

LangfordLife

The Voice of the Village

Spilling the beans

FLTR's Jeff and Christie Lothamer share their passion for coffee and community



Wretchwick Green update

Trains headed for Cambridge

London Road barriers

Bicester residents' forum



HOORAY FOR SPRING

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Steve Clack
Editor

Editor's letter

I have to confess that living in Bicester has become something of a bittersweet experience for me. I've been here for 26 years now, and seen our town grow from around 17,000 residents to almost double that amount. An Oxfordshire resident for most of my life, my partner and I were drawn by Bicester's convenient transport links and reasonably-priced housing.

With Bicester's huge growth over the past few decades it's been a town in transition for at least that long, but plans for the next few decades fill me with both enthusiasm and dread.

On the downside, the growth comes with ever-worsening congestion, coupled with pollution levels that are going through the roof. And then there's the farcical London Road railway crossing. We also have over-stretched resources, such as a hospital with barely a dozen beds to serve a town that's 70% of the size of Banbury. Also, our 'new' Pioneer Square has a positively shocking number of un-let units, which makes me nervous about the future viability of our town centre. Of course, most of these problems are commonplace across the over-populated southeast, but that doesn't make any of it easier to bear.

If the 'garden town' plans lead to better infrastructure then things could all turn out happily ever after, but funding constraints and the seeming lack of will to make Bicester truly 'green' in any real sense makes me wary.

Looking on the bright side, Bicester remains a great place to live for commuters, with good road links to London, Birmingham and the south coast, though the A34 seems to become more painfully congested every day. As you'll see from our feature on page 10, the new Oxford rail link should eventually extend back to Cambridge, Bedford and beyond, which is great news as the UK road network inevitably becomes more congested as the years pass. Closer to home, Langford will shortly have its very own artisan coffee shop (see page 6), which I'm looking forward to immensely.

So, there is still a lot to like about Bicester, and reasons to be positive, so maybe I'll just sit down with a good coffee, chill out and hope for good things to come!

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Wretchwick Green update

The Wretchwick Green housing development opposite Langford Village will have a huge impact on local residents. **Carole Hetherington** and **Richard Kingshott** report

This new development, due for construction over the next 10–15 years, will incorporate some 1,500 houses, including 450 affordable and ‘starter’ homes. It will also have a new primary school and a range of local shops and community facilities. As well as residential space, it will include an employment hub off the A41, with a range of small industrial and larger distribution units. This will include premises for light manufacturing, technology and knowledge-based companies.

The outline planning application for the scheme has already been submitted to Cherwell District Council, and should be approved early this year, subject to meeting the Bicester Local Plan and Master Plan criteria.

The development will include a spine road passing through the centre (as shown on the image on the right), which will form part of the Bicester ring road. This will be limited to 30mph due to the number of surrounding houses, which currently presents a concern due to the amount of heavy traffic likely to be passing through it.

Redrow Wates, the developer of the estate, has worked closely with the LVCA to take our concerns into account, and have amended their plans as a result, and we look forward to continuing this consultation in the



coming months, particularly regarding the scale and impact of the proposed industrial and commercial premises.

Perhaps as importantly for us, Redrow Wates have also looked favourably on upgrading some of the highways infrastructure within Langford Village. This includes plans for cycling and walking routes from Wretchwick Green to Langford Village,

aimed at encouraging walking and cycling into town. Planned upgrades to Langford’s footways and cycleways include complete resurfacing of the Wretchwick Way shared use facility, which currently is in a very poor state of repair.

For more information on the Wretchwick Green development, visit www.wretchwickgreen.co.uk

Did you know?

The ancient Deserted Medieval Village of Wretchwick, located adjacent to Wretchwick Way opposite Langford Village, is protected by law and cannot be built on. It was mentioned as an estate in 1086 in the Domesday Book, and is known to have had the status of a Manor by 1194. By 1274 it was owned by Bicester Priory, and

in 1279 the population consisted of ‘24 villains and their dependants’. In 1488 it was suffering from a reduced population due to the Black Death plague, and was depopulated by the Prior of Bicester. By 1536 the manor had been divided up into five leasehold farms, and by 1791 had only one farm on the site.



Bicester responds to refugee crisis

Churches in Bicester have responded to the ongoing refugee crisis in Syria and elsewhere, and have set up a Refugee Support Group to raise awareness and channel local support.

The latest public meeting of the group on 5 February welcomed more than 70 residents who were shown a film made by Jo Brunwin to help convey the desperation of Syrian refugees, and the urgency with which we need to act. Cllr Barry Wood's response to our petition, urging Cherwell District Council to take

more than the mere six families already committed to, was most encouraging. It was also great to hear that the council is hoping to welcome the first family to Bicester this spring.

Thanks to everyone who has signed up to our volunteer database. We have been in contact with Connection Support (www.connectionsupport.org.uk), who have been appointed to provide the support service, and hope to coordinate our volunteers with their work. One of the most pressing needs is for Arabic

speakers, or those who speak another language spoken in Syria. It has been great to hear from some, but please let us know if you are aware of anyone else who may be able to help with translation.

If you'd like to help, perhaps by making a donation or if you would consider renting accommodation to a Syrian family, please email cibrefugee@gmail.com

Rebecca Mitchell-Farmer
Co-chair, Churches in Bicester
Refugee Support Group

Taming the Peregrine Way/A4421 junction

On the evening of 20 February there was yet another road accident at this perilous black spot. Thankfully, the LVCA have finally been heard ...

In 1997, Carole Hetherington and Richard Kingshott of the LVCA approached Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) about the hazardous conditions at the T-junction where Peregrine Way joins the A4421 Wretchwick Way, near the eastern end of Jubilee Lake. OCC subsequently put up a 'Side Road Ahead' warning sign at the junction's northbound approach to help make the junction more obvious to A4421 traffic.

Three years ago, LVCA began a campaign in earnest for additional road safety improvements. Following our request, OCC completed a safety audit of the junction, which agreed that it was unsafe in its current layout. Sadly, financial cuts in the highways budget prevented the recommended safety improvements being carried out. At this point it became obvious that the only way to obtain the necessary funding was through contributions from developers.

LVCA later established an agreement with OCC to request the necessary



THE MORNING AFTER Mid-morning on 21 February: turning in or out of this junction at any time of day is a risky manoeuvre

funds from the proposed Gavray Drive development (see page 13).

The proposed scheme would introduce white ladder markings along Neunkirchen Way and Wretchwick Way. Prohibitory 'No Overtaking' white lines would also be included at the approach to the T-junction. These road safety improvements would discourage overtaking and, due to narrower running lane widths, help to reduce traffic speed along the whole route. A similar traffic calming scheme is already in place on the A41, between

the Rodney House roundabout and the new hamburger roundabout.

