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Restrictions to North Bridge weight limit threaten bus services and retailer deliveries through town

Oundle's North Bridge is in need of urgent structural repair work, but Northamptonshire County Council has walked away from the problem due to lack of funding.

The council's solution is to impose a 3 tonne vehicle weight limit, which will mean considerable disruption to deliveries, schools, public transport and construction.

Since 2014, the bridge has been undergoing daily structural monitoring to assess its weight bearing load. Over this period considerable movement was detected, and it was determined that seven of the thirteen arches are unable to carry their full weight bearing capacity.



The Grade II listed bridge currently has a 13 tonne carrying capacity per vehicle. The 3 tonne limit will mean that large vehicles, including double decker buses, will not be able to use the bridge.

There is a 7.5 tonne weight restriction for traffic passing through town, but public service vehicles, emergency services, delivery lorries and permitted

construction vehicles are exempt.

The estimated cost is £750,000, which the council says it does not have.

Tom Pursglove MP is making enquiries about obtaining funding from the Department of Transport Challenge Fund for highways maintenance.

Pick Arthey is located just over the bridge and takes delivery of 30,000 litres of fuel per week. With the weight restriction, their fuel delivery vehicle, plus the car transporters will need to travel through the centre of town.

Stagecoach, which runs the X4 bus, is concerned that the restriction will undermine the viability of the bus service through Oundle.

Any diversions will mean an extra bus, adding to unplanned costs.

Business owners predict that the weight restrictions will bring "mayhem" and "paralysis" to Oundle roads and increased congestion in the Market Place will reduce customer footfall.

If large vehicles are redirected down South Road, a one-way system around town along West Street and South Road may need to be enforced.

It is expected that the weight limit will begin in June. The NCC have not indicated how long it will take before funds are available and work can begin.

The council said the bridge is "not in immediate risk of collapse", but that action needs to be taken to prevent further damage.

South Bridge was strengthened after years of repair work and now has a 18 tonne amenity weight restriction which could accommodate heavy vehicles. Alternate routes will require a wide detour through surrounding villages.

NCC and ENC plan for Fletton Field development

Elinor Nikolva

Fletton Field came to the market for sale in January on the instructions of NCC. This rarely available parcel of land near the centre of town comprises 1.7 acres off Glapthorn Road, between the memorial Chapel and Abbott House. Originally the land was bequeathed to the town by the Smiths and subsequently used for allotments. Since then it has been used by the community for many things, and until recently it also served as the playing field for the Primary School. The use by the Primary School ceased when it relocated from Milton Road to Cotterstock Road as part of a merger with the Middle School.

NCC Councillor Heather Smith said: "The NCC estates team has assessed it with a value of £2m, and the council has to accept the highest bid."

Without planning consent for the land, property experts are sceptical about the valuation.

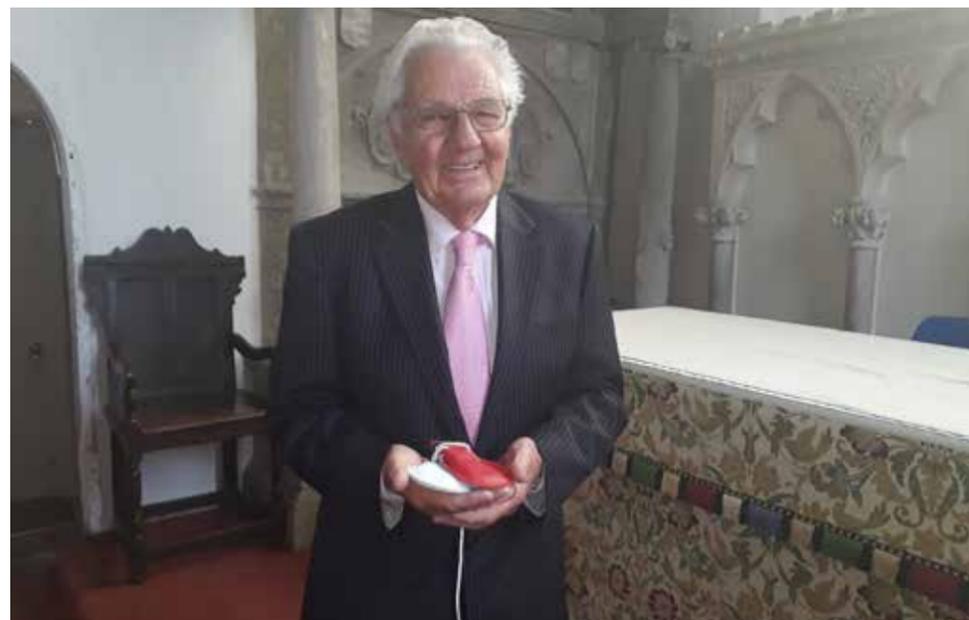
Richard Tremellen, Estates Bursar at Oundle School said: "In its current state as a playing field or paddock it is possibly worth about £100,000+. However, if the site was sold with planning consent to build on it, the value may be in excess of £1.5m.

"NCC are keen to sell it for as much as they possibly can, so would like to receive bids from developers. As it stands, any developer would be purchasing the land at risk. Their offers would also be conditional on gaining planning consent and there are no guarantees about gaining planning consent."

In 2016, a planning application for up to 13 dwellings on the land was refused by East Northamptonshire planners.

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A humble honour for a Maundy recipient



David Wills was invited to represent the Peterborough Diocese at the Maundy Thursday service with the Queen at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle

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NatWest joins high street bank exodus

Elinor Nikolova

Within a year of Norwich and Peterborough Building Society having closed its Oundle branch, NatWest Bank also announced the closure of its Oundle branch, effective 21 June 2018. The last remaining bank in Oundle is Barclay's on New Street.

NatWest's managing director, Janat Hulston, explained their reason for closing the Oundle branch to Tom Pursglove MP: 'Since 2012 we have seen transactions in the Oundle branch decline by 29%, with many customers already banking in other ways.'

Nationally, NatWest branch usage has fallen 40 percent since 2014, while mobile transactions have increased by 73 percent and the number of customers using the NatWest mobile app has increased by 43 percent. In first half of 2017 there have been 1.1 billion mobile and online transactions - an increase of 41 percent since 2014.

'As customers change the way they bank with us, we must change the way that we serve them and this means that some branches will have to close.'

As a result of the move to increased online transactions, NatWest is closing 197 branches nationwide.

The nearest NatWest branch to Oundle will be in Corby, 11 miles away.

NatWest emphasises the other options available to its customers, including services via mobile, telephone, webchat, cash machines and video banking.

Business customers can use Bankline or online banking to manage their accounts and payments. There are also courier services, such as Bank to You.

Many counter services can still be provided by the local Post Office. NatWest customers can get a balance, make withdrawals using their debit card and PIN, and pay in cash and cheques with a pre-printed paying-in slip at any Post Office. Business customers can also use Post Offices to make deposits of up to £2,000 with a pre-printed paying-in slip, debit card withdrawals of up to £500, and can register for a change giving service.

Tom Pursglove met with a NatWest representative to discuss alternative banking services for Oundle and local village residents. He said: 'Clearly, closing the branch is far from ideal, but at the meeting, we discussed the possibility of introducing a Community Banker in Oundle, to ensure face-to-face banking services can continue to be provided for NatWest customers.'

Since that discussion, a Community Banker has been appointed by Natwest Bank to come into Oundle and help people with banking queries. The banker will not be able to distribute cash or receive deposits; it is an advice service. The Community Banker will be based at the Oundle Library.

Mr Pursglove said: 'I hope this provides some reassurance to all those concerned that they will continue to be able to access NatWest services face-to-face in our community.'

Community Banker to hold drop-in clinics for banking queries

Sienna Rushton

NatWest Bank's Community Banker, Mr Mohommad Chauhan, will be based at the Oundle Library on Tuesdays from 10am to 1pm.

