesting and fun evening which will be part talk and part musical activity.

Jennifer Cowling will encourage us with simple exercises, some seated, to get us going after the winter, and age is no barrier!

Wearing trousers and soft shoes is advisable but not essential.

Visitors are very welcome and the cost of £5.00 includes refreshments and a raffle ticket.

The Letcombes W.I. hopes to see you at the Letcombe Regis Village Hall on Monday February 14th at 7.30p.m.

Letcombe Football Club

nly two matches were played in January because of the New Year break and covid. We lost 5-0 away to Kennington in the Berks & Bucks cup, but then returned to winning ways with a 4-1 victory in the league at home to Carterton.

First team fixtures in February are:

Saturday	5 th	V	Clanfield Development	Home	3.00
Saturday	12 th	٧	Marlborough Development	Away	3.00
Saturday	19 th	٧	Carterton	Away	3.00
Saturday	26 th	٧	Shrivenham Development	Home	3.00

Yoga with Diana



Yoga class Thursdays 11.15-12.30pm in the Village Hall. Yoga for health, fitness and well-being. Mixed ability class. Everyone welcome.

Contact Diana Reynolds mob 07522 202666 or reynodi@gmail.com. Website www.dianareynoldsyoga.co.uk

We don't currently have anyone from the village in this class so it would be really nice if some people could come along! As one of my students said "this Village Hall is just made for yoga!"

Have your say on the future of transport in Oxfordshire



Full story on the Oxfordshire County Council website or below:

People who live, work in, or visit Oxfordshire are urged to have their say on a plan to deliver a zero carbon transport network by 2040.

Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet approved the draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) last October, which – among its many ambitions – aims to cut car journeys by a quarter by 2030 and reduce them by a third by 2040. It also plans to increase the number of cycling trips from 600,000 to one million by 2031. Now residents can have their say on the plan until 16 March. People can take part and make their voices heard at letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ltcp. Final adoption of the plan is currently scheduled for summer 2022.

The county council will be hosting a series of online webinars to introduce the LTCP in more detail and answer questions. Detail about how to sign up for these will be provided on the council's website and social media in the coming weeks. Webinars will be hosted on the dates below for the following audiences:

- Town and parish councils: 24 January and 1 February (7pm 8pm)
- Businesses: 26 January (8am 9am)
- Transport stakeholders: 20 January (2pm 3pm)
- General public: 19 January and 7 February (7pm 8pm)

Residents can also email <u>LTCP5@oxfordshire.gov.uk</u> if they have any further questions or issues.



St Andrew's

Photo - Neil & Angela Huxter

The bells rang out across the village for the first Sunday Communion of the year on 9th January and they will be rung for 4 weddings in 2022 with the first on Tuesday 22nd February. Revd Andrea Colbrook officiated at a very happy service, well attended by everyone from the elderly to a baby! It was lovely to see Leonora and Peter Hill among the congregation, and we hope to see them regularly while they are still living at the Rectory.

As you will all know we are only having one Sunday service each month during the interregnum. The Sunday service dates for St Andrew's and for all the churches in the benefice are to be found in The Signpost. However we are lucky enough to have a service of Evensong every Monday at 3 pm taken by Revd Mary Harwood. Also on Monday there is a Prayer Group at 10.30 am, everyone is welcome for both. The church is open every day for private prayer or a few minutes of calm and reflection. A book on the table at the back of the church – *Daily Strength for Daily Needs* – has brief selections of prose and verse for every day of the year which is an added resource.

It is always a special occasion to have services in the church in these pandemic times, and it was a delight to see the first snowdrops and aconites poking through the grass in the churchyard, harbingers of spring to come. Snowdrops are sometimes known as Candlemas bells and by the time we come to Candlemas (2nd February) we expect we shall have the usual wonderful display of the first spring flowers. Candlemas is when we celebrate the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. The name comes from the Christian tradition of taking candles to church that day to be blessed before being used for the rest of the year. In St Andrew's the crib in the church will stay in place till then, when it will be put away till December.

