

Didcot Diary

Spring 2020



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Welcome to the Spring copy of Didcot Diary.

During this uncertain time we look back at some of the events held by the Council in happier times.

Unfortunately due to the Coronavirus we have had to cancel several events we were due hold at the Civic Hall during the Spring & Summer months.

Please stay safe and follow the Government's and the NHS advice:

www.gov.uk

www.nhs.uk

You can also find help and advice on our website too:

www.didcot.gov.uk/coronavirus

Everybody stay safe





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Message from the Mayor



During this period, we all find ourselves in unprecedented times.

Didcot Town Council's top priority is the safety of our staff and members of the public.

The Council continues to operate, but some services may experience interruption.

Our office staff are working from home where possible; outdoor staff are doing the necessary to ensure the open spaces remain safe - and Council Meetings are currently suspended until the Government allows us to meet remotely to continue essential Council business.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank key workers that continue to work on the front line, especially the NHS & emergency services.

Thanks also to all the local charities and individuals who are working hard to help the vulnerable in our community. These are difficult times, but together we will get through this.

Anthony Dearlove
Mayor for Didcot

Open Letter to Didcot Town regarding Covid-19



Dear Residents of Didcot,

Firstly, I must thank everyone for adhering to the Government's advice to stay in and only going out when essential. When I go on my daily walk with my family, I have noticed the roads and pavements are very quiet. If I do see anyone, I see people observing social distancing by crossing the road or moving to one side.

I want to thank all the residents who have volunteered in this moment of crisis by aiding the vulnerable in our community such as helping with shopping, delivering food parcels and by keeping in contact with neighbours. I would also like to thank businesses for giving discounts or free food to NHS and care workers.

I wanted to take this opportunity to write about what Didcot Town Council has been doing in these unprecedented times as the Covid-19 lockdown continues.

Decisions that we have had to make:

- Our priority is protecting the health, safety and welfare of Council staff and residents, hence why the Council Offices and Civic Hall are closed but operating remotely.
- I asked for the Council website to become a knowledge hub for advice, help and support and we have collated useful information on: www.didcot.gov.uk Plus, we will be delivering information leaflets throughout the Town shortly.
- Parks are open but playgrounds, gym equipment and skate parks are closed.
- Allotments are open but the burn dates have been cancelled for April.
- The Didcot Summer Fayre has been postponed until 7th August 2021.
- Even though the Council is losing revenue due to the Civic Hall being closed, we have protected our Grant Aid Funding and are calling on charities and organisations to apply for funds to help them to continue delivering the great work they do within the community.

- We are working closely with South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to ensure businesses, organisations and residents are getting the help and support they need.

The current situation is unpredictable and constantly changing, sometimes on an hourly basis. There is no handbook to deal with this crisis so I, as Leader of the Council along with Council staff and Chairs of Committees are using emergency powers to make decisions based on the information available and Government advice. There have been some who have stated we have acted too soon and others claiming we have acted too late on some decisions. As Leader, I take full responsibility on every decision made and I hope we have made more right decisions than wrong. Only time will tell.

Finally, as a community we will come out of this much stronger and more connected with our neighbours and more appreciative of all key workers from cleaners, care workers, delivery drivers, those stacking our shelves to those that work for our NHS and our emergency services. It is amazing and emotional seeing young and old coming out at 8pm on Thursday evenings to clap for our heroes. I hope going forwards that they get more tangible help from the Government.

Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Mocky Khan
Leader of Didcot Town Council

Past Events

Remembrance Parade – Sunday 10th November 2019

The Annual Remembrance Parade and Service took place at the monument in Smallbone's Park on Sunday 10th November 2019.

The Parade was led by the Oxford Caledonia Pipes & Drums Guards, followed by the armed forces, Town Councillors, local scouts, girl guides and schools and other community groups.

During the service wreaths were laid at the monument.

It was a lovely sunny November day and we had a large turnout of local residents.



