Parish Report: November 2026

Dear Parishes

The most common question I am being asked at the moment is about local government reorganisation and the proposals for a Thames Valley Mayoralty – see below for a full update..

I was also delighted that Oxfordshire has identified £10 million towards a vehicle underpass on **London Road** (see picture with a slightly anachronistic big cheque!). This should ensure that this option goes forward and that the route remains open to cars.



All the best

Laura

<u>What I've been working on:</u>

Drains: with rains restarting it's become clear that there are some areas where there are problems with drains not having been cleared. I am aware of some key sites but if there are others in your parish please let me know and I will chase them up. The easiest way to do this is to report it on Fix My Street and then send me the reference number.

Islip Bridge: I have been getting regular updates on the Islip bridge closure. We are now well over halfway through and the works are on time. Of course it's possible that a late snag will derail things but the team are optimistic about reopening on time.

Quiet Lanes: I have been working with Blackthorn parish council to more forward proposals for Quiet Lanes in Blackthorn. An update on this should be available by next month if not before. In the mean time, I wrote about the proposals here: https://thegroundonwhichwestand.substack.com/p/quiet-lanes-whats-happening-in-otmoor

PFAS: I chased Oxfordshire County Council to provide more updated health information on PFAS and Cherwell to ensure robust testing in place for the Islip Fuel Depot site.

Cycle Lanes: I am chasing East West Rail to promote an active travel route alongside the railway between Islip and Kildington. They initially said no but I am pushing back and my colleague Gareth Epps, the Cabinet Member for Transport, raised it with them. We will keep pushing. I am also supporting Hampton Gay and

Poyle Parish Meeting to promote a permissive footpath and cycle route from the village to the A34 slip road and into Kidlington.

In County Hall: Things have been busy! I spoke at Full Council to promote some of the wonderful work we are doing on nature recovery – if you have a look at the habitat map https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/lnrs/local-habitat-map you can really drill down and see what we're doing locally. Examples in this area include support for wetlands restoration, woodlands restoration and water voles.

Road and Right of Way Closures

Roads:
06/07/2026-28/08/2026: Islip Bridge closed for structural repairs

08/01/2027: Brill Road in Piddington closed for telegraph pole replacement

11/01/2027: Jerome Way in Shipton will be closed for pre-surface dressing works

Footpaths and Bridleways:
Footpath Closure in Hampton Gay and Poyle/Kidlington: The footpath running from the Islip Road to Bicester Road is closed until further notice due to the illegal landfill. Although the landfill has now been removed, the site still needs further work to make it safe, so the footpath remains closed- I will follow this up.

Footpath closure: Footpath between Merton and Fencott/Murcott closed until October 2028 due to an unsafe bridge across the River Ray. Having been told this would be fixed this year, I have now been told this will be pushed back and the closure extended until October 2028. I am challenging this.

County Council Business

OxBus 2040: A consultation is live on Oxfordshire County Council's plan to improve bus services over the county over the next 15 years. The survey asks for your views on the vision for buses in Oxfordshire, the proposed actions and whether they will help achieve the plan's vision, and specific proposals relating to the future network, customer experience, fares and ticketing, climate change, and bus infrastructure. You can give comments until November 2026.
https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxbus-2040-plan-for-bus

Traffic Filter Trial: the consultation on the traffic filters is live. Give your views here: https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxford_filters_etro2026

Primary School Application Process: The primary school application process is open with a deadline of 15th January 2027. You can read more here:
https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schools/apply-school-place/reception-applications
and check your eligiblity for free home to school transport here

https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schools/travelling-school/eligibility-free-and-paid-travel-school/free-home-school-travel

We have agreed proposals for a **Thames Valley Mayoralty** to include Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Swindon, with a door open for Buckinghamshire to join later. This comes with significant increased funding for local strategic planning and infrastructure as well as more control of local services. I think it's a huge opportunity for our county and I'm pleased it's going ahead.

Local Government reorganisation, unfortunately, is less positive, with the government reimposing its disastrous proposal for three unitary authorities. This would drag the majority of Otmoor into greater Oxford, while moving the rest into a tiny northern authority with little prospect of fiscal sustainability. Oxfordshire County Council are exploring options to challenge the decision and I will keep you updated

Travel Benefits for NHS and School Staff: some of the income from Oxford's temporary congestion charge is being invested into a new travel benefits package for NHS and school staff, including free parking for up to 16 hours per day at the park and ride sites, or a £1 bus ticket to and from their workplaces in Oxford. Eligible staff should have received a link from their employer inviting them to apply.

Fire and rescue service: new proposals for the fire and rescue service will provide a more sustainable service and improve emergency response times. In this area, Bicester will move to a new day crewing model similar to that used at Kidlington, and Kidlington fire station will remain open.

Oxfordshire Museum: the Oxfordshire museum in Woodstock celebrated its diamond anniversary! My kids absolutely love their holiday activities – do check it out in its anniversary year.

A new HWRC: the Ardley tip will be decommissioned and the county is developing plans for a new site near the Bicester Village park and ride. A full consultation will be launched next year but it will be a modern facility with a full range of recycling facilities, and a re-use shop.