Another February day not often thought of as a Christian festival is St Valentine's Day. St Valentine was a priest or bishop in the Roman Empire who ministered to persecuted Christians. He was martyred on 14th February 269 and his day has been observed since 496. However many of the legends about him derive from Chaucer and it was at this time (14th century) that St Valentine became associated with courtly love leading centuries later to the current commercialisation of his festival.

Looking ahead: March 2nd is Ash Wednesday and there will be a service in St Andrew's at 10.30 am.

St Andrew's and the Letcombe Regis WI will be having their Daffodil Day on Saturday 2nd April – a date for your diaries.

Useful contacts:

Revd Andrea Colbrook: revd.acolbrook@gmail.com
Revd Mary Harwood: maryharwood695@btinternet.com
Debbie Webb (Church Warden): debbieleek21@gmail.com
Gill Thompson (Anna Chaplain): gill.mabbett@hotmail.com

Tony and Gill Macdonald (Prayer Group): gnt.macdonald@btopenworld.com

Book Buffs



The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 2nd February at 8pm in the Greyhound. We shall be reviewing 'The Garden of Evening Mists' by Tan Twan Eng and discussing and assessing all the titles we have read during 2021. The new library book is '1984' by George Orwell - available at the meeting.

Please return 'The Garden of Evening Mists' to the blue box outside Blandy's Barn as soon as possible.



Letcombes Gardening Club

Topical Tips

ebruary can be a rather dark, cold, dank month but it is the last month of winter and so hope is on the way! The days are getting longer and we should be getting plenty of snowdrops opening in our gardens to brighten those dull days. Other spring bulbs will be hot on their heels.

It is now time to get on those gardening clothes and get back out into your garden. If you have any ornamental grasses, which you left to provide interest through the winter, these should now be cut back.

I know I say this every year but do cut off the old leaves of hellebores and epimediums otherwise all the effort they put into flowering will be lost as the flowers will be hidden under grotty old leaves.

Any fuchsias you have stored in your greenhouse can be pruned back now to encourage new growth.

If you really like lilies and are prepared to do a daily check later in the season for lily beetle, then now is the time to plant them into pots.

Lets move on to shrubs. You can continue to plant shrubs and roses and move established shrubs as long as the ground isn't too cold or soggy.

You can start tackling those summer flowering deciduous shrubs like buddleia and cornus this month. This also applies to salix that you may be growing for their beautiful winter stem colour. All the aforementioned should be stooled, which means they are cut back very hard.

Some climbers can also be pruned this month, in particular those clematis that flower in the summer and autumn. You can also tidy up your winter jasmine and give wisteria its winter prune.

Now lets not forget the vegetables and fruit. Broad beans can be sown this month if you didn't do so in autumn. Check your seed packets as you can sow tomatoes indoors in February. The information on the seed packets often tells you to sow parsnips in February too but do be careful. If it's too wet then the seed will just rot off so you're better to be a bit patient and wait a little.

It is also a good time to plant garlic and shallots and start to chit your potatoes.

There isn't that much to be said about fruit but you can top dress fruit trees and bushes with a general fertilizer and check for any damage or disease.

Here's a little hint about summer fruiting raspberries. If you tip back their stems to 6ft this will encourage the development of fruiting side growth.

I think I have given you enough work to be getting on with and to keep you warm on those cold days. Enjoy!

The Letcombes Gardening Club

This month we are back to our usual format of having a speaker after our AGM and club evening in January. We have Ian Thwaites Coming to talk to us on 'Travels to see the cacti of Chile'. This should really transport you to warmer more exotic climes, something we could all do with after being so restricted as regards travel. The meeting will be held on Wednesday 16th February at 7.30pm in Letcombe Regis Village Hall. All are welcome. If you are not a member maybe you would like to join but if not you can still come along for a small entrance charge. Do come and join us for what promises to be a very interesting talk.