He aims to support the community with banking and financial questions. Some of the information services he plans to include will concern fraud and scam awareness, digital safety awareness, and alternative ways of banking.



Drop-in clinics will be available for both NatWest customers and non-customers. Mr Mohommad Chauhan said that he plans to work with the entire community.

He will also be able to help non-profits with signatory requirements and mandates. However, he will not be able to assist with any transactions of cash and cheques.

Additionally, the Post Office will also be able to assist Natwest customers with counter services such as withdrawing and paying-in, just as a local branch would do.

New timetable for X4 service adds extra routes

Clemmie Preston

From 27 May, buses services coming through Oundle are following a new timetable. The 24 bus service has been merged to

form a new X4 service and the new timetable increases the frequency of buses between Peterborough, Lynchwood and Oundle to Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and

Northampton.

Buses will now travel the route every half an hour Monday to Saturday, and every two hours on Sunday, and most will now operate via Lynch Wood, Orton Waterville and Elton.

The services are frequent enough so people can travel at a convenient time. Three early morning buses from Oundle will continue on to the Peterborough train station. The last bus to Oundle from Queensgate leaves at 8:58pm on weekdays. Most journeys to Peterborough now take 36 minutes.

The X4 will no longer stop at the New Road area in Oundle, and the changes to the 24 bus have resulted in Warmington village losing its service. Warmington residents now need to walk out to the Services on the A605 to meet the X4 bus.



The new X4 bus timetable adds extra buses during the day.

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Fletton Field

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Fletton Field is designated as Green Space on the Rural North Oundle and Thrapston Plan, and is also designated as Green Space in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

Theoretically, this is land that should not be used for development.

However, Heather Smith said they would look for a developer

with plans to build extra care homes for the elderly. At the Oundle Town Meeting in April, Councillor Philip Stearn, Chairman of the Planning Committee, indicated that the ENC planning authority would favourably consider a planning application for extra care homes, overriding the local structure and neighbourhood plans.

Cllr Stearn's approval of extra care homes signals a green light for potential developers, and gives

more weight to the NCC's steep valuation. However, it remains unclear how this scheme would better satisfy the reasons for the previous refusal of the 13 dwellings on this green field site.

Initially, NCC had hoped to receive bids on 2 March with a view to complete the sale by 31 March.

But because East Northants Council (ENC) had recognised the land as an asset of community value, there was a requirement to give a six week notification period for local interest groups to submit expressions of interest to purchase the land.

This then triggered a moratorium which allows six months for local interest groups to organise the funding.

Local groups in Oundle have until August to submit a bid to purchase the land as an asset of community value. A local authority can sell a property below market value if the sale will promote the social or environmental well-being of the area. However, if the property is valued above £2m, the council must consider the highest bid.

According to the NCC estates team, the field is worth £2m, which could put it out of reach of any consideration as an asset of community value.

New location identified for post office

Lucy Cairns

After several years of uncertainty as to whether the Oundle Post Office would continue to operate in Oundle, it has been confirmed that the Post Office, under the new Post Office Ltd business model, has found a new location at Oundle Pharmacy, 32 Market Place.

The Oundle Post Office is just one of about 7,500 branches across the country that are part of the ongoing modernisation being implemented by Post Office Ltd. This new approach has meant that branches have been bought by local retailers as part of a franchise deal.

At the new location, the Oundle Pharmacy's store layout, fixtures and fittings will be adapted to accommodate a new main Post Office with two service areas, and will continue to be run by Mick and Kam Patel. The Patels have been running the Post Office since 1987.

Under the new management, opening hours will be extended to Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm and Saturday, 9am to 3pm, with no lunchtime closing, ensuring that the Post Office remains sustainable and accessible to the residents of Oundle.

Every little bit will help to save Fletton Field

The Oundle Recreation and Greenspaces Group, a community group set up in 2016 to protect the town's accessible greenspaces, has launched a community-wide crowdfunding bid to secure the future of Fletton Field. Chair of the group Christina Cork spoke at the Annual Town Meeting in April.

"We want to engage the whole town in securing the future for the field. We are running a fundraising campaign to purchase the field. It is beyond dispute that the town needs more amenity greenspaces, not less. Fletton Field is of critical importance to the town, in terms of its size, location and feel.

"Many local communities just like Oundle have raised funds to save their greenspaces, local pubs and community buildings, from Scottish crofting communities to villages in the rural English countryside.

"There is no reason why Oundle can't also secure this last remaining area of freely accessible greenspace close to the centre of town, long term, for all of its residents," she said.

There is a growing body of evidence that recognises the immense value of accessible greenspaces within towns for a community's wider health and wellbeing, as recognised also by the county council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Oundle has a lack of accessible, public greenspace, with ten times less per person than Raunds, and five times less than Burton Latimer. Losing this field will reduce Oundle's accessible greenspace still further by 40%.

The Greenspaces Group welcomes all offers of help to mobilise contributions to save Fletton Field. Visit for details: www.saveflettonfield.org.uk.

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Plastic bag levy may be extended

Lucy Cairns

In January 2018, Prime Minister Theresa May ordered a review to extend the 5p minimum charge on plastic bags to all shops, including small independent ones. Under the current law, the charge only applies to retailers who have 250 or more employees.

Since the initial five pence minimum charge for single-use plastic bags was introduced in 2015, use of plastic bags has been reduced by nearly 90%. This has had a huge effect on how much plastic is being released into the environment.

Before the implementation of any charge, cashiers and customers would use plastic bags freely, double-bagging as a matter of course. Made from ethylene, a by-product of petroleum or natural gas, plastic bags are so cheap and flimsy that they would never even be reused. The result was that shoppers ended up with hundreds of plastic bags stored in their houses, many of which eventually end up in the oceans or landfill.

Even when disposed of properly, plastic bags are so lightweight and aerodynamic, they are easily picked up and carried by the wind, contributing to roadside litter.

However, under the current charge, not only are far fewer plastic bags being used, but retailers may choose how they use the funds collected for each bag, with many donating the proceeds to environmental causes.

Waitrose donates all funds to

help tackle the plastic pollution: "We have donated £500,000 from the proceeds to fund the Marine Conservation Society's clean-up of plastics from beaches and rivers."

In Oundle, while Tesco, Waitrose and the Co-op have already implemented the 5p charge, there are many independent shops which will be affected if the extension of the charge goes ahead.

Trendalls Butchers currently use plastic bags for packaging meat, and are aware of the financial impact this levy will have for them.

"Over time this levy would affect our costs", they said. "Recyclable bags are more expensive and just not as easy to come by. However we are pro-biodegradable and support the movement towards reducing the amount of plastic that is being used."

The introduction of this levy forces even small, independent stores to take a position on this environmental issue, and make decisions about whether they as a company choose to commit to support it. Plastic bag pollution should not be the responsibility of only major shops, but of every business.

Despite the added cost of investing in biodegradable bags, many of the independent stores in Oundle support this wider environmental movement to minimise our currently unreasonable use of plastic bags.

It is now also up to the consumer to support them.

It pays to recycle food waste

Jordan Badiru

There are currently no legal requirements for separate food collections in England and only 44% of households in England have access to food waste recycling services. Fortunately, East Northamptonshire is a council that offers residents the service. However, unless householders commit to recycling their food waste, the council will no longer find it financially viable and could terminate the service.

As the repercussions of climate change force communities to acknowledge environmental issues, it is essential that individuals are encouraged to actively promote a greener lifestyle for a sustainable future.

Recycling food waste is increasingly important. Food waste sent to landfill sites does not break down purely. Instead, it rots and produces methane gas which is 25 times more toxic than carbon

dioxide. The increased presence of such a harmful greenhouse gas in our atmosphere is not good for anyone.

At last summer's Food Fair, Oundle Transition highlighted the importance of recycling waste food for the generation of electricity and production of crop fertiliser.