Christmas Carol Concert – Tuesday 3rd December 2019

The annual concert is organised by Didcot Choral Society and is attended by several local school choirs and is open to the public.

The Mayor, Cllr Anthony Dearlove joined in the now tradition of the Mayor of Didcot singing the chorus of 'Good King Wenceslas' unaccompanied....

Anthony was confident about this as he won a karaoke event a few years ago for 'best male' - however he was the only male so he won by default!!

A rolling collection was taken during the evening and £400 was raised towards the Mayor's chosen charities Secret Santa 365 and Make a Wish.

Events Postponed

We had so many lovely events planned for the Spring & Summer this year and unfortunately due to the Coronavirus these have had to be postponed or cancelled.

Here's a list of the events sadly postponed:

Artwork Opening – official opening of the artwork designed by Suzanne O’Driscoll (see below)

Annual Litter pick

Mayor Making Ceremony

VE Day Celebrations

Open Air Cinema

Family Fun Day

Culture Day

Town Fayre

Didcot Food Festival

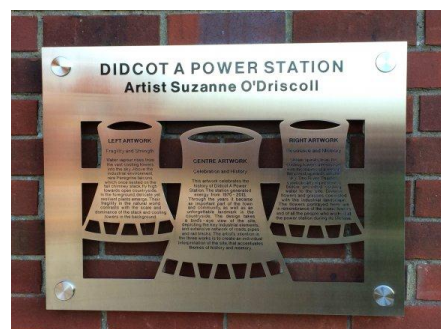
Fun Dog Show

These events will be back next year bigger and better.



Other private events such as, weddings, conferences and training courses have also had to be cancelled. When we open again we suggest participants contact the organiser before making any unnecessary journey to make sure the event is still taking place.

For more information about future bookings or cancellations please contact our team by email civichall@didcot.gov.uk or check our website and Facebook page.



Mayor's Charity Dinner

Cllr Anthony Dearlove held a Charity Dinner on Saturday 7th March 2020 at the Civic Hall. The theme was James Bond aka 007.



Several guest dressed up as James Bond characters including Cllr Mocky Khan who came as Oddjob.

The guests sat down to a three course meal by Creative Catering, with entertainment from Bernadine Soul School of Dance and local singer Maya.

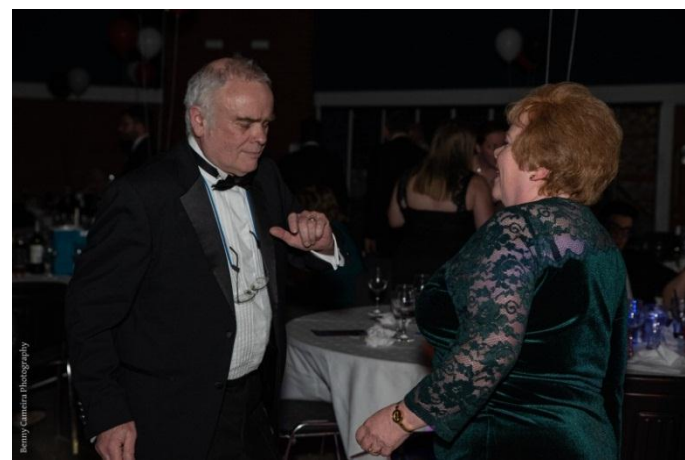
Secret Santa 365 held an auction where some of the prizes consisted of a signed football shirt and a bottle of whiskey signed by Boris Johnson....

After the three course meal it was time to boogie to the sounds of Insomnia disco.

Money was raised for the Mayor's chosen charities; Secret Santa 365 & Make a Wish.

Well done to Chelsey for organising her first event for the Town Council. Plans are already in place for next year's ball.





Thank you to all those who attended

Staff Updates

We have had a lot of staff changes over the last few months. We wish all our new team members good luck in their new roles.