Full Fibre Build Update

urther to the article in last October's Register about the rationale for and issues surrounding the fibre optic cabling proposals for Letcombe Regis, the present article is aimed at providing an update on progress towards the new infrastructure.

Just to remind people, the current telecommunications arrangements based in part on copper wire, are due to be replaced with what is known as ultrafast full fibre broadband. This will see all premises having the opportunity to utilise the advantages, namely reliability, bandwidth and speed, of a fibre optic system from their home to what will be an upgraded exchange in Wantage. The schedule for completion of all work necessary sees the project finished at the latest by April 2025 but may occur well before then.

The first stage of the project is the development of the supporting infrastructure. This work will be carried out by OpenReach and is not subject to any bidding process, i.e. will commence as soon as feasible. As part of the project OpenReach needs to understand the state of the current infrastructure and what, if any needs replacing. This process will manifest itself over the coming weeks through a substantial increase in the number of roads being dug up to check on the existing conduits and their capacity to carry the new cabling. Only once this has been completed will there be any real indication of the work needed to build the new infrastructure and hence a more precise timeframe for the completion of the work.

A number of people have been in contact asking about the offer from Airband who have again sent out a mail shot. Airband has an existing fibre optic cabling system running along Warborough Road. This work was funded under a previous Government funded scheme for businesses in rural areas. The new arrangements allow homes to take possible advantage of that placed under the old scheme and hence a limited number of properties could take up the offer. However, I would draw to people's attention that any contract is simply to allow access to the network arrangements. Airband currently does not carry all broadband services. Furthermore, until the offers from other companies are announced, the value of the current offer by Airband remains unclear.

The Parish Council continues to work closely with other Parishes and the County Council on this matter and as further information becomes available we will use the Register to keep you updated. However, if you do have any queries please get in touch and I will do my best to try and answer them.

Paul Batchelor

(paulb@public-health.ucl.ac.uk)



Trustees Wanted - Campaign to Protect Rural England - Oxfordshire

Do you care about your local countryside? Want to make a difference?

CPRE Oxfordshire is the voice of the countryside in Oxfordshire. Due to retirement of current members, we are looking for new trustees to join our team.

This is an excellent opportunity to play an influential role in a respected and long-standing environmental charity, applying your experience to make a real difference and to be part of a friendly group that is passionate about the Oxfordshire countryside.

Application deadline is 31 March 2022 in the first instance, but we are happy to receive expressions of interest on an ongoing basis.

For further info, please contact our Branch Secretary Dorian Grier.

E: dorian.cpre@gmail.com

T: 01491 612079

See our website for more information: www.cpreoxon.org.uk





Riding Club

s life slowly returns to normal and the days gradually lengthen, we are delighted to see the increased equine activity at the riding club arena. Our membership level is the healthiest it has been for the past couple of years and we continue to welcome new members.

It has been a busy time keeping the field cut, moving cross country jumps and erecting a few new ones. The arena had a surface top up at the end of last year which was quite a task. A huge thank you to all those that lent a hand to get it moved and spread. We have also set up a new website, an online booking system and an app to enable our members to manage their own bookings and payments. This has proved to be hugely efficient and helps cut down on administration!

We have been lucky this year, so far, that the rain has held off and the ground remains relatively firm. Many of our wooden jump poles are in need of maintenance, so once the weather warms up we will be giving them a bit of 'TLC' and fresh coat of paint!

Our very popular training clinics, with Ryan Hawkins, will start again at the end of January, and we hope to be able to schedule these twice a month. The clinics range from flatwork to pole work and jumping. They are a great way for our members to socialise, have some fun and improve their skills at the same time.

We look forward to seeing as many members as possible using the Riding Club facilities in the coming weeks.