Anaerobic digestion (AD) is 'widely accepted as the greenest method of recycling unavoidable food waste' according to the AD business, Bio Collectors. 'There is no reason that the huge capacity now available across the UK should not be utilised.'

Anaerobic means 'without oxygen'. In a sealed biological environment bacteria will digest food and transform it into something useful such as a nutrient-rich digestate that farmers can use as fertiliser. The process also gives off a biogas that includes methane, which is sold to gas networks to power homes. The

The true cost of a takeaway coffee

Lucy Cairns

British tea drinking culture has evolved over the years, changing us from a nation of tea drinkers to one addicted to takeaway coffee. Although this takeaway culture suits our faster, on-the-move lifestyle, with this change of pace comes a throwaway culture, with 2.5 billion coffee cups being sent to landfill each year.

The biggest issue is the misconception that disposable cups can be recycled. However, coffee cups are lined with polyethylene, which is what makes the cups both

trialing a 5p charge for a disposable cup from 35 London stores.

As part of its loyalty scheme, Waitrose offers free tea and coffee from self-service machines, using 52 million cups a year. After looking unsuccessfully for a paper cup that could be used in mainstream recycling facilities, the store has decided to eliminate disposable cups entirely "as part of our commitment to reduce the amount of plastic and packaging we use". They will be removing takeaway cups from the Oundle store by autumn 2018 and asking customers to bring in their own reusable cup for drinks.

Takeaway is not Brew Babu's niche, with the majority of



waterproof and unrecyclable. The difficulty of recycling coffee cups is additionally increased by the fact they are left with coffee stains.

This means cups cannot be easily recycled, but must instead be taken to special facilities, of which only three exist in the UK. The reality is that less than one per cent of coffee cups are actually recycled.

Earlier in the year the Environmental Audit Committee proposed a 25p 'latte levy' on disposable coffee cups, with a target for all coffee cups to be recycled by 2023. In March, however, the government rejected the proposal, leaving the effort of reducing plastics to shop owners.

Many businesses are responding, forcing consumers to face up to the issue. Starbucks is the UK's second largest coffee chain, and is

customers buying a sit down coffee, but they do offer branded reusable coffee cups to encourage the transition from paper coffee cups. "If you do buy one of our coffee cups you get your first coffee free, however so far this hasn't really taken off."

Bean's Coffee Stop has been using fully recyclable disposable cups for over a year. 'We have always been aware of issues with our packaging', said owner Phil Gilbert.

Their cups and lids are supplied by Vegware and Sustain and are made entirely from plant material, with every component being compostable. The convenience for the customer does come at a cost for the shop owner, though.

"The cups are more expensive by 20%," said Mr Gilbert. "It's an extra cost for us, but we feel we have got to do it. It's the right thing to do."

process takes 50 days.

In the last few years the AD industry has grown rapidly and there are approximately 107 dedicated waste plants in the UK. While the East Northamptonshire Council use several local facilities to reprocess food waste, their locations are regarded as 'commercially sensitive information'.

In the financial year from April 2016 to March 2017, 2,555 tonnes of food waste was collected by the council. This accounts for 9.37% of total waste. On current trends, the council says these figures are likely to be higher this year.

Nevertheless there is still a lot of work to be done. Approximately

£13 billion of food was wasted in the UK in 2015, equating to approximately 7.3 million tonnes.

Food waste reduction starts with consumers. A number of household initiatives can be put in place to reduce food waste. Households must learn to shop smarter and more realistically.

According to The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee: 'The average household lost £470 a year because of avoidable food waste whilst those with children incurred a loss of £700; the average person in the UK lost £200'.

It is clear that it actually does pay to be aware of the effects of food waste and its impact on the environment.

Crisis at Northants County Council brings in the commissioners

Freddie Smith

Following months of crisis reports from the Northamptonshire County Council, two government appointed commissioners are being sent to run the Tory-controlled council. They will be in place until 2021.

In February Northamptonshire became the first local authority in two decades to issue a section 114 notice for the remaining months of the financial year, meaning no new expenditure was permitted, with the exception of safeguarding and statutory services.

The council has been forced to identify £40m worth of cuts, which included shutting 21 libraries.

Whilst Northamptonshire MPs accused the council of mismanagement, Councillor Heather Smith, the former Leader of the Council claimed that the council had been starved of funds by central government under its austerity budget.

The county had been reducing its budget for a couple of years, stemming from their ambitious 'next generation' plan to try and put the council on a financially sustainable basis. However, five years ago it warned that meeting the demands of another five years of cuts would be impossible.

Following a February vote of no confidence by the Conservatives in the council, and the publication of a damning government report, Heather Smith, who represents Oundle, resigned as Leader of the Council in March.

In her resignation statement she said: "This has not been an easy decision for me as the authority goes through the most turbulent times it has ever known. The personal pressure of vicious public attacks

by four local MPs seeking to make me the scapegoat, has not been pleasant for anyone to witness. I have continued to fight for fairer funding for Northamptonshire residents, in spite of the personal attacks."

Other leaders in the council have also come under scrutiny. After ten years at the helm, former chief executive Dr Paul Blantern stepped down from his £185,000 post in October, taking a controversial £95,000 pay-off with him.

His replacement, acting chief executive Damon Lawrenson was paid more than £1000 a day until

Freddie Smith

Communities secretary Sajid Javid ordered an independent inspection of the NCC in January. The report, published in March made highly critical conclusions.

The report accepted the NCC claim that it had a historically low council tax and above average population growth compared to all other councils, but it refuted the claim that the council had been underfunded. While acknowledging the impact on services during the "austerity years", it said that distribution of available resources had not been "unfair to NCC".

Poor management and a lack of budgetary discipline were responsible for the council's present circumstances. There were no "articulated set of financial and managerial controls", and the council had no "clarity or understanding as to what was going on".

The council's approach to information reporting on spending came across as "sloppy, lacking in rigour and with challenge".

he left the council in March. He had previously served as finance director of the council. The GMB union reported that the council had paid a consultancy firm owned by Mr Lawrenson nearly £1m in fees from 2008 to 2018.

In April auditor KPMG said it was reviewing payments made to Dr Blantern, and reviewing the process for filling statutory roles.

The failure of the council has led to fears that other county councils may also face similar problems. There is rapidly shrinking income from central government and rising demand for the social care services, which the county must

Its business plans lacked any "realism". They were ambitious, but vague and outlined no measurable outcomes.

The cabinet blocked scrutiny by councillors. The report criticised the process by which the decision was made to sell NCC headquarters, One Angel Square. It reported that no information about the plan had been presented to councillors, no reports from scrutiny were published, and no minutes from meetings recorded.

The cabinet refused to accept challenge or scrutiny, operating on the principle that "senior members and officers knew best".

The report said that the problems were so deep and ingrained that there was no possible recovery plan to bring the council back to stability within five years. It recommended that a model for a unitary form of local government be discussed as "a way forward with a clean sheet, leaving all the history behind."

legally provide.

Northamptonshire has seen the biggest growth in over-65s of all English counties, and in 2013 the council received a damning Ofsted report for its services to protect vulnerable children, after which they launched a recovery strategy. They made significant progress and have taken record numbers of children into care, but this has come at a cost. The council reported overspends in adult and children's social services of £12.6m and £5.8m.

The pressure to fund social care has been so fraught that the council was accused of misappropriating public funds. It emerged in March that the county misused more than £70m that had been ring-fenced from Public Health England for public health expenditure over two years.

Heather Smith said the money "may have been spent in adult social care. It is debatable whether that was a public health need or not."

The council may now be asked to repay more than £10 million.

In October last year the council opened its new £53 million headquarters at One Angel Square. The council had hoped to make significant savings by closing 12 different offices and bringing all services into one building, but by February a proposal had been made for the council to sell the building and lease it back.