As part of their local improvement obligations for the Wretchwick Green development, Redrow Wates have also agreed to pay for the installation of traffic lights at the Peregrine Way T-junction.

If these measures are approved by Cherwell District Council, we'll hopefully see a much-reduced accident rate at this junction, making it far safer for Langford residents and others.

Bicester Ladies Circle

If you're female, aged 18–45 and looking for fun, friendship and fundraising, look no further, says **Dawn Andrews**

Bicester Ladies Circle meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. You're welcome to attend whenever suits you, with no commitment necessary. We run a huge range of events, with plenty of opportunity to simply chat and make friends. In the past year we've had book swap and jewellery-making evenings, been chocolate tasting, geocaching (essentially a treasure hunt around Bicester using GPS trackers), had a Kwik Fit car maintenance session, been to the golf range and done a pole fitness lesson with Pantha Alternative Fitness.

As an international organisation, a couple of times a year we'll discuss which local charities we can help with with funding-raising events. Last year we donated £1,800 to five charities: Seesaw, Restore, Bardwell School, FairyTale Farm and Round Table Trust.

If you'd like to find out more then please visit <http://www.ladiescircle.co.uk/bicester>, email bicesterladiescircle@gmail.com, or take a look at our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BicesterLadiesCircle. We look forward to meeting you soon!



Shed heaven

Tucked away just off the B430 near Weston-on-the-Green, The Milk Shed offers great breakfasts, lovely lunches and more ...

Previously Godwins Ice Cream, The Milk Shed (www.themilkshedstore.co.uk) is now open 9.00am to 4.00pm from Tuesday to Friday, and 9.00am to 3.30pm at weekends, with last orders taken an hour before closing time. It still sells the same great home-made ice cream as before – in at least 20 flavours – but it now serves breakfast and lunch too.

Don't expect the usual sausage-bacon-egg fry-up here though, at least not quite. The Milk Shed has a rather more creative take on its brekkies, and the lunch menu is equally offbeat.

For breakfast you'll find such delights as a sourdough bacon sarnie, scrambled eggs with slow roast tomatoes, bacon or smoked salmon, plus daily specials such as mushroom puff pastry tart with lemon, parsley, rocket, parmesan and poached egg. At weekends you can also get eggs benedict (poached eggs on a muffin with bacon and hollandaise sauce), or eggs royale, which substitutes the bacon with smoked salmon.

The lunch choices go even more left-field, with the likes of red lentil and coconut dal, with fried halloumi or chorizo, spiced almond yoghurt, raisins, coriander and flatbread. Or how about Basque squid stew with red wine, tomatoes, parsley, aioli (garlic mayonnaise) and toast? Foodie heaven.

Across more than a dozen visits, we've found the food consistently delicious, the service helpful, and the prices reasonable. The bread is particularly great, the poached and scrambled eggs are lovely and soft – assuming you like them that way – and everything is fresh, interesting and just that little bit quirky.

An inevitable downside of every great eatery, it can sometimes be tricky to get a table right away on weekend mornings, but it's well worth hanging around. The Milk Shed can be quite noisy at times, particularly as it's frequented by quite a few families with children.

On a very personal note, we found the coffee not quite strong enough for our continental tastes, even with an extra shot in our americano, but most will undoubtedly be satisfied.

You'll of course find tea, hot chocolate and a good choice of cold drinks, plus all those ice cream flavours. There's also a handful of decent cakes on offer, plus a small selection of ice cream sundaes and other desserts.

There's a small deli area at the bottom of the restaurant, offering various oils, preserves, dried pastas, chocolates and condiments. If you go and browse, it's hard to leave without finding something new that you simply can't resist.

Caffeine buzz

The black hoarding has finally come down to reveal Langford's very own independent coffee shop – but there's a fascinating story behind this exciting new project.

Steve Clack talks to FLTR's husband-and-wife team, Jeff and Christie Lothamer



So, tell us a little bit about what brought you to Bicester...

Back in 2011, while Jeff was working as a pastor in Michigan, our friends Steve and Sarah Caton moved to the UK to start a church in Bicester. The project was set up through Reign Ministries, a Christian charity that works closely with local schools and youth clubs, and also trains youth workers.

We both have a background in church leadership of various sorts, so we were asked if we'd like to come over from the USA to partner with them.

As we're both pioneering sort of folks, we decided to go for it, together with our three children, and went ahead to get our work visas arranged.

And coffee wasn't on the agenda at this point?

No. Almost every job we've had has involved bringing restoration or change to communities. So, shortly after getting ourselves established in Bicester, our team formed a new church, Journey Communities (journeycommunities.co.uk). We still do volunteer work with Reign Ministries, but Journey is now an independent church.

But this isn't a physical church, right?

Right. The 'church' has no physical location – it's more about family than an institution, so we do a lot of gathering at people's homes, the pub, the park, and so on. We work closely with a lot of local churches though, like the Emmanuel Anglican and Highway Churches.

We're realistic enough to appreciate that not everyone wants to be part of a church in the conventional sense, which is fine. We believe the church

should be about people who truly want to bring something to the community by helping to bring life to it.

How did coffee come into the equation?

We were previously both die-hard Starbucks fans. About three years ago, after we decided that Jeff needed a hobby, he got a popcorn popper for Christmas, together with a book on how to roast coffee beans. So, one thing led to another, and the idea of a coffee shop as a great community venture was born.

We were initially looking for something in the centre of town, but just over 18 months ago, Mike Oke, your LVCA Chairman, introduced us to Andy Ng, the owner of the Sun Wah and Tesco building on Peregrine Way.

Andy and his family had already made plans to extend the shops, but they wanted to make sure it was the right kind of thing for the community.

Luckily, he was very keen on our coffee shop idea from the outset.

So how did that idea become reality?

The two of us made initial plans with a team of friends, and formed a group of five directors: Robert Jackson, Jonathan White, Sarah Caton, Mark Ellis and Jeff.

As a new-build, we're essentially starting from a shell and installing everything from scratch. Some of the funding has come from grants and gifts from a variety of organisations and networks we've connected with over the years, and also from some local residents. The finished café will be owned by Journey Communities, but registered as its own company.

It's a straightforward commercial venture?