Greyhound Inn





LETCOMBE REGIS · OXFORDSHIRE



New menu starting in February from our Head Chef, Martin Sherriff

Every weekday

Lunch for Less

2 courses £20 3 courses £24

Available 12-2:30 pm Monday to Friday

It's back! Every Wednesday evening

The Midweek Fix

2 delicious courses for only £20

www.thegreyhoundletcombe.co.uk email: <u>info@thegreyhoundletcombe.co.uk</u> Tel:01235 771969 **Pub Quiz** with Big Dave Sunday 13th at 8pm (charity is SSNAP: Supporting Sick Newborns and their Parents)

<u>Valentine's Day Special Menu</u> on Monday 14th (evening) Pre-booking only

We are so proud and delighted to have been nominated as the Best Gastro Pub (link to) in Oxfordshire by the popular entertainment and food blog OXINABOX amid some very stiff competition. The awards will be hosted by Raymond Blanc in March in Oxford. Not only that, but our outgoing Head Chef, Liam Whittle AND our new Head Chef, Martin Sherriff, have BOTH been nominated for the same awards in the category Best Chef . I think we can safely say we are the only restaurant with two nominees! We will be putting our money on the future and hope that you will too, although we have been proud of our food offering with all our chefs.

Please help us by voting for **The Greyhound** and for **Martin Sherriff** in these categories using the links above. And do come and try out Martin's new menu next month. If you joined us for New Year, you'll have had a taste of what he can do. We are so excited about the coming year. We have a great team, a great pub and fabulous customers who are loyal and whom we want to keep delighted with high quality service, food and drink, not to mention the boutique accommodation for your visiting friends and family. Thank you to everyone for your support over the years!





Film Club

The Courier (12) Wednesday 9 February 8pm

This months film is a good old fashioned spy thriller. Set in the 1960's, it's based on the true story of British businessman Grenville Wynne who was recruited by MI6 and the CIA. His job was to courier information from the Soviet Union on their nuclear capabilities and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Benedict Cumberbatch takes the lead role and true to form gives a stellar performance.

COVID held up the release of this cracking film, which eventually hit the big screens in 2021 and got excellent audience reviews. Come along and enjoy a good evening out to brighten up these dark winter days.

Refreshments available from 7.30pm.

DURIER

COMBE FILM CL Letcombe Regis Village Hall, Wednesday 9th February

Tickets £5 Doors open 7.30pm Film starts at 8.00 pm

Refreshments - Soft Drinks, Wine, Beer and Tea/Coffee

Free Family Film for Half Term

Hugo (U) Sunday 27 February 3pm

We have a real treat for half term with a special free screening of the multi award winning family film 'Hugo'. Released in 2011 and directed by the legendary Martin Scorsese, Hugo is based on the book 'The Invention of Hugo Cabet' by Brian Selznicks.

It tells the story of Hugo, an orphan who lives in the walls of a station in Paris, looks after clocks, and has great adventures!

The excellent cast includes Ben Kingsley, Jude Law and Sasha Baron Cohen. Nominated for 11 Academy Award, Hugo won 4 including for Best Visual effects and Best cinematography, Hugo is a feast for the eyes. One review said "an absolute joy to watch from start to finish', another that it brings the magic back to cinema.

This film will appeal to all ages (although probably of Doors open at 7.30pm, film starts at 8pm. most enjoyment from around age 7 and above) so come along with your families for a free afternoon out!

> Doors will open at 2.30pm, film starts at 3pm. Refreshments available. See you there!



Sunday 27th February

Free Family Screening Doors open 2.30pm Film starts at 3.00 pm Refreshments on sale - Soft drinks, Wine, Beer and Tea/Coffee



Letcombe Sports and Social Club

The Club continues to be busy when it is open with a good mixture of Social, Darts and Football activities taking place. Before we know it, the Cricket season will be upon us. This starts in April, with the AGM in February.

The Magic Show with "Magic Peter" on the 2nd of January was not as well attended as expected because some children had Covid and could not attend. Those that were there thoroughly enjoyed it - as did the adults! We will look to plan another similar event for Members' children and grandchildren when the weather gets warmer.