The sale was initially halted in March after a government report proposed a major restructuring of the NCC, but the council went ahead and made a deal with Canada Life, which will buy the property for £64m with a leaseback agreement of 35 years.

Oundle Library saved from spending cuts

As one of seven medium-sized libraries in Northamptonshire, the Oundle Town Library was spared closure in the latest county council

round of budget cuts. Twenty-one other smaller libraries across the county were not so lucky, and are scheduled to close in August.

Under financial pressure, the council sought to cut £40m of expenditure, and threatened closure of all county libraries except

for eight large libraries in urban centres.

The council's consultation earlier in the year proposed three options, which received 6000 responses from consultees, members of the public and organisations. Five local MPs also contributed concerns from their constituents.

In reaction to the council's decision, two separate legal actions representing the 21 small libraries were lodged in March, challenging the council's consultation.

Additionally, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport is investigating a complaint filed by the Library and Information Association (CILIP), that alleges that the library closures mean "NCC will not meet its statutory duty under the [Public Libraries and Museums] Act to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service", or its

statutory duty under the Equalities Act.

CILIP's complaint also alleges that the NCC failed to consult on the option that was eventually approved by the full council, and that the Option 2 that was agreed on, was not the same option that the public were consulted on.

The complaint notes that the financial decision to close libraries was flawed, and that the reductions would not meet targets used to justify them.

Culture Secretary Matt Hancock said he would examine the complaint fully, but there was no set timetable while evidence was being gathered.

Studies show that children are the worst hit by library closures, drastically reducing their access to books and opportunities for improved literacy and social mobility.



No end of potholes

Jordan Badiru

Despite campaigns to spotlight potholes and the rising tide of indignation from the public, potholes continue to crater roads and imperil drivers and their vehicles.



It is commonly misunderstood that the local council is responsible for road repairs. However it is the Highways Department at Northamptonshire County Council who are currently responsible.

Northamptonshire Highways claim that during 2016 to 2017 they spent a total of £2,678,941 dealing with potholes, using a process called the RoadMaster

Carriageway Repair process, with an average cost to repair each pothole of £40.97. They reported that 19,026 potholes were repaired throughout the county using the RoadMaster system.

After months of roadworks over the last year, potholes are appearing again on newly resurfaced

roads. In early March a 75mm deep and 600mm wide hole on the A605 near the Warmington roundabout reportedly took out six car wheels in just half an hour.

For drivers facing large car repair bills from damage caused by potholes, there is no consolation that the council will reimburse them. Jill Insley wrote in The Sunday Times: "Councils cannot be

held responsible for potholes they do not know about either because they have not been reported or because the potholes were not detected during a regular check."

The safety risks are increasingly alarming and need to be addressed. Yet, potholes around town remain unrepaired, with stretches along Blackpot Lane, New Road and St Peter's Road being reported as particularly treacherous.

Lenient government guidance allows council highways inspectors to get away with ignoring the risks that arise from deep potholes, which have been described as a 'death traps' for cyclists.

Unfortunately, drivers should not expect improvements to be made any time soon. The county council budget have made cuts of £295,000 for 2018/19 and 2019/20 to highways maintenance; road repairs are not a priority. And in the future the council may even pass along total responsibility to local councils, which simply do not have the funds to maintain roads.

Nevertheless, the community can continue to put pressure on Northamptonshire County Council to be responsible for car damage and road repairs by vigilantly reporting potholes on the council's Street Doctor website.

Eyes on the road!

Giorgio Capuzello

As smartphones have increased in popularity and functionality over the last decade, so has the number of drivers using their phone behind the wheel. While it used to be just sending a text or making a phone call that would lead to unsafe driving, nowadays drivers even risk taking a photo, sending an email and posting on social media.

Fourteen percent of drivers have admitted that they would take photos while driving, while 20 percent said they checked social media. Since 2014, there has been a change in attitude towards phone use, with 14% of drivers believing it is acceptable to take a call.

A recent RAC Report on Motoring revealed a significant increase in the number of drivers admitting to using a mobile phone at the wheel. According to the report, between 2014 and 2016 this figure rose from 8 percent to 31 percent. Regardless of the reason, any distraction behind the wheel can lead to accidents, severe injuries and car write-offs.

Between 2013 and 2015, on average 24 people per year were killed in road traffic collisions where the driver of the vehicle was using their mobile phone, according to reports from the Department for Transport, compared to 17 people in 2012.

All of this information highlights just how catastrophic the consequences can be when a person is not in complete control of his car.

The government has therefore resolved to make the sanctions for driving while holding a phone much more severe than before: an offender will receive six penalty points and a £200 fine. If the offender has passed his driving test in the last two years, he'll lose his driving license. It is illegal to hold a phone or satellite navigator while driving; the person must either have a Bluetooth headset, voice command, a dashboard holder, a windscreen mount or a built-in navigator.

All drivers must stay in full control of their vehicle at all times. The police can stop a person if they believe he or she is not in control because they have been distracted. If this is the case, that person can be prosecuted.

The law still applies even if a driver has stopped at traffic lights, is queuing in traffic or supervising a learner driver. A driver can only access his or her phone if safely parked or if calling 999 or 112 in an emergency, and it is unsafe to stop.

If taken to court, a driver can be banned from driving and receive a maximum fine of £1,000 (£2,500 if driving a lorry or bus).

The rising use of Snapchat has also led to a number of young drivers using their phone to take selfies behind the wheel, snaps of the speedometer, and using the app's own speed filter as a way of showing off about how fast they are driving. This is a serious cause for concern, particularly when coupled with the fact that these may be inexperienced drivers.

There are no figures that determine the exact number of accidents or write-offs due to drivers using Snapchat. However, there have been many news stories of drivers crashing while using Snapchat, one of these being the music artist DJ Khaled who wrote off his Ferrari by doing so. 16 million users of Snapchat, over 10 percent of its app users, admitted to using Snapchat while driving.

The app introduced a new 'I won't snap and drive' filter in an attempt to prevent more accidents, though how successful this will prove remains to be seen.

To protect himself from irresponsible driving, a driver must not ever use a phone. Phoning or texting while driving must become as socially unacceptable as drinking and driving.

Only with these accepted norms can fatal incidents be avoided on the road.



~ Est. 1981 ~

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Fines are no deterrent for dog owners who refuse to bag and bin

Iris Cecil

Dog owners might rightly feel they are the target of increasing complaints, whether it is about dogs off leads or dog poo abandoned in public places and on countryside paths.

But while most dogs are adorable, and most dog owners are responsible about cleaning up after their dogs, there are some for whom even punitive fines are not a deterrent for anti-social, and even illegal behaviour.



Dog mess left on a pavement on Benefield Road. There have been no fixed penalties issued in Oundle in the last four years

Failure to pick up dog mess is an offence, and if an authorised officer witnesses a dog owner not cleaning up after a dog, there is a fixed penalty of £75. But it is difficult to identify offenders, with very few authorised officers such as dog wardens around to impose fines.

A freedom of information request made by the Oundle Chronicle found that fixed penalties for dog fouling in the whole of East Northants were issued just five times in 2018, and four times in 2017.

In Oundle over the years 2014 to 2017 there were no penalties issued.

Compounding the problem about picking up dog poo, is the problem of overflowing dog bins, which are provided by the council. For some dog owners this becomes an excuse for not cleaning up after their dogs.

Earlier this year, one dog owner complained on a community Facebook page that the bin at the top of Benefield Road "absolutely stinks" and that it had not been emptied for "a good few weeks/months".

Further complaints about the bins led to a response from East Northamptonshire Council "urging dog walkers to apply a common

sense approach when disposing of waste, following a spate of complaints from residents and businesses".

They noted that some dog waste bins in the district have filled up quicker than normally, and in some cases have overflowed before the council has had a chance to empty them.

They assured residents that dog bins are emptied at least once a week, but if bins are already full, they asked dog walkers to take

their dog waste home or use another bin.