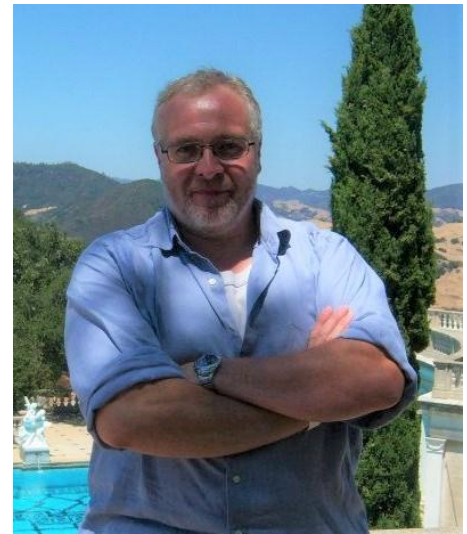
Guy Langton

Last November we welcomed Guy to the Didcot Town Council Team. Guy joins us as the Planning and Environment Officer.

We asked Guy some getting to know you questions:

What's your favourite film?

Star Wars (the original) ... or maybe Rogue One? Quite fond of Marvel too ... it's hard to say 'cos it depends on the weather and how I feel. I am not a fan of period costume drama, I am proud to say I have never seen Downton Abbey.



Who's your favourite actor?

My cousin, Rhys Downing, a genuinely nice bloke ... But for one you're more likely to have heard of, John Cusack or Ellen Page, I like actors you don't necessarily notice are there. For more obvious faces, I like Morgan Freeman and Denzel Washington.

What kind of music do you like?

Lots ... like most people I have a varied taste, easier to say what I'm not so keen on I suppose but here goes ... bit too old for the rave generation but I was there at the beginning, more of a 'free-party crusty' in my youth ("it's cool by the river, the wind keeps us clean" ... name the band from the lyric ...). PJ Harvey and 10,000 Maniacs also enduring favourites, with honourable mentions to Billie Eilish and Daphne & Celeste (to keep my colleagues happy). And I like Ska ... original Jamaican and Two-Tone British revival.

What do you do in your spare time?

I don't have much; I am also the Parish Clerk in East Hanney, where I live so work fills lots of my time. I am a beekeeper though, with 5 colonies of bees at the moment, and I try not to have more than that so have bartered colonies away for the past couple of seasons. I like baking, bread mostly, I got a great recipe book from Bread Ahead a couple of Christmases ago that I have great fun with. I do help my wife with the garden and allotment when many hands are needed. We try to grow lots of our own food; we have still got 2 onion squashes in store from last year's harvest. We are looking to keep chickens again now we have young cats so they can keep the inevitable rats at bay! I think we may channel Tom and Barbara Good just a little too much.

Chelsey Lordan



Some people probably already know Chelsey as she was previously a member of the Civic Hall Team. In November 2019 she made the short trip from the Civic Hall to join the Didcot Town Council! Chelsey's new role is the Environment & Events Co-ordinator.

This means she will be involved in Environmental issues around the Town and will organise Events held by the Council.

Unfortunately due to the Coronavirus most of the events that were planned this Spring/Summer have had to be cancelled or postponed.

However most of the events will be rescheduled next year – so that is something to look forward to.

Beth Gillham

Beth went on Maternity Leave in November last year and her lovely little daughter Elaria was born in December.

We spoke to her recently and she said:

“So hard to believe my little pixie is nearly 4 months old - it's amazing how much more I love her every day...let's see if that continues when she can talk and sass me, judging by this cheeky face”

Beth - With such a beautiful baby girl I bet you're having a wonderful time with her.



Mike Blake



Mike joined us in April 2020 and is a new member of the Outdoor Services team. He will be helping to maintain the Council parks and outdoor space.

If you see him out on one of the tractors give him a wave.