The Rugby Six Nations matches will be shown at the Club. The first match is on the 5th of February, but the complete schedule is on the Club calendar here - https://letcombesportsclub.org.uk

The Darts "A" Team are locked in a close battle at the top of the Wantage and District Darts League Division 2. The "B" team, after a sluggish start to the season has produced some excellent performance to move up the table (slightly) in Division 3.

If you are interested in how the Club operates, or becoming a member, then please contact the Secretary on letcombesportsclub@qmail.com

Richard Secretary, Letcombe Sports and Social Club

Village Hall & Recreation Ground Trust

THE PROPERTY OF

A Ithough use of the Hall has increased with the easing of Covid restrictions, there are still incidents of cancellations due to Covid. At the moment we are refunding those hirers who have to cancel because of Covid.

The curtains in the Hall are getting some overdue repairs done, and we are planning to refresh the furniture in the Foyer, as it is starting to look a little tired. Also, the taps in the kitchen have been replaced as they had both started to leak. These types of ongoing repairs and maintenance jobs are expected as the Hall gets older - it is now six years since the old Village Hall was demolished. How many of you can even remember what the old Hall looked like!

Outside maintenance will also need to start in the spring. We are working with the Parish Council to get value for money on tasks that overlap, such as hedge and tree maintenance and grass cutting. The various Sports Clubs will continue to keep their area tidy and mown, so that we can all enjoy the excellent facilities and open spaces on offer.

We are expecting work on the children's playground to start, and hopefully complete this year. It is long overdue (Covid not helping), and some of the play equipment is showing definite signs of wear. The playground and equipment is inspected annually in August to make sure it meets current safety standards.

Dog fouling continues to be an issue. The health hazards are well known and documented. There is a clear responsibility for dog walkers and owners to ensure they "pick up" at all times. We have contacted the local Environmental Enforcement Officer, who plans to visit the Recreation Ground when he can. We will be refreshing the signs around the Recreation Ground, Village Hall and Sports Pavilion to reiterate the message about picking up, and also the consequences if not. At the moment, there is a maximum fine of £1000 for offenders. We are also considering additional dog poo bins being installed, particularly as the one where the footpath goes up to the Recreation Ground is often full, and is not conveniently located for the 2 Car Parks. If any villager has any comments, or suggestions on how to tackle this issue, please let me know.

The licence agreements between the Village Hall & Recreation Ground Trust and the various Clubs who regularly use the Recreation Ground and Sports Pavilion have been updated, and will be shared with the Clubs in the near future.

We have a villager who has expressed an interest in filling the vacant trustee position. More details on this next month, once it has been confirmed. This will bring us back to the full complement of 9.

If any villager wants to know more about the workings of the Village Hall and Recreation Ground Trust, then please contact myself. Contact details are in The Register.

Richard Taylor

Chairman, Letcombe Regis Village Hall and Recreation Ground Trust.

LETCOMBE REGISTER

The views expressed in the Register do not necessarily reflect the view of Letcombe Regis Parish Council

TO RECEIVE YOUR EMAIL PDF COPY OF THE LETCOMBE REGISTER, PLEASE CONTACT LIZ JENKINS, THE PARISH CLERK:

LETREGISPC@GMAIL.COM

(FOR GDPR REASONS - THE LETCOMBE REGISTER HAS NO ACCESS TO THE VILLAGE EMAIL LIST)

Registers are available to view, along with much more information, on the Village Website:

www.letcomberegispc.org

To submit an article please contact:
Francesca Engelmann,
2, The Old Stables,
Letcombe Regis,
OX12 9LD

Register@oldstableyard.co.uk

01235 769310

Deadline for inclusion is the 27th of each month. Items will generally appear in the order they were received

February 2022 Waste Calendar

Click Here for more information

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

Green recycling Food waste Brown Garden Waste Grey Landfill Food waste You will be relieved that there are no collection changes scheduled for the next two months.

Then the new Calendar will probably have dropped through your letter boxes for you to keep handy, in the meantime there is:



The app lets you know what is what each week.

For iPhone For android For PC click <u>here</u> click <u>here</u> click <u>here</u>