"Leaving bags on the ground is only adding to the problem. Everyone has a responsibility to keep our district clean and tidy."



Overflowing bin on Benefield Road posted by a dog owner on a Facebook Oundle community page

Police Beat

Giorgio Capuzzello

There were 31 reported crimes in January, up from 28 in December. There were 12 cases of antisocial behaviour, six of violence and sexual abuse, and four cases of shoplifting. There were also four cases of damage and arson, and three of theft, one burglary, and one vehicle crime.

At the start of the year there were many reports of theft of equestrian equipment. The Police released an email on 16 January to advise horse owners on how to protect their belongings, including an alarm system with high-pitched frequencies, secure lock-ups, and visible identification marked on equipment such as a security register number or the owner's postcode.

There were 29 reported crimes in February, down from 31 in January, with the most being violence and sexual offenses - 11 cases. The second highest crime was antisocial behaviour with seven cases. Other crimes included burglaries, criminal damage and arson, shoplifting and vehicle crime.

Damage was caused overnight on 2 February to a wall at the Oundle Rugby club. The wall, which was under construction, had been torn down completely with most bricks lying around the area.

On 20 February one or more offenders gained entry to a motor vehicle parked behind a property in East Road. Although the criminals damaged the door, nothing was reported stolen.

The police have had several calls in relation to "Nottingham Knockers" across Oundle and surrounding villages who knock on doors and try to sell household products on the door step. The police warns that doorstep crime can happen in two ways: either by a criminal trying to trick their way inside a house to steal money or valuables, or a false trader offering an overpriced service. They advise that householders do not open the door unless the person's identity has been verified.

There were 23 reported crimes in March, six less than the 29 in February. Antisocial behaviour is the most popular, with 8 cases followed closely by 6 cases of violence and sexual offences, 3 thefts and 2 burglaries.

A quantity of lead was stolen from the church of St James in the village of Thurning during the night of 6 March. The police urged citizens to pay close attention to churches in their area to avoid other thefts of this type.

On 21 March, there were several complaints about inconsiderate parking outside Oundle Primary School on Cotterstock Road. It would seem that drivers churned up the grass verges by parking on them. Ali Wallace, a Community Support Officer said: "I remind you that blocking driveways and parking on grass verges outside of people's homes is unacceptable. Unfortunately we cannot be there all the time but patrols have been carried out. If you are still having issues please contact the council and speak with the school as I shall also be doing again."

On 2 April an incident occurred on the A605 between a silver Ford Fiesta, a silver Renault Scenic and a grey Honda CRV. The 23-year-old driver of the Ford Fiesta was declared deceased at the scene while the five occupants of the Honda CRV were taken to Peterborough Hospital with serious injuries, one of them being potentially life-threatening. The two occupants of the Renault Scenic were not injured.

During the night of 8 April two thefts from vehicles took place on West Street in Oundle.

On 10 April a bike shed in the grounds of Oundle Primary School was damaged during a period of 24 hours.

On 18 April there was a report of a smashed window in Wakerley Close.

A burglary in Stoke Doyle Road took place between 2.10pm and 3.20pm on 24 April. The criminals forced their way in and made an untidy search. Nothing was taken but damage was caused to the property.

On the same day there was another burglary in Warren Bridge between 10.30am and 3.10pm. Once again there was proof of forced entry. The criminals made an untidy search of the bedrooms and stole some jewellery.

There was an attempted burglary on 29 April of a property in Wakerley Close, where there was an attempt to unscrew the hinges on a patio door. Nothing was taken from the garden or the property and no damage was caused.

A resident on Glapthorn Road reported that their car wing mirror appeared to have been kicked off and their vehicle keyed across several panels, sometime between 4 to 7 May.

There was a burglary of a property in New Road between 21.00 on 6 May and 19.00 on Monday 7 May. Very little was taken.

The potential of the youth vote to change politics

Zara Abdullah

What would your average 16-year-old be preoccupied with? Friends? Parties? The latest social media trend? If you had said any of the aforementioned things I would have wholeheartedly agreed. But soon, 16-year-olds may have much more on their plates.

Current British voting requirements state that to vote in a UK general election a citizen must be at least 18 years old, but at local election levels, more young people are being invited to participate in the democratic process. The Welsh assembly are debating allowing 16 and 17-year-olds in Wales to be given the right to vote in council elections. In Scotland that age group can vote in all local council elections and for the Scottish parliament. In the Isle of Man people 16 and over have been allowed to vote since 2006.

This will leave England and Northern Ireland out of the loop - but do young people care?

In recent elections 18 to 24-year-olds have been the least likely to turn out; it is the older age groups, particularly the 70+ age range, who are the most likely to vote. If granted the ability to vote, would 16 and 17-year-olds be any more likely to than those slightly older in the 18 to 24 age range?

If 16 and 17-year-olds do not take advantage of the opportunity they have been granted, politicians are likely to overlook their views and concentrate on the proportion of the population who do vote. Ironically, it may be that granting them the right to vote may make them less influential.

We can't forget that voting would be non-compulsory. No one would be forced to participate. Having the vote would be an opportunity, not an obligation. Just like the rest of the population, some people would choose to be active and many would not.

Despite this, 84% of teens that took part in a survey conducted by

British Social Attitudes said they intended to vote when they turned 18, while 64% of the teenagers thought that by getting involved themselves they could make a difference in their local community. They are open to being engaged in politics and still see voting as a civic duty, but they are committed to effecting change in different ways.

One example of how teenagers' participation can be effective is the activism demonstrated by the survivors of the February school shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida that left 17 dead. Survivors rallied alongside hundreds from other schools to demand safer schools and increased gun control regulations, and their protests gained momentum across the nation. Students from California to Washington D.C. held walkouts in solidarity with the teens from Parkland.

As a result of the Florida student protests and demands, big businesses responded. A dozen businesses withdrew member discounts for National Rifle Association (NRA) members, and the major national gun retailers announced that they would no longer sell guns to young people under 21 years, and would withdraw from sale semi-automatic weapons. While politicians have not been bold enough to adopt legislative change yet, as this generation of teenagers reaches voting age, the politicians may find they need to fall in step with their voters.

The activism among teens across America is proof that a strong sense of individual responsibility within today's teenagers can be mobilised, and they are not looking to just government to make a difference. They see positive change in their communities coming from charities, social enterprises, campaigners and businesses, and they want to be part of that change too.

Inspection sets a steady course for Prince William School

Harry Squire

In the first inspection carried out since Prince William School (PWS) became an academy, Ofsted inspectors graded the school 'Requires improvement' after its visit in November 2017.

Although this would have been disappointing for teachers and for the EMLC Academy Trust, there is plenty of reason to believe that the school is currently undergoing the required improvement.

In the Ofsted report, a recurring phrase outlining the school's issues was 'until recently', implying that prior to this inspection, there had been significant improvements to the overall performance of the school.

Prince William School became an academy with high expectations under the auspices of the EMLC Academy Trust in 2016, and it is to be anticipated that it would take time to fully implement the improvements that would come with the new academy structure. So the argument could be made that it was too early into this transition phase to give the school a thorough inspection while the school is still trying to reach specific targets.

However, the report did pick up on several areas which as of yet have not been - and ought to be - addressed. Support for educationally disadvantaged pupils was judged not satisfactory, many pupils do not have confidence that the school deals with bullying effectively, teachers give inconsistent feedback and do not do enough to prevent low level classroom disruption.

Many of these assessments are identical to those from Ofsted's previous report on PWS from

November 2014, and it is a concern that under the previous management these issues went unaddressed.

In the 2017 report, there was far greater emphasis on recent improvements, which illustrates that under academy status, these issues are finally being tackled. This is evident among the year 11 of 2017, whose academic progress was well above the national average, especially in English.