No. It's a community project, and our profits will primarily be invested in helping young people to realise their own entrepreneurial dreams. This will

It's a community project, and our profits will primarily be invested in helping young people to realise their own entrepreneurial dreams



FAMILY TIME Jeff and Christie with their three children

LOCAL SUPPORT Residents pose with the FLTR team on a wintry February day



HOT WHEELS The FLTR team have been offering free coffee and meeting people on the streets of Langford from their mobile coffee cart



include providing startup funds to help with scholarships. We're also keen to hire young locals to work in the shop and teach them barista skills.

The FLTR board of trustees will jointly decide on how best to invest the money, but we're committed to investing it all into people, no matter what. We're not simply donating to charities.

What's going to be on the menu at FLTR, other than coffee?

Beyond the usual espresso-based coffees you see in High Street chains, such as cappuccino, americano, latte and so on, we'll be offering artisan filter coffee, which these places generally don't serve. We'll be using fresh roasted, freshly ground beans, and the centrepiece of FLTR will be our 'pour-over bar', where you'll be able to watch your filter coffee being handmade by a trained barista.

We're going to take a classic approach to our espresso-based coffees too, with lots of emphasis on getting things just right, so we're investing in the best training. For at least the first year, a highly-trained barista friend of ours from Portland, Oregon, will be providing training for our team, and we've already received training from the prestigious Speciality Coffee Association of Europe (www.scae.com).

Also, we have a great relationship with the head judge for UK barista competitions. He has a keen interest in social enterprise projects such as ours, and has volunteered his services to help train our team on barista skills.

To be sure we have the equipment

to match, we've got ourselves a good deal on one of the very best espresso machines – the kind used by all the big coffee shops, and a top-notch grinder, which is also really important.

All of our beans will be ethically-sourced by Dark Woods Coffee Roasters in Marsden, and we'll be using 100% recyclable paper cups – the kind without the usual wax coating.

And beyond coffee?

We're going to serve hot chocolate, top-quality loose-leaf teas, and cold coffee drinks during the warmer months. We'll be selling cakes and pastries, of course, hopefully sourced locally. And for lunch we'll be offering a small selection of sandwiches and paninis, plus either soup or salads, depending on the season.

What about the shop itself?

Space is obviously limited, but we're looking at a few dozen seats, which will include some soft, comfortable chairs, and a bench along one wall. We also received the go ahead for some outdoor seating.

How about opening hours?

To start with, we'll hopefully be opening at 8.00–8.30am, closing at around 5.00–5.30pm. Beyond drinks and food, we're looking at a number of special events that will help people to connect, as part of our goal of bringing life to the neighbourhood and helping to address isolation in the community. Maybe a weekly Scrabble Club, or perhaps other boardgame events one evening a week. Perhaps even occasional lunchtime seminars

for businesspeople, or life guidance sessions from a trained counsellor. We're also hoping to run coffee brewing workshops, tasting sessions, home roasting workshops, and so on. For the evening events, we'd probably look to stay open until 9–10pm.

Why 'FLTR'?

Beyond the association with filter coffee, and the fact that all web domains with the vowels of f-i-l-t-e-r still in are already taken, it links in with our own mantra: Full Life Through Relationships – F-L-T-R. It's all about bringing people together through a place where they can gather and connect with each other.

Your coffee shop needs YOU!

FLTR is a £70,000 project that still needs to raise some funds in order to finish the fit-out and make the necessary purchases of supplies and equipment.

To help get this exciting new venture off the ground, visit www.chuffed.org/project/fltrcoffee to watch a promotional video and to make a donation.

Backers will enjoy benefits such as founder status on the FLTR website, free coffee or tea vouchers, a vinyl car/laptop sticker, plus FLTR T-shirts and mugs. The crowdfunding project closes on 15 March, so time is limited!

You can find more information on FLTR at their new website, www.fltrcoffee.co.uk

Crossing conundrum

Since the opening of the railway line from Bicester Village station to Marylebone early last year, regular level crossing closures have caused long traffic queues in both directions along the London Road, often gridlocking the town centre.

LVCA have been in discussion with Network Rail to request that they minimise the amount of time the barriers are down before and after the trains have crossed, but as the number of trains increases, a more long-term solution needs to be found.

Three years ago, before the line closed for rebuilding, there were no more than 10 freight trains a week through Bicester, and drivers would have been unlucky to get stuck at the level crossing. But soon there will be 10 or even 12 trains per hour. This will

increase the current 15 minutes-per-hour closures we're often experiencing with just four trains per hour, up to a shocking 39 minutes per hour when the line to Bletchley opens (see article on page 10), according to a study by Network Rail and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) last year.

In all, 37 level crossings have already been closed between Bicester and Oxford, so London Road could soon be the only crossing left between Oxford and Bletchley. OCC has said there are no plans to close the crossing permanently,

and they are investigating various options for either a tunnel or bridge. Subject to funding, the hope is to get a solution in place before the line opens to Cambridge, around 2030 or so.



CLOSED ISSUE? A train passes through the controversial crossing on London Road

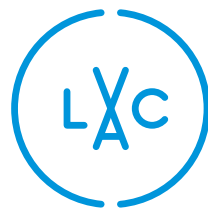
New logo for LVCA

As the LVCA gets more involved in local planning matters, the time was right for a new logo

With all the planning meetings, consultations and workshops LVCA committee members have been attending lately, it became clear that business cards would be a useful accessory for LVCA delegates to have at their disposal. The idea was mooted during a committee meeting and the question of a logo was raised. Committee member and Graphic Designer, Richard Ponsford, was asked to take a look.

'I didn't feel the existing logo did the LVCA any favours,' says Rich, 'It was given to the LVCA in a time before social media, and so wasn't very versatile. Logos need to work on so many different platforms these days, so we needed something that could be easily adapted to suit both print and digital environments.'

Nor did it seem to represent the association in its current guise: 'Bicester



Langford Village
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
BICESTER

is changing rapidly and the LVCA needed to look like it was keeping up. Committee members are regularly invited to all sorts of official meetings and consultations, so we needed a logo that could be taken seriously.'

So what's the thinking behind the new design? Rich explains: 'Using a circle to represent Langford Village seemed very apt. Circles are familiar, friendly shapes with no sharp edges, but also robust

and visually appealing. The two halves represent Old and New Langford, with the letters V and A forming a cross in the exact centre – or the heart – of the circle. You could argue that's where the LVCA aims to be: at the heart of the community. It was the big stone circle at the London Road end of Langford Meadows, with its strong central stone, that gave me the idea.'

As well as adorning business cards for those committee members who need them, the intention is that the new logo will be used on everything the LVCA has a hand in.

'My hope is that the new logo will not only go down well with the committee, but the community as a whole,' Rich continues. 'The LVCA exists for the benefit of the people of Langford, so it'd make me very happy if the people of Langford felt they had some sort of ownership of the logo too.'