New Civic Hall Staff



Benny Cameira



Benny is one of our part-time Civic Hall Assistants. She helps set up for events and works the bar at parties/weddings etc.

She is an accomplished photographer who in her spare time takes professional photos of weddings etc.

Benny is our resident in-house photographer and takes photos of Events held by the Civic Hall & Didcot Town Council.

The photos of the Remembrance Parade and Mayor's Charity Dinner were taken by Benny. We thank her for her expertise in photography and the lovely photos she takes.

Kate Buckle

Kate also joins us as a part-time Civic Hall Assistant, helping with setting up for events etc.

She is also the Wedding Organiser for the Civic Hall – in this role she helps couples to arrange their wedding at the Civic Hall.

She is Mum to a gorgeous 16 month little boy called Charlie who keeps her on her toes....

Due to the Coronavirus Kate is currently self-isolating as she is expecting her second child in August.

We wish her well with baby number 2 and look forward to meeting the new arrival.



General Information

COVID-19 - Changes to Cemetery and Burial Procedures

As the pandemic – COVID-19 virus – continues to grow, Didcot Town Council has taken instructions from burial and cremation authorities regarding the measures we should take to minimise the risk of infection. Please be assured that the Council have not taken the following decisions lightly and these changes are being put in place to help and protect the public, funeral director staff and our staff – who are vital in the future delivery and operation of this service. From Friday 27th March 2020 we are introducing these restrictions:

- As per the Government's guidance only immediate family should be present at any burial. Please consider limiting attendees to: *
Spouse/Partner * Parents/Carers *
Brothers/Sisters * Children (and partners)

- Although it is an extremely sensitive subject and we understand that this will cause some stress and upset, Didcot Town Council are limiting the number of mourners to 6 around the graveside. A further 4 can attend by standing further back and adhering to Government's advice on social distancing (maximum of 10 attending in total).

- All those present must follow social distancing guidelines and should NOT attend if they are symptomatic or self-isolating. It is advised that all those in the 'at risk' categories should refrain from attending.

- Mourners will be asked to stand 2m from the grave and to avoid contact with each other.

It is understood that these requests are difficult at a time of mourning, however by following them we will help to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. In this fast-moving situation, it may be necessary to update this advice in the coming days. As soon as the Government issues further advice, Didcot Town Council will endeavour to update these measures.

Please rest assured that your safety and wellbeing is at the forefront of our decisions.



Notice for Allotment Holders re: COVID-19

As you are aware, we have temporarily closed the Council office at the Civic Hall due to the COVID-19 outbreak and as such we will not be taking allotment rent payments until we re-open.

Please do not attempt to pay anything until asked.

The allotments remain open for people to visit their plots; however, we do urge you all to adhere to the Government's advice on social distancing and hygiene and do not congregate in groups, whilst on the allotments.

Ideally attend your plot on your own to take your daily exercise and to encourage positive mental wellbeing and make sure to wash your hands regularly, especially after using the gate locks (on sites that have them).

Any plot holder self-isolating because a member of their household is ill with the coronavirus will NOT be able to visit the sites. All holders who are in the 'at risk' category and who have been asked to self-isolate for 12 weeks, will also not be allowed on site.

Everyone should do what they can to stop coronavirus spreading. It is particularly important for people who:

- are 70 or over
- have a long-term condition
- are pregnant
- have a weakened immune system





More funding for Didcot Garden Town

Recently, the Government announced that Didcot Garden Town will receive an additional £100,000 to allow us continue to work on the delivery plan for our residents.

We are working with the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board

and look forward to working with the Sounding Boards to consider recommendations on our priorities and how to spend the new funding in the best way possible.

The funding was allocated by Government to help to support garden communities across the UK to deliver well connected communities.

Upcoming Events

To help us launch the Sounding Boards, we will be holding a community **Garden Party** at Cornerstone Arts Centre in the summer, once it is safe to do so.

We will let you know they details when the final date is confirmed.