Another element which will contribute to further improvements at the school is the new principal, Elizabeth Dormor. She is described in the report as having 'an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses', and she is credited with having 'taken action in order to raise expectations and establish more rigorous systems of monitoring'.

The report also accepts the fact that many leaders who are 'newly in post' has contributed to the school's disappointing overall score, further suggesting that it was too early for this inspection.

Ofsted recognises that the school has 'undergone a period of uncertainty and instability', with fundamental reform in structure and personnel over the last two years. However, now that this new status quo has been firmly established, the school must start to improve; there are still issues to be addressed.

With an improved relationship between the trust and the school, an ambitious new principal, and recent academic improvement recognised by Ofsted, there are grounds to believe that with the necessary hard work, the future is bright for Prince William School.

As a 15-year-old, Eleanor has another season in the U17 Cadets, so will be looking to use her newly gained experience when the fencing season starts again in September. In the meantime Eleanor will be representing England at U17 level at the Commonwealth Cadet and Junior Championships taking place

in Newcastle in July.

This season, Eleanor has already competed for Great Britain on the European Cadet (U17) circuit, fencing in Austria, Finland and France.

Her best results so far have been in Finland where she placed 31 in the individual and 6 in the team competition. Eleanor's performances at home and abroad meant she finished 2017 number 1 in the Great Britain U17 epee rankings.

Eleanor, who is a pupil at Prince William School in Oundle, has been fencing for six years. She was U14 British Epee Champion in 2016 and represented England at Challenge Wratistavia, Poland in 2015 and 2016. Eleanor travels to Stevenage, Cambridge and Northampton each week for training.



Epee champion from Oundle

Zara Abdullah

Epee champion Eleanor Taylor represented Great Britain at the European Junior and Cadet Fencing Championships in Sochi, Russia earlier this year.

Eleanor, who fences Epee, competed in the U17 individual and team Cadet competitions against the best young fencers in Europe. Eleanor competed in the Sochi championship, as well as the Junior and Cadets World Fencing

Championship in Verona, in which she placed 53 out of 80, and 69 out of 125 respectively.

In both events, Eleanor got through the round robin stages and made it to the knockout stages, but lost her first fights 8-15 and 9-15 in each respective competition. The events were unlike anything Eleanor had competed in before, with Russia, in particular, presenting a massive contrast to UK culture.

The long road from persecution: a refugee family's story

Isabella Nieto

Nursing a cup of tea with an umbrella by his side, Musa Koko may not yet feel acclimatised to the British weather but he has certainly found a home in Oundle where he and his family have found refuge.

After having been displaced from his home in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, expelled from Khartoum and victimised in Egypt, it has been a long journey to safety for Mr Koko and for his family. He is acutely aware about managing expectations about new places and is simply thankful that his prayers for security have finally been answered.

From the 1980s to 2005, the Nuba people were subject to the Khartoum government's scorched earth policy during the Second North-South Sudanese War. When a jihad was declared in 1992 northern Arab forces decimated the population. Africa Watch likened the treatment of the Nuba people to genocide or ethnic cleansing.

Although ceasefires have been called and renewed since 2005, conflict still continues and more than three million people have been killed.

Journalists who have recently visited the area illegally (due to the government's refusal to allow any humanitarian aid) have also reported that Russia's involvement in the area with the use of Antonov bombers has resulted in vast numbers of casualties.

When Mr Koko fled the conflict to live in Khartoum, he said he was among those subjected to intense persecution.

As both a Christian and a black African, citizens like Mr Koko are viewed by the Khartoum government as lower forms of human life, worthy only of being "abid": an Arabic word that is translated literally as slave but has come to be used as a more racially charged insult.

The brutality of the government forced Mr Koko to flee to Cairo in 1999. However, Egypt was to be neither accepting nor stable. Victimisation of refugees is institutionalised in Egypt, where discriminatory legislation both heavily restricts the legal influx of migrants into the country and legal employment is almost impossible to obtain.

Sudanese refugees have no right to own property and are not allowed to live in the camps. Forced to rent on the commercial market at inflated rents, they must illegally seek low wage work with no employment protections.

The history of violence against



The Koko family have resettled in Oundle with the help of the local community

the refugees in Egypt instils a climate of fear. In 2005, Mr Koko joined 2000 other Sudanese refugees at the Mustafa Mahmoud square near the UNHCR offices to protest about conditions in Egypt and ask for resettlement, when Egyptian security forces opened fire. Official figures recorded 25 deaths.

Previously Human Rights Watch had reported disappearances and killings as part of an Egyptian police round-up known in a police document as "Operation Track Down Blacks".

Mr Koko set up a bible school for displaced Sudanese children who were resorting to theft, and had around 150 children under his care.

He said he had been trying to teach them "right from wrong" through Christian teachings, but faced efforts from the Egyptian government to stop.

With numerous church bombings during the Easter period last year, Egypt has been named on Open Doors' list as a dangerous country in which to be a practicing Christian: 128 Christians were killed in 2017.

It was because of these risks that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees determined the Koko family were

eligible for resettlement to the UK in 2016.

In 2015 the UK government announced that it would accept 20,000 refugees processed by the United Nations through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme.

In 2017, the Home Secretary announced that the government would expand the programme to include other nationalities within the quota to address the global migration crisis.

By 2017, 235 local authorities across the UK had offered to provide places under the government's refugee resettlement programmes.

Although the local council has not been involved, beginning in September 2016 the Oundle community mobilised to discuss ways to participate in the scheme and provide a home to resettle a refugee family.

The church-based Peterborough charity Hope into Action helped to find a house by identifying an investor who would lease it to the charity for at least five years.

Teams of volunteers in Oundle then went into action to get it ready. Wish lists were drawn up and residents and businesses have donated items to furnish the house.

Mr Koko, his wife Nagat and

their three children arrived in Oundle in 2017. He has a daughter from a previous marriage who is also seeking resettlement.

They are grateful to the British Red Cross, which liaised with the UNHCR about their resettlement, and "greeted them like superstars" when they got off the plane from Egypt.

For Mr and Mrs Koko, language skills remain the biggest challenge to integration into UK life. They have been attending a language course at City College, Peterborough, and also receive weekly tuition from local volunteers.

The children attend local schools, have made friends and are joining in with new activities, including swimming and cricket.

While the use of an Arabic translator was necessary to conduct the interview, it was not difficult to interpret the Koko's anger about the plight of the Sudanese, and the gratitude for the welcome they have received from the St Peter's Church community.

Mr Koko said he hopes to be able to learn English quickly in order to give back to the community that has embraced him and his family.

Gardens Open Day supports Cransley Hospice care in North Northamptonshire

Sienna Rushton

2018 marks the 20th anniversary of the opening of Cransley Hospice in Kettering, a project initiated by Dr John Smith, who had been caring for elderly patients on the ward at St Mary's Hospital when he decided that a dedicated service for palliative care was needed.

Cransley Hospice serves the North Northamptonshire region, caring for patients with life limiting illnesses either at the hospice at St Mary's Hospital, where patients have the option for single, double or shared rooms with a garden at the back of the hospital, a care home or the patient's home. Their services take in all aspects of care, including physical and mental health, and social and spiritual care.

Alison Lloyd, who has organised the Oundle Open Gardens Day in June in support of Cransley, became involved with the hospice when her elderly father came under their care. Because he did not want to stay in the hospice, he was given the choice to be cared for at home.

"The hospice worked closely with the family and the GP, and he was provided with day and evening nursing care. Our family were very grateful for the care he received.

"Cransley Hospice is truly a fantastic cause," Ms Lloyd said.

Cransley Hospice is able to offer care from clinical nurse specialists, therapists, registered nurses and healthcare support workers, but all these services for in-home care can be very expensive.

The hospice is funded by donations made to the Cransley Hospice Trust and by the NHS through the local Clinical Commissioning Groups.