Hamburger relish!

It seems like no time ago that the 'hamburger' roundabout at the A41/A421 junction looked like the drone photo below. The hamburger is all finished now though, and is hugely improving traffic flow from the M40 to the A41 and Bicester's eastern bypass, while reducing conflict with traffic into town and Bicester Village.

There's still more work to do, as the project also involves reconfiguration of the Pingle Drive roundabout. This will eventually include the dualling of Pingle Drive into Bicester Village, and widening of the A421 Oxford Road.

The whole scheme is due to be completed by mid-summer this year. See growingbicester.co.uk for more.



- 1 Pingle Drive Roundabout
- 2 A41 (to Aylesbury)
- 3 A41 (to M40, Junction 9)

BURGER FROM ABOVE This superb aerial view of the new hamburger roundabout was kindly provided by Bicester resident Jeremy Costello (contact www.facebook.com/bicesterfromabove or www.access-all-aerials.co.uk)

... and even more traffic lights

In addition to the A41 hamburger roundabout, the Rodney House roundabout at the end of Neunkirchen Way is also set to become traffic light controlled in readiness for the Graven Hill housing development. This will ease traffic congestion along the A41 in both directions, as well as Seelscheid Way and London Road at peak times. The scheme is due to commence imminently, with a construction period of about six months.



Parkrun proves popular



PARKRUN PHOTOS: KATY ANDREWS

The Bicester parkrun has gone from strength to strength since it started in April last year, regularly hosting over 120 runners of all abilities. Parkrun takes place all over the country at 9am every Saturday morning, and was started as a way to get the whole community fit, healthy and active. It's a free, friendly, timed 5km run, and prides itself on being inclusive to all. Runners of all ages and abilities take part, with some pushing pushchairs, and even bringing their four-legged friends. And don't worry if you haven't run before – you'll never come in last place, thanks to the volunteer tail runner!

The run covers two loops of Langford fields, starting and finishing in the field at the stone circle. Go to www.parkrun.org/bicester to register your details and to print off your barcodes to bring with you on the day, so your time can be officially registered.

The run wouldn't be possible without a team of regular volunteers, who coordinate the course each week by marshalling, timekeeping, barcode scanning and much, much more. Parkrun is always looking for new volunteers, too – just email bicesterhelpers@parkrun.com to offer your services.

Bicester on the line

Andrew Smith gives us an update on the plans for Bicester's ever-expanding rail links, together with a little bit of history...

The Chiltern Railways train service from Bicester North to London Marylebone and Birmingham has been running for a number of years now. After a few years of closure, Bicester Village station, previously called Bicester Town, opened in October 2015 to reinstate the service into Oxford. Around the same time, a new station was built at Oxford Parkway, alongside the Water Eaton Park and Ride near North Oxford Golf Club.

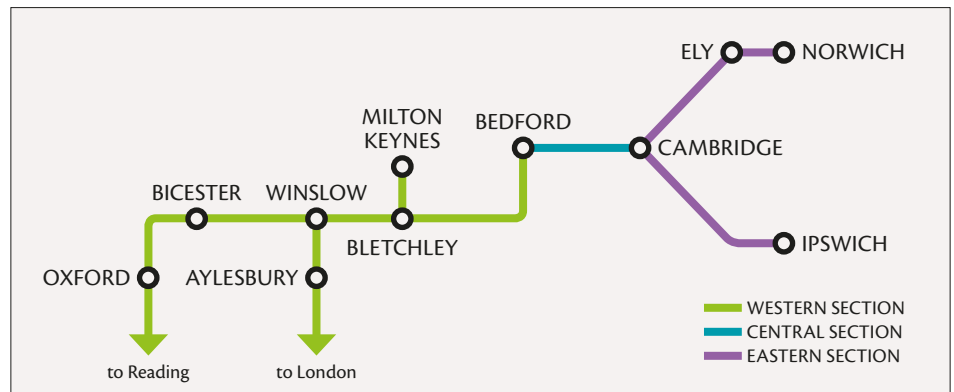
Historical link

Bicester Village station is the first new rail link between London and a major British city for 100 years – quite an impressive claim, considering that it required the construction of just 1km of new line. But Chiltern Railways' new service between Oxford and Marylebone is only part of the story.

The next 20 years

Already extremely well connected in comparison to most towns in the area, the next 20 years should see many more improvements for Bicester. The Western section of the East West Rail (EWR) project, which will initially involve reconstruction of the line to Bletchley and Milton Keynes, will eventually continue all the way to Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich.

Phase 2 of the Western section will see one train per hour from Oxford to Milton Keynes, and another to Bedford, stopping at Winslow and Bletchley. There will also be one train per hour from Milton Keynes to Marylebone, as an extension of Chiltern Railways' service from Aylesbury Vale Parkway via Princes Risborough. This will also include stops at Bletchley and Winslow, potentially giving two trains each hour from Bicester to Milton Keynes.



HEADING EAST With the Bicester-to-Oxford line now completed, the East West Rail project will now head east towards Cambridge, albeit slowly

Cambridge in an hour?

A typical journey from Oxford to Milton Keynes will take 40 minutes, plus another 20 minutes on to Bedford. A direct train to Milton Keynes from Bicester could take just 25 minutes, and maybe 45 minutes to Bedford. By contrast, the existing X5 bus route takes an hour to Milton Keynes and 105 minutes to Bedford.

When the central section opens, a fast direct service from Oxford to Cambridge could take as little as 75 minutes, potentially only 60 minutes from Bicester.

Mixed messages

Though the Bicester-to-Oxford line was delivered successfully, other rail projects have not been progressing as planned, and there have been fears that EWR was going to be de-scoped. As a result, the National Audit Office published a report last year that was highly critical of the Department for Transport, Network Rail and the rail regulator. In November last year the National Infrastructure Commission published an interim report on the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor. Its central finding was that a lack of housing and connectivity are putting future EWR success at risk. A joined-up strategy

linking infrastructure and homes was needed to unlock housing and development.

So, £100m was requested to deliver the Western section of EWR before 2024, along with £10m in development funding to continue work on the Central Section. This was agreed by the Chancellor last November.

A new beginning

On 6 December last year, priorities changed when Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling, said that the decision to close the line in the 1960s is one that we have lived to regret, and that East West Rail is now one of the most strategically important rail projects. However it was stuck in a pipeline of other projects: "So I am going to do things differently, I want to go faster," he said. "I am going to establish East West Rail, which will become a new and separate organisation to Network Rail." As a result, the new East West Rail company will be established early this year.