Infrastructure plans for Didcot!

Oxfordshire County Council has launched a public consultation on the proposed range of transport improvements in Didcot and surrounding areas that will support the creation of new jobs and homes.

Work on these infrastructure improvements follows the successful funding announcement of £218 million for Didcot Garden Town from government in March 2019, known as the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF).

All schemes include new and/or improved high quality walking and cycling routes, which will give people real travel choice. [Read more here!](#)

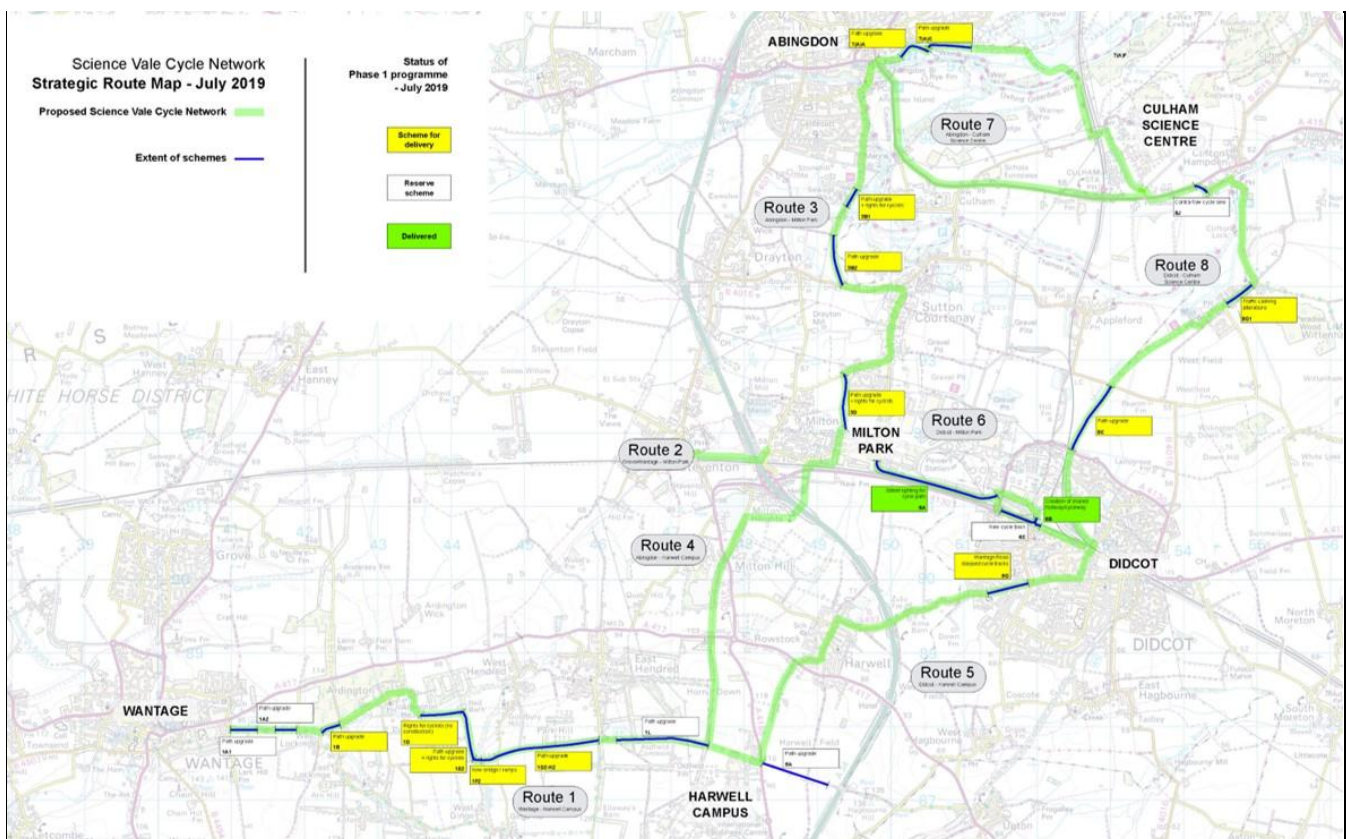
To review the latest scheme designs and have the opportunity to give your feedback, [click here](#). The deadline to make your comments is Thursday 30 April.