This year the charity needs to raise £1.4 million to continue their services. This means that they need to raise around £4,000 every day in order to provide their full range of services, amounting to £166 an hour.

Alongside a café and charity shop in Kettering, the fundraising team maintains a full events portfolio including a hospice lottery, corporate challenges, social galas and concerts, as well as fundraising efforts from supporters across the region who recognise the importance of the hospice in caring for those with end-of-life illnesses. www.cransleyhospice.org.uk

Oundle Gardens Open Day features eleven gardens in all their blooming glory

Sienna Rushton

Oundle is home to many enthusiastic gardeners who will be opening their gardens on Sunday 17 June 11am - 5pm to support the Cransley Hospice. At gardens across the town there will be plant stands, as well as a raffle and quiz for children, and dogs are welcome. Tickets go on sale at the Oundle Festival Office from 29 May for £4.50, and on the day at Fletton House, 17 West Street and 2 Cordwainer Gardens for £5.

There are 11 beautiful Oundle gardens for everyone to explore:

John and Erica Grubb

This is a self-described "plantaholics" garden full of shrubs and perennials - some a little less common, such as a beautiful *Cornus Alternifolia Argenta*. The back garden is landscaped on four levels with a pond and a summer house.

Alison Lloyd and Simon Page

Cobbler's Cottage sits on a piece of land locally known as "Nora's Garden" (pictured below). In the last four years the new owners have aimed to create a tranquil outdoor room at the same time as they have made it a priority to provide a habitat for the wildlife encouraged over the years by Nora. (Entry tickets, raffle tickets, plant stall)



Tean and Rachel Hatt

The Hatts moved to Oundle 20 years ago and immediately fell in love with their overgrown woodland garden. They have attempted to continue the feel of a natural garden, planting native plants as far as possible and gardening organically to encourage wildlife. They have added a "woodland walk", enlarged the pond, and added a small stream. They have tried to create rooms within the garden for different activities and places to hide. It is still very much a work in progress.



Lois Fletcher

This garden was mostly planted three years ago with a pergola, roses, clematis, shrubs and herbaceous perennials.

Rupert and Uli Bankart

"Rehoboth" lies on a gentle slope with a view over the valley in the heart of Oundle. The owners say they are "taming the jungle" in a garden that is still in "evolution". There are rare trees, such as a Dawn Redwood and Japanese Elm, a windswept treehouse, a summerhouse and gentle bubbling brook. (Spoon making demonstrations, refreshments)

Tracey Mathieson

On the edge of town, this cottage garden (pictured above) is planted with perennials and grasses grouped creatively together amongst gravel paths to create a natural look. Some unusual plants and quirky oddities create a different and colourful informal garden. They have a new meadow pasture which has been turned into a new cutting garden.

George and Sally Backhurst

Right in the centre of town, this garden features an extensive and beautiful collection of hostas from large to miniature. There are also many hanging baskets and tubs of mixed summer flowers plus a collection of climbers. (Entry tickets, raffle tickets.)

David and Sheila Wills

A garden that has been 60 years in the making, it extends over a few acres of established plantings, including perennial borders, mature trees and vegetable beds. It is a garden that is both beautiful and edible. It is a peaceful and relaxing place to be.

Fiona and Rupert Paul

This organic wildlife garden is packed with flower borders, a wildlife pond, lawn, vegetables, raised beds, fruit trees, log piles and a tortoise area. There is also an amphitheatre style patio built into the slope of the garden with built-in amphibian friendly features built.

Helen and Richard Austen

Designed with a "circles" theme this is a brand new garden, not yet a year old. It has been planted for low maintenance and year-round structure, and features the original shed used as the former cobbler's workshop.

June Food Festival and Fringe

Hannah Wakeford

The 2018 Oundle Food Festival is an annual feature in food lovers' diaries. The highlight of the Festival is the street market, which falls this year on Saturday 23 June. Over 75 of the region's finest independent food, drink and kitchenware producers will come to town.

Many of the stallholders from previous years are returning once again. This year's gathering will also welcome some newcomers who include Northamptonshire sparkling wine producers Painter's Vineyard, Jorge's Artisan Foods, and The Artisan Honey Company.

The Oundle Fringe Festival will provide a programme of music and dance, which includes the Appalachian dance groups Tap n Sync and Kickstart, folk groups Tourdion and The Gathering, shanty singers The Lincolnshire Poachers, the Wansford Ukulele Folk and Michelle Murray's Highland Dancers.

Family entertainment from

Corby's Balls Up Juggling Club and the Nene Valley Festival crew, as well as Oundle's first ever Grand Snail Race, will make the street market a great family day out.

There will also be events and offers which celebrate the region's food and drink running throughout the weeks preceding it.

These include a tour of Riverford Organic's farm at Sacrewell, a tour of the Nene Valley Brewery, as well as the launch of a new brew, and demonstrations and book signings at AGA Oundle, including a fundraising event for the NSPCC – a chance to try Chinese canapés created by the award winning chef Kwoklyn Wan, perfectly paired with Amps' wines.

Throughout June many local shops will be running Food Festival offers, such as 10% off certain beef cuts from Trendalls and Seven Wells, a free loaf with a spend of over £10 at Hambleton Bakery and 10% off purchases during June at Stu-Pots.



From Bach to jazz and rock at the International Music Festival

Offering ten days of a rich variety of music, the Oundle International Festival this year welcomes pianist William Howard performing new and old love songs, world and folk music from Kabantu, and the European Union Chamber Orchestra with soloist Daniel Lebhart.

The jazz star Atila will perform a retelling of the Nat King Cole story, and more jazz will feature in a performance by the David Gordon Trio of Alexander Scriabin's Ragtime Band.

An evening of uplifting music from the 1920s and 1930s from the Pasadena Roof Orchestra has already sold out, but hopefuls can

add their name to a waiting list.

Family fun and outdoor spectacles include the Oundle Classic Bike Rally, a production of David Walliams' The Midnight Gang in Barnwell Country Park, and the annual Big Bach Walk through the countryside with rest stops along the way for organ recitals in a celebration of the completion of Bach's Orgelbüchlein.

The festival concludes with the Party at the Wharf, headlined by Toploader and supported by breakthrough band Austin Gold.

For further information, visit the website at oundlefestival.org.uk or drop by the Festival office on New Street, Oundle.

Culinary pop-up events with Ora Cultro

Lucy Cairns

A new dining experience has come to Oundle. Ora Cultro, is a pop-up restaurant combining fine dining with flexible venues and changing menus.

Chris Huggett, previously a chef at The Talbot, The Olive Branch at Clipsham and The Chubby Castor has launched a new culinary venture aiming to offer a new gourmand experience, with each event adopting a different culinary theme, from a Thai banquet to Italian cuisine.

The Common Room on Milton Road is being used for their pop-up venue, and they hope to use the garden area for forthcoming summer events. The menus are designed by Chris Huggett who creates seasonal three or six course meals that use locally sourced produce wherever possible. A selection of wines is specially chosen to complement each of the courses.

"The concept of Ora Cultro is to provide a different dining experience for the people in Oundle and the surrounding area."

Their venture has attracted a lot of interest. "The first two events have been really successful, with people coming from a lot further

afield," said Francesca Joseph, Chris's partner who has been supporting Chris in the launching of this initiative.

For now, this enterprise remains within the hands of family and friends, who have helped with every aspect from flower arranging to sourcing wines.



Crab lasagna at Ora Cultro

"We could not have got Ora Cultro running without the help of our friends and family," said Francesca. "They have gone above and beyond the call of duty."

The Huggetts' plans for the future include pop-up events at venues in other towns such as Uppingham or Oakham.

Their next dining event will be a multi-course meal that starts and ends with strawberries on 31 May. Further event details are available at: www.oracultro.restaurant.