The next steps

Before the next section of the line can be constructed between Bicester and Winslow, major work is required around Calvert, where EWR will cross the forthcoming HS2 line. HS2 will

use part of the Aylesbury-to-Claydon line, which will be moved to the east. The Oxford-to-Bletchley line will be raised to cross over HS2, and to allow access into the planned construction depot (and future HS2 Infrastructure Maintenance Depot). The Calvert works should take place this year, when the HS2 works will also start. The £110m funding announced last November will fund rebuilding of the lines for 100mph running, as well as a new station at Winslow, amongst a number of other modifications.

EWR Central Section

The central section of the line around Cambridge is more problematic, particularly as part of the former line has been partly built on, so this will need to be re-routed. Also, the line

originally went through a different station in Bedford, which didn't connect with intercity trains. With all the planned new connections from Bedford, a new station may be required there: either a rebuilt Bedford St Johns or Bedford South Parkway.

Another station is planned in Sandy, just east of Bedford, and perhaps another one south of Cambridge, serving Addenbrooke's Hospital. Possible completion of the scheme (assuming funding and consents approval) is unlikely to be before the early 2030s.

Future developments

As well as the continuation of the Oxford-Bicester line on to Bedford, Milton Keynes will eventually connect to London Marylebone via Winslow,

Aylesbury and High Wycombe. The service will also likely extend beyond Oxford to either Didcot or Reading. A through service to London Paddington via Heathrow Airport is also a possibility via the future Western Rail Access. However, train service patterns will ultimately be down to the Department for Transport and the train operator to decide.

Did you know?

- The previous single-track line from Bicester Town station to Oxford was reopened almost 30 years ago on a shoestring budget. Line speed was limited to 20–40mph, so the journey took almost half an hour, compared to just half that on the new line.
- The original railway line from London to Birmingham, going through Bicester North, was constructed over 100 years ago, with Bicester North first opening way back in 1910.



TUNNEL VISION The upgraded railway in Wolvercote Tunnel, where an innovative lighting system has been installed to protect bats

OXFORD BOUND The new Oxford Parkway station, just off the A34, alongside the Water Eaton Park & Ride near North Oxford Golf Club



Get yourself connected

Bicester has never been so well connected by rail. Here we have selected three of the country's most exciting cities that are now even easier to reach from either of Bicester's train stations



London

Getting there: The combined service to London Marylebone from Bicester North and Bicester Village stations is now around four trains per hour. Journey times vary between 45 and 68 minutes, depending on the number of stops.

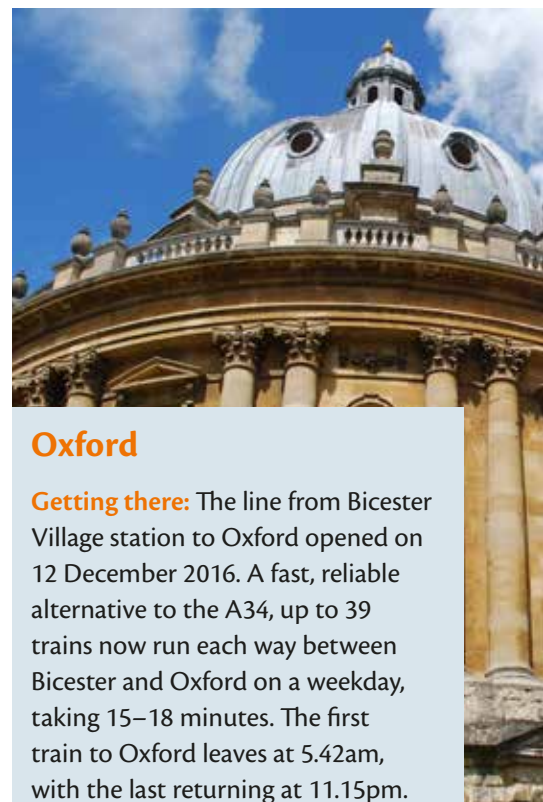
Things to see and do: What can you say about the country's capital that hasn't been said already? One of the most exciting and culturally diverse cities in the world, there is no shortage of things to do. There are still plenty of free museums and galleries to visit, so a trip to London needn't cost the earth. And the new train line often means you can be there and back within a few hours, which is great for parents taking young children to the capital for the first time. Go to www.visitlondon.com for more ideas.



Birmingham

Getting there: Bicester Village station doesn't offer any trains directly to Birmingham and other points north, but Bicester North provides around two trains per hour, though around half of them require a train change at Banbury. Journey times for the direct trains vary from about 68–79 minutes, depending on the number of stops, which can include Banbury, Leamington Spa and Warwick, plus at least half a dozen others.

Things to see and do: Britain's 'second city', and with more miles of canals than Venice (34 miles, in fact), Birmingham is rightly proud of its industrial heritage. Shoppers can enjoy the premiere Bullring shopping centre (pictured above), situated in the heart of the city with plenty of shops and restaurants to suit even the most discerning tastes. There is the amazing Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, and Antony Gormley's partially sunken *Iron:Man* sculpture is in nearby Victoria Square. For fans of the macabre or anyone looking for something different, try the Coffin Works! For more suggestions, go to visitbirmingham.com



Oxford

Getting there: The line from Bicester Village station to Oxford opened on 12 December 2016. A fast, reliable alternative to the A34, up to 39 trains now run each way between Bicester and Oxford on a weekday, taking 15–18 minutes. The first train to Oxford leaves at 5.42am, with the last returning at 11.15pm. The service is expected to see over 850,000 journeys per year. All trains stop at Oxford Parkway, where there are frequent buses to Oxford city centre, Kidlington, Summertown and both John Radcliffe and Churchill Hospitals. There is also a regular coach service to Birmingham Airport. Buses also serve Woodstock and Blenheim Palace. Oxford station offers onward connections to Didcot, Reading, Southampton, Worcester and Hereford. Both Oxford and Banbury also offer direct services to Birmingham, Coventry, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Newcastle, etc.

Things to see and do: Steeped in history, Oxford is high on the agenda for tourists visiting the UK. Aside from the university buildings, there's the world-renowned Ashmolean Museum, as well as the Museum of Natural History and Pitt Rivers, and the Bodleian Library often has interesting and unusual exhibitions. Gig-goers can see big-name bands and DJs perform at the O2 Academy on Cowley Road. If that's not your bag, you can just wander the historic cobbled streets and marvel at the city's architecture. More at www.oxfordcityguide.com



On the beat

An update on Langford community policing from local Thames Valley Police Neighbourhood Officer, **PC James Waterson**

Despite the enforcement campaign we reported in the last issue, speeding remains one of the top priorities raised by Langford residents. As a result, your local neighbourhood team has conducted more speed enforcement along Peregrine Way, mainly during school drop-off and pick-up times. Since our last update, 21 more drivers have been issued with tickets for speeds over 35mph, with the vast majority of them living on Langford Village. Most worryingly, the highest speeds were up to 40mph, which increases the risk of death in pedestrian collisions by approximately four times.