Science Vale Cycle Network Improvements

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has been looking at how they can improve cycling and walking networks across the county, to help people become more healthy and active. A better network will help to provide a better environment and promote better connections for everyone between communities throughout Oxfordshire.

We have helped to support OCC to ensure cycling and walking routes in Didcot, surrounding villages and throughout the Science Vale include two of our garden town principles – to create a unique identity and to inspire ‘green living’. OCC’s current improvements will include better links between Wantage Road, Didcot town centre and Milton Park, and will include access to Culham and Appleford. To read more, [click here](#).

Want to have your say on the local transport and connectivity plans? [Click here](#), to share your opinion!



Grant Aid Reports

Each year Didcot Town Council makes grants available to local organisations that support people in Didcot.

Here are some recent reports of how groups have used the money granted. These are all pre social distancing.

If you would like to apply for grant funding from the Town Council please visit www.didcot.gov.uk/Grant-Aid for more details.

DIDCOT TOWN COUNCIL GRANT AID REPORT – RON SYKES TEA DANCES

The money from Didcot Town Council Grant Aid (£800) was deposited in our account on 30 September '19.

The plan was to hold a special 'Pre-Christmas party' on Sunday 8 December with a live musician, as opposed to the CDs. This person was booked at a cost of £200. We ordered Mince pies for the refreshments and Chocolates to share. However, we had to cancel all that as the hall was required for the General Election purposes. The musician did not charge a cancellation fee; we cancelled the Mince pies and Chocolates. The money that would have been spent is secure in our bank account.

The October and November did not raise enough income to cover all expenses.

The January event was the first dance event in the area since before Christmas, and attendance was good as a result. We did cover all expenses with some left over.

February and March usually sees a drop in attendance due to bad weather, or the fear of it.

I am now planning a 'Special event' for the 19th April. As it is the week after Easter we should get a decent attendance.

I shall invite the Mayor and his Deputy to attend, with their wives/partners, to see what we do at the tea dances.

I had two of the previous Mayors attend and they were pleasantly surprised to see us. I even managed to coerce them into venturing onto the dance floor.

Yours sincerely

R J Sykes



15th Didcot Scouts Grant Aid Report

In summer 2019 the electric boiler and water heating system at 15th Didcot Scout Hut failed and needed to be replaced. The funds that we received from Didcot Town Council's Grant Aid scheme covered the cost of the removal of the existing system and installation of replacements, including upgrading the heating controls to a programmable thermostat. Following the approval of our Grant Aid application, we were able to have the work carried out the following week and the Beavers, Cubs, Scout and Explorers who use the Scout hut every week were able to benefit from the grant straight away.

15th Didcot is a popular Scout Group: each week we provide Scouting to around 60 young people from Didcot in Beavers, Cubs and Scouts supported by 11 leaders and other volunteers. The Scout hut is also used by Didcot Explorer Scout Unit and 23rd Didcot Beavers and Cubs for their weekly meetings providing benefits to a further 50 young people. Our Scout hut is in use for weekly meetings every night of the week and having hot water for hand washing and washing up as well as heating in our toilet block extension is essential, especially as we approached winter.



I will be very pleased to arrange acknowledgement of the Council's financial support on our (in-progress) website, other social media and in our annual report in due course. Since the electric boiler and water heating system was replaced, we have been able to continue to rent out the space for other Scouting and community groups to use. This provides us with a small but essential income stream and provides the wider community with a place for meetings. We have held night's away events at the Scout hut for the Cubs, Scouts and Explorer sections, all of which wouldn't have been possible without the replacement of the electric boiler and water heating system.