Bicester has seen an increase in burglaries over the past few months. To reduce the risk of being targeted, we encourage residents to lock all doors and windows whenever you go out, even if it's just briefly. During the darker evenings, also make sure a light is left on, use a light timer switch, and don't leave expensive items on show.

As always, please remain vigilant at all times. If you hear or see anything suspicious, report it to us immediately, either via 999 in an emergency or via the non-emergency number, 101.

If you have any information that could help with our enquiries but wish to remain anonymous, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. For more home security advice, contact one of your Neighbourhood officers at Bicester Police Station, either by calling 101, or emailing BicesterTownNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk.

Bicester remains a safe place to live, with a low crime rate. By working in partnership with our community, we hope this will continue.

If you're on Twitter, make sure you follow your local policing team @TVP_Bicester. This is a great way of keeping up-to-date with the latest local crime news and witness appeals, and to see what your Neighbourhood Team get up to when out on patrol.

Gavray wildlife threat

Gallagher's plan to build a further 300 homes alongside Gavray Drive threatens this valuable local wildlife site and Conservation Target Area

A year ago, plans were submitted by Gallagher Estates to build 180 houses on the west side of Langford Brook, along Gavray Drive, with an outline plan to build a further 120 homes on the east side of the brook in the future. The plans were initially rejected, but Gallagher took Cherwell District Council (CDC) to court and won the case, allowing the full 300-home development to proceed.

Further court proceedings were initiated by the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), who are fighting to protect a wildlife site at the eastern end of Gavray Drive and a Conservation Target Area within the site. Sadly, these court cases have also been lost in favour of Gallagher Estates.

All is not lost yet though, as the plans for the initial 180 homes should go back to the CDC planning committee for the next stage of approval fairly soon, and we understand that CPRE are again challenging the proposals.

LVCA AGM



Residents arrive for the 2016 AGM

Last year's Langford Village Community Association Annual General Meeting back in September attracted perhaps our best turnout ever, with well over 100 residents attending. Please accept our apologies if you had to stand – we're buying more chairs in time for this year's event.

As well as electing the LVCA committee for the coming year and announcing the appointment of our new Treasurer, Jean Coker, we had a number of guest speakers in to update us on local issues.

Kathy Heath talked about the merger of Langford Medical Practice with Victoria House Surgery (see page 15). PC James Waterson from our Neighbourhood Policing Team updated us on recent police operations in the area, as described in 'On the beat' opposite. Jeff and Christie Lothamer then announced their plans for the new FLTR Coffee Shop (see page 6) next to the Sun Wah takeaway.

The Committee then explained how we're working to minimise the negative impact of the many local developments now in progress, and how we're trying to improve local roads and footpaths.

Many people stayed after the meeting to chat. This has since led to increased attendance at our monthly LVCA meetings, and several of our new-found friends have kindly volunteered to help out with some great new initiatives.

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Langford Surgery merger

As many residents will already be aware, Langford Medical Practice merged with Victoria House Surgery back in October last year. The new partnership has been named Alchester Medical Group. The practice presented it as a positive move, stating "We believe that this merger presents a great opportunity to increase the services we can offer patients, manage our costs more effectively and attract and keep talented staff."

They also stated that they will be exploring the potential to bring the two surgeries together under one roof at some point over the coming years, but made no comment on where the new combined surgery might be located.

The main reception team has been moved to the Victoria House surgery, so to book an appointment you now need to call 01869 248585 instead of the old number. Despite claiming that this should allow calls to be handled more quickly, a number of residents have reported major problems when phoning the new number.

As a result, the practice is suggesting that phone calls are likely to be answered more quickly if you call in the afternoon, but people are still reporting waits of 10 minutes and longer. You can of course still drop into Langford surgery in person to make an appointment.

Symmetry is coming ...

Previously known as Akeman Park, the forthcoming Symmetry Park warehousing development alongside the A41 will cause major headaches for Bicester residents

Located adjacent to the proposed Wretchwick Green estate (see page 3), adjacent to the A41 and east of Wretchwick Farm Cottages, the Symmetry Park warehousing facility will generate a considerable amount of HGV traffic, adding to already busy A41 traffic volumes. Although it sits on a relatively small plot of land, the site will include lorry parking and hardstandings for a large number of heavy goods vehicles.

The LVCA objected strongly to the plans that were submitted, due to concerns about both vehicle movements and the intrusive size and scale of the warehouses. The facility will be

operating around the clock, and the increase in HGV traffic both night and day will affect all arterial routes in and out of Bicester.

The Cherwell District Council Local Plan states that Bicester needs a wider range of employment opportunities within the town to reduce commuting to other employment centres, but warehousing does not achieve this, and will provide relatively few jobs for the town.

Unfortunately, our objections came to nothing. Permission was granted in November last year, and work on the site is expected to start imminently.

The wading whimbrel

Most of the streets on Langford Village are named after British birds, but the whimbrel is one you're unlikely to spot around Bicester

Like many 'Langford' birds such as the avocet, heron and sandpiper, the whimbrel is a wading bird, so you're most likely to spot one plodding around near ponds, shallow water or reedy areas. In the UK, they're not resident any further south than the Shetlands and Orkney islands off the northern tip of Scotland, where they spend the summer breeding. You might spot one around the coastline in either spring or autumn though, or even occasionally inland, as they pass through on their way to or from South Africa, where they spend the winter.

Whimbrels can reach about 43cm (17in) in length. They normally lay 2-5 eggs, and aggressively defend their chicks – even attacking people on occasion. Their long bill is designed to extract insects, fish and crustaceans from the mud, though they also eat fruit, seeds and leaves. Because of their long curved beak, they're known as 'elephant birds' in some parts of the world.

Though uncommon in the UK, they're one of the most wide-ranging shorebirds in the world, and migrate from their northerly breeding grounds all the way down to South America, Africa, south Asia and Australia.



Victoria Prentis MP
Member of Parliament for North Oxfordshire**Contact Victoria**By email: victoria.prentis.mp@parliament.uk**Constituency**By phone: 01869 233 685
In writing: Heyford Park House
Upper Heyford
Bicester
OXON, OX25 5HD**Westminster**By phone: 020 7219 8756
In writing: House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA**Meet Victoria**

Victoria holds regular surgeries for constituents and visits pubs across North Oxfordshire as part of her Pub Tour. Please check the website or call Victoria's office for information about upcoming dates and locations.