As Scouts, we believe in preparing young people with skills for life. We encourage our young people to do more, learn more and be more. On behalf of 15th Didcot Scout Group, I would like to thank Didcot Town Council for the Grant Aid award, which has allowed us to continue to do this.

Helen Seymour
Group Scout Leader, 15th Didcot Scouts



FREE CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH REPORT 2019

Thank you so much once again for your kind donation to my Free Christmas Day lunch for people who would otherwise be alone on that day. It was very successful and was greatly enjoyed by both attendees and volunteers. The Mayor called in to see everyone before lunch and spoke to a few of the attendees. We had 50 in total including the volunteers, who also have dinner, and delivered four dinners to those who could not attend on the day. Lifts for most attendees were arranged to and from the venue

After lunch we had a raffle with some lovely prizes then played bingo, again with prizes for one line, two lines and a full house. Each attendee went home with a lovely hamper and a Christmas cake

This day could not happen without the generosity of organisations such as Didcot Town Council

Many thanks for enabling me to make this happen yet again this year

Kindest regards

Anna



DIDCOT AIR TRAINING CORPS GRANT AID 2019

The flight simulator was successfully installed at 2410 Didcot Squadron Air Training Corps in September and is now being used to give cadets training on piloting skills and navigation, before they set foot in a real aircraft, thus enhancing their experience whilst reducing risk and costs. The cost of the simulator was £3,700 and we anticipate that it will remain at the forefront of our training for several years, potentially training over 100 cadets.

The flight simulator is being used as part of the cadet's core syllabus training which covers topics like the principals of flight, how the flight controls affect the various control surfaces of the aircraft and elementary navigation. By learning these core skills in a controlled environment the cadets can get a greater benefit from time spent in the air at RAF Benson or RAF Little Rissington.

In addition we utilise the simulator as part of project nights where small groups of cadets take these core skills to the next level and practice on a larger variety of aircraft.

We thank Didcot Town Council for their kind donation towards the flight simulator.



Report on New Staging

Harwell Primary School, Gobo Theatre Foundation, Harwell Village Hall

The above organisations joined together to buy some portable staging equipment for community use.

Gobo Theatre Foundation (charity number 1140695) is a youth theatre based in Harwell Village Hall and our emphasis is to make sure that opportunities are available to all, especially those that could not afford it elsewhere. We have a tiered pricing structure based on family income and are very proud to be supporting some great young people with our work, who might not otherwise be able to pay for these chances. We have also started doing some work with adults – partly as a way of bringing more funds towards the youth work, and this aspect of our work is held at Harwell Primary School. In joint conversations we realised we both needed some portable staging – the school has some very old stuff that Gobo used last year but it is not really adequate for our or their needs.

The village school has grown considerably in recent years as a result of the house building increase in the area. There are now around 200 children across 7 classes. The current Head and management team are working hard to make many improvements around the school, and increasing facilities for these numbers, as funded by the Harwell School

Association (charity number 1129793), which is the fundraising parent teacher group. The hall has been renovated over the February half term – very old equipment removed, walls repainted and the floor sanded and varnished. To complete this with new staging has been very valuable. Particularly as the staging we purchased is multi-level, which allows for excellent visibility.

For the youth theatre Gobo uses the renovated Harwell Village Halls, both for rehearsals and productions. It has been designed so that the floor is a stage and the seating is raked to allow for visibility – however as our numbers grow and grow, we are finding that this isn't sufficient for getting everyone seen and to have some elevated areas would be immensely beneficial. There are also many other groups using the Village Hall that have expressed interest in being able to

have a raised area – particularly bands who might want a drummer seen, and choirs who often have many onstage and only standing so need those at the back seen. Local Didcot Phoenix Drama Group and other players who bring shows to the hall would also like it as an option. So in conversations here we also realised it would be useful for community use within the village hall.