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Twitter: @VictoriaPrentis**LANGFORD
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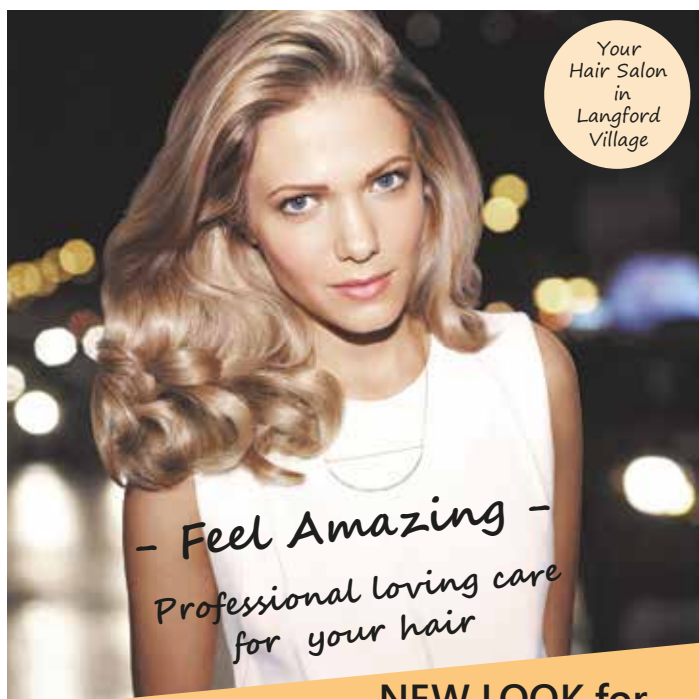
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Bicester Residents' Forum

Residents answer Council's call to help shape the future of Bicester Garden Town

Cherwell District Council hosted the first Bicester Residents' Forum on 12 December last year in the new council offices at Franklins House (pictured right). The forum was created by CDC's 'Bicester Delivery Team', with a view to sharing information with residents, as well as being an opportunity for locals to feed back on future plans being considered for the town.

The group, which will meet every three months, consists of residents from across the town who expressed an interest in helping to shape Bicester's future on the 'Love Bicester' questionnaires that were distributed at CDC's Garden Town exhibition in

Crown Walk last summer.

Presentations on the night were given by Garden Town Delivery Manager, Maria Curran, and Bicester Engagement and Liaison Officer, Gill Munday. Attendees were also asked for ideas and opinions about potential cultural events that could be held here. Some strong ideas were put forward, and residents pointed out Bicester's lack of a permanent venue for staging such events.

A new Council 'hotline' email address was also announced. Much like fixmystreet.com, it's a new way to directly notify CDC if you see anything in the town that needs the Council's attention – perhaps you know of something that needs urgent maintenance, or somewhere that would benefit from a thorough tidy up? Email your concerns to ssls@cherwell-dc.gov.uk.

Wider issues, such as the Bicester Masterplan, are expected to be discussed at future forums. Members of LVCA will be attending the meetings, together with other Langford residents.



Franklins House, Wesley Lane



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Photography competition

If you have a feel for photography, hop to it!

PATIENCE, YOUNG GRASSHOPPER

This time around we didn't receive any images of high enough resolution to use on the front cover, so we've used a few shots taken by our own editorial team. The front cover photo was taken by Rich Ponsford at the small stone circle on Langford fields. This closeup of a grasshopper, basking on a Toyota Prius, was taken by Steve Clack on Avocet Way.



In every issue of *Langford Life* we run a photo competition. No huge cash prizes, unfortunately, but you'll get to see your name in print, and enjoy the fame that goes with having your photo on the cover of the magazine and posted through every letterbox in Langford.

The subject can be anything from your last street party to a close-up of a kingfisher swooping over Langford brook, but as long as you're standing somewhere within Langford Village when you take the picture, you're eligible to enter.

Your photo should be **at least 3264 pixels wide by 2448 pixels high**, which is the equivalent of an 8-megapixel camera (although the higher the resolution, the better). The winning photo will appear on the front cover of the next issue, so bear in mind that we'll crop your image to make it exactly the same shape as the one you see on the front of this issue.

Please email a low resolution copy of your entry to editor@langfordlife.org.uk. If your photo is picked as the winner, we'll let you know and ask you for a copy at full resolution. There are no time limits for entry, so if you miss the next issue we'll simply enter you into the competition for the following one.

THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR This fascinating photo of a caterpillar was snapped by 13-year-old Reece Chamdal last year, in his back garden in Mallards Way. As well as taking photos in his spare time, Reece is also a member of the England Table Tennis Youth Team.



Wordsearch



Pour yourself a coffee and kick back with our wordsearch, which this issue is all about, well, coffee. Hidden in the square are 24 words related to the world's favourite hot beverage:

AMERICANO	FLAT WHITE
ARABICA	FRENCH PRESS
BARISTA	FROTH
BEANS	GRINDER
BLEND	LATTE
BREW	MACCHIATO
CAFFEINE	MOCHA
CAPPUCCINO	ORGANIC
COFFEE ✓	PERCOLATE
ESPRESSO	REDEYE
FAIR TRADE	ROAST
FILTER	TAMPER



Sudoku



9			6		4			8
			3	5	7			
		7	8		9	2		
	8		5		3		7	
1								6
	3	8				1	2	
	6			8			5	
7								4

Solution on page 22

Bicestory!

Delving into the forgotten corners of local history ...

A lot of us drink tea or coffee to help us feel less like a ghost in the morning, but owners of the Newlands Tea Rooms on Sheep Street had some ghoulish regulars that no amount of coffee could help. While restocking some mirrored cabinets, the proprietor once saw the reflection of a man dressed as a gamekeeper walk across the shop floor. Thinking he was a customer she turned around, but there was no one there ... Objects are also reported to have hurled themselves across the room, which would give a whole new meaning to the term 'flying saucer'!

Find out more about 'The Newlands Case' at www.ghostfinder.co.uk/Newlands.html

WHERE THE STREETS HAVE NO NAME



Oy-oy-oy-oy! Mike Skinner from The Streets here. Last time Bono was in Goldfinch Close, but the geezer hasn't been seen since 'New Year's Day', so I've come out to look for him. But where in Langford am I? Fill in the gaps to help me out.

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Community hall schedule

Here's a list of current regular events at the Langford community hall at Nightingale Place (next to Tesco Express), with contact details for each. Please see www.langfordlife.org.uk/community-hall/bookings-calendar/ for the latest updates.