Many children crammed onto the small old stage at the school for the nativity in 2018. Most not visible!



Gobo show 2019 with around 30 students – grown to 50 this year. We are hoping the new staging will improve visibility and dynamics for our 2020 production.

Bernadine Soul School of Dance

The very talented dancers of 'Bernadine Soul School of Dance' who entertained the guests at the Mayor's ball on 7th March 2020 have been selected to represent team England in the Acrobatic section at the Dance World cup in Rome 2020.

The event was due to take place in June but due to the COVID-19 it has now been postponed until August 2020. However, this date may still change but a decision will be made the end of April by the organisers.

They will be competing against 62 other countries from around the world!

The group need to raise £20,000 to help pay for uniforms/accommodation etc. They have been doing lots of fundraising events; from bag packing at local supermarkets to selling cakes etc. to help raise funds so the team can get to Rome.

They also have a crowd funding page to help raise money. Click [here](#) if you would like to donate.

This is an amazing achievement and we wish them well when the event takes place.

Good luck in Rome.

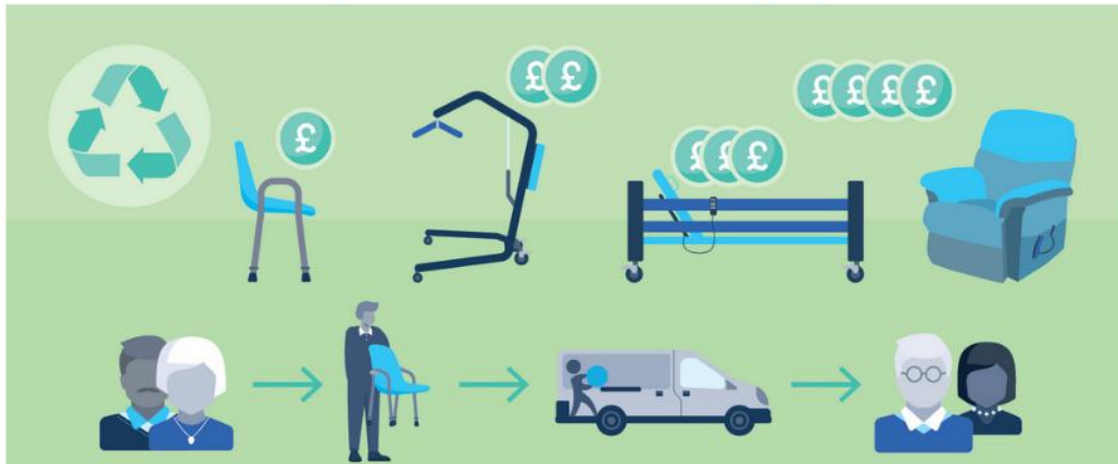


**Due to the COVID-19 Virus
WE NEED YOUR HELP**

If you have been loaned equipment and you no longer use it...

PLEASE HAND IT BACK

To avoid a shortage and so we can send to people who need it.



**Please contact us at
Tel: 01869 225 420 or Email:**

**enquiries@oxfordshire.nrs-uk.net to
arrange your **FREE** collection**



URGENT: EQUIPMENT REQUIRED DUE TO COVID-19

Your community needs you!

If you have been loaned equipment that you no longer need...

Please Hand it Back

We need chairs, beds, wheeled commodes, mattresses, any electrical items, bed rails, walking & toilet frames, telecare items and slings. If you have other equipment to return, please keep hold of it and contact us after the COVID-19 virus.

If you want to Hand Back some equipment and would like to arrange a collection, please call NRS Healthcare on:
**01869 225 420 during opening hours
8.30am–4.30pm Monday to Friday**

Or email your details to:
enquiries@oxfordshire.nrs-uk.net



Important!

Please make sure the item has an NRS Sticker on which includes a bar code:



Together we can help those who need it most