Mondays

Baby and toddler group (9.15–11.15am)

Andrew Smith 01869 240467

Cubs (6.30–8.00pm)

Ellie Thompson 01869 322425

Aikido (8.30–10.00pm)

Martyn Tyas 01869 321375

Tuesdays

Musical minis (10.00am–12 noon)

Leena Thakker 01296 739652

Beavers (6.00–7.30pm)

Ellie Thompson 01869 322425

Square dancing (8.00–10.00pm)

Julie Davis 01869 246455

Wednesdays

Slimming World (8.30am–1.30pm)

Beth Bowkett 07874 283640

WI (2.00–4.00pm, first week of the month only)

Beryl Mann 01869 325834

Pilates/fitness (5.45–7.15pm)

Sharon Canning 01869 240959

Aikido (8.00–10.00pm)

Martyn Tyas 01869 321375

Thursdays

Rugby tots (9.15–11.15am)

Rob Hill 08453 131908

Rainbows (4.30–5.30pm)

Karen Smith 01869 324512

Brownies (6.00–7.30pm)

Tracey Honey thoney@sky.com

Church group (8.30–9.30pm)

Mike Oke 01869 246796

Fridays

Yoga class (9.30–10.30am)

Elaine Whittaker 07917 453224

Ballet (3.30–9.00pm)

Victoria Hill 07748 455093

How to book the community hall

For general booking enquiries or to rent the hall for your own event, please call 07946 289092 (9am–6pm) or use the booking form on the website: www.langfordlife.org.uk/contact/hall-booking-enquiry/

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Join the club!

Want to meet like-minded people? Perhaps joining a club was your resolution for 2017? Here's a handy list of some of the most popular clubs and societies in the Bicester area.

Sports and pastimes

Bicester and District Aunt Sally League
www.bicesterauntsally.com

Bicester and District Darts Association
<http://bit.ly/1QGnogT>

Bicester and District Pool League <http://bit.ly/1MQSXys>

Bicester and Kidlington Ramblers <http://bit.ly/1YcRf2P>

Bicester book group <http://bit.ly/1ObkSwz>

Bicester Bowls Club
<http://bicesterbowlclub.synthasite.com>

Bicester Camera Club
www.facebook.com/BicesterCameraClub/

Bicester Gliding Centre www.windrushers.org.uk

Bicester Green Gym (outdoor exercise)
www.bicestergreengym.org

Bicester Lawn Tennis Club
www.bicestertennisclub.co.uk

Bicester Local History Society www.blhs.org.uk

Bicester Speakers Club (see feature right)

Bridge Club www.bridgewebs.com/bicester/

Chess Club www.freewebs.com/bicesterchess/

Millennium Cycle Club www.bmcc2000.com

Rotary Club <http://bit.ly/1QpWZEW>

Round Table <http://bicester.roundtable.co.uk>

Music and drama

Bicester Choral and Operatic Society
www.bcoswesing.org.uk

Bicester Concert Band www.bicesterconcertband.org.uk

Bicester Drama Society <http://bit.ly/1kOE7SM>

Cloud 9 Feelgood Choir www.cloud9musica.co.uk

Launton Players (pantomime)
www.launtonvillageplayers.org.uk

Rock Choir Bicester <http://bit.ly/1HT0Dis>

If you're a member of a local club or society
and would like it to feature in this list,
please email the details to:
editor@langfordlife.org.uk

Bicester Speakers Club

Bicester Speakers Club offers a really affordable way for people to learn, practice and refine their public speaking and leadership skills. Members regularly comment on their increased self-confidence and improved effectiveness in meetings. For some members it has even led to promotion at work.

The club meets on the first and third Thursday of each month, starting promptly at 7.30 pm. Each meeting includes a mix of impromptu and prepared speeches delivered by members with varying experience, from beginner to well-established speaker.

There is no charge to visit and no need to pre-book. Just turn up at The Council Chambers, The Garth, on Launton Road. There is no pressure on visitors to participate – just come along and be entertained.

You'll find more information at <http://bicester.toastmasterclub.org>, or by joining the Bicester Speakers group on Facebook. Alternatively, email ben@bbkmedia.com.

The club would like to thank Bicester Town Council for the use of the Council Chambers for the past ten years – it's truly appreciated.



Local directory

Civic

Oxfordshire County Council 01865 792422
 Cherwell District Council 01295 227001
 Bicester Town Council 01869 252915
 Social and Community Services (OCC) 01865 816401
 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 0345 0507666
 Bicester Library (Wesley Lane) 01869 252181
 Thames Valley Police 101 (for emergencies, dial 999)
 Langford Village CP School 01869 369021
 Longfields School 01869 252386
 Bicester Leisure Centre (Queens Avenue) 01869 253914

Medical

Langford Medical Practice (Alchester) 01869 248585
 Bicester Community Hospital 01865 903880
 A&E (John Radcliffe/Horton) 0300 3047777
 NHS 111 (fast medical help, less urgent than 999) 111
 St John Ambulance Bicester 01869 255481
 Child Line 0800 1111
 Samaritans 116 123

Transport

National Rail enquiries 03457 484950
 Chiltern Railways enquiries 03456 005165
 Stagecoach buses (Oxfordshire) 01865 772250
 Thames Travel 01865 785400
 Dial-a-Ride (Shopmobility Bicester) 01869 320132

Places of worship

St Edburg's (Anglican) 01869 323375
 Emmanuel (Anglican) 01869 320021
 Immaculate Conception (Catholic) 01869 253277
 Orchard Baptist Church 01869 388978
 Methodist Church 01869 323030
 Salvation Army 01869 369160
 Bicester Community Church 07970 927082
 Elim Christian Centre 01869 250866
 Hebron Gospel Hall 01869 277300

Other

NSPCC 0808 800 5000
 Citizens Advice Bureau 01869 321806
 RSPCA 0300 1234999
 Crimestoppers 0800 555111
 Gas emergency 0800 111999
 National Power Cut Helpline 105
 SSE Power Distribution 0800 0727282
 Thames Water (24-hour leakline) 0800 714614
 Thames Water (public sewer flooding) 0800 3169800
 Bicester U3A 01869 242506
 Langford Village WI 01869 325834

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Sudoku solution (from page 19)

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6	4	7	8	1	9	2	3	5
2	8	6	5	9	3	4	7	1
1	9	5	4	7	2	3	8	6
3	7	4	1	6	8	5	9	2
5	3	8	9	4	6	1	2	7
4	6	2	7	8	1	9	5	3
7	1	9	2	3	5	8	6	4



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