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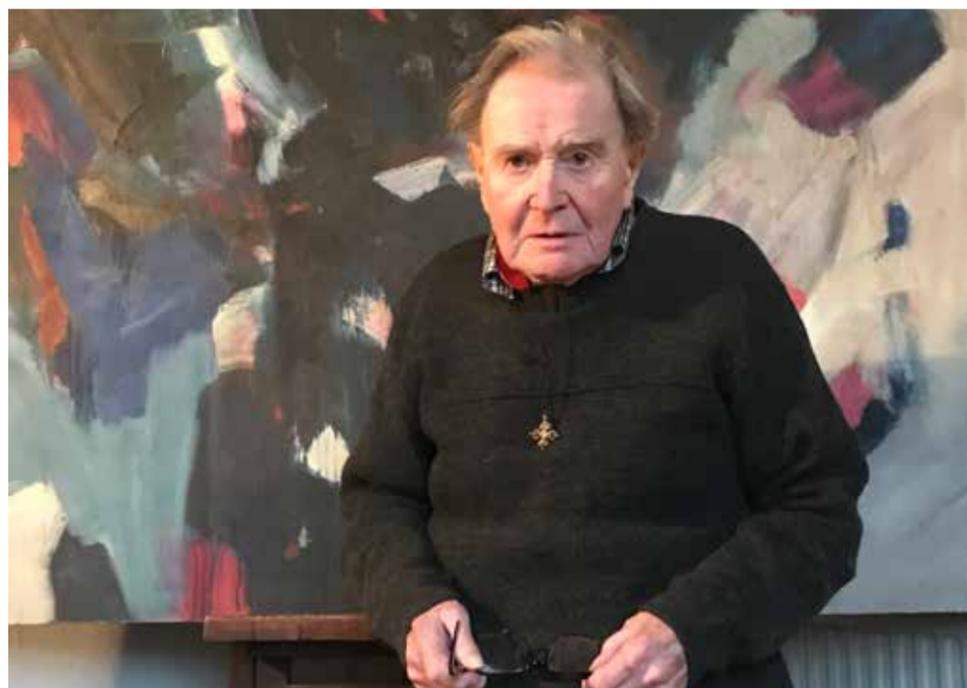
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Profile: four artists of Oundle

Judah Stephenson

Bernard Kay (91) was born and raised in Southport where his father owned a bicycle shop. He knew that he wanted to be an artist from the age of nine and his family supported his choice to go the Liverpool School of Art in 1943, followed by the Royal Academy School where he spent a year studying drawing. In the 1950s, he won a scholarship to study in Paris, where he was able to meet famous artists of the Paris art scene, including Maurice Estève and Picasso. Lydia Corbett, Picasso's "ponytail model" is still a dear friend of his. While in Paris Mr Kay studied the process of aquatint etching under Johnny Friedlaender, and his later series of etchings were sold by Editions Alecto. In France he travelled throughout the countryside and collected drawings that would form the basis for all of his architectural landscape paintings. During his early years in London he focused on large canvases in an abstract expressionist tradition, before returning to landscape paintings worked in a structured style using an earthy, muted palette. His paintings were represented by the Cork Street Gallery, Roland, Browse and Delbanco, and have been collected in galleries around the country. In the 1980s Mr Kay followed his friend, the artist Crispin Heesom to Oundle, where he has lived ever since. Although he no longer paints, he is a magpie collector of anything "lovely" that catches his eye, creating domestic still lifes that reflect his artistic vision.



Carol Parfitt moved to Oundle in 1974, and raised her family in one of the oldest houses in Oundle, dating to the 1500s. After completing her masters in fine art, Carol led art workshops for children and the disabled before starting a teaching career as a lecturer at Tresham's College. For many years she was a member of a local artists group. She exhibited alongside fellow artist Crispin Heesom, and collaborated with Oundle's Nick Penny on a large scale installation at Fernym Woods Gallery. Her love of gardening led to her focus on flower studies arranged in still lifes of posies in small vases. She mainly works in oil, primarily on small canvases. She aims to reveal the character of each flower in a slightly impressionistic style. Alongside her flowers she works on abstract paintings of pebbles that she has collected from her travels. She is currently working on a suite of botanical watercolours from the garden of a friend who grows unusual plants. Her work is sold at the Dolby Gallery.



Nick Grove went to Prince William School and studied fine art at Southampton University. He has worked as a professional photographer for 15 years, specialising in weddings. Nick is increasingly committing more time to painting. He recently completed "31 paintings in 31 days", posting paintings online at the end of every day for a month. He paints "en plein air", on location, working in oil "alla prima", layering wet paint on wet paint all in one go. The technique means he has to make quick decisions and just get on with it no matter what happens in front of him or how the weather changes. His aim when painting is not to labour over detail, but rather to "grasp the experience" of what is in front of him. He does not want to be super realistic; he wants his work to look like a painting. He is influenced by the artist Peter Brown who works on location in all weather, as Nick does. He even enjoys painting in the rain. He has many commissions lined up and is currently represented by the Peter Barker Fine Art Gallery in Uppingham.



Crispin Heesom grew up in Oundle, and was influenced by his mother, who was a painter. She encouraged Crispin's ambitions to go to art school to study painting. He studied painting in Norwich and lived in London for many years before moving back to Northamptonshire more than 20 years ago. He describes his style as expressionist and uses what he calls a spontaneous palette of vibrant colours in his work. He has also done many etchings and in complete contrast to his vibrant paintings, these are boldly black and white. His subject matter is mostly of Kings Cliffe, where he has developed a particular fascination for its small village lanes. His studio is in Kings Cliffe, where he uses a local framer. He says that Kings Cliffe is a vibrant bohemian village, perfect for practising art. His next exhibition is at Lyme Regis. At 68 years of age, he says there is still a lot to be done, with many commissions lined up and subjects on his mind that he wants to take on.



Intrepid adventurers sign up for the journey of a lifetime with the Mongol Rally

Jordan Badiru

Adventure is this summer's theme for two motoring teams from Oundle who are embarking on the Mongol Rally, described as "the greatest motoring challenge on the planet".

The route encompasses in excess of 10,000 miles across a range of mountains and deserts from Prague, Czech Republic to Ulan Ude, Russia. While there is no fixed route or rules, the journey must be completed in a clapped-out old banger with an engine no more than 1.2.

The first rally was run in 2004, and now attracts a few hundred cars for its annual race. It is definitely not for the fainthearted. The organisers, The Adventurists post a warning on their website: "These are not holidays. These are adventures and so by their very nature extremely risky. You really are putting both your health and life at risk. That's the whole point."

It is a new type of challenge for Oliver Frisby from Oundle and two school mates, James Keane from Werrington and Josh Allen from Warwickshire. The trio are taking on the Mongol Rally this summer, just a year after leaving Oundle School.

The three friends had talked about their desire to do something out of the ordinary before going

on to university in the summer, and the rally presented itself as the perfect adventure. They are relishing the prospect of combating the topographic demands of the rally, of which there will be many, in abundance, and have adopted the team name "Livin' on a Spare" to reflect the challenges ahead of them.



Team Saxosaurus will be driving to Siberia in their Citroen Saxo

The team announced the purchase of their rally car on Facebook: "Apparently Nicole & Papa will be very happy with our choice of vehicle! Honestly don't have a clue who they are....but we have bought a Renault Clio from 2001, with over 125,000 miles of experience under her belt! Classic..."

Each team must raise at least £1000 to participate. Half the money raised will go to the rally's

charity, Cool Earth, which works to preserve the rainforest, and half will benefit the boys' personal choice, the Sue Ryder hospice at Thorpe Hall in Peterborough where both Ollie's grandparents were cared for.

"Both of these experiences have shown me on a very personal level that the work that the charity does is incredible and vital for the people who are in the hospices," he said.

The boys have plotted a route which will see them drive through Europe to Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Mongolia, to Russia, and they hope to finish the route in six weeks, just in time for Fresher's Week.

The rally is bound to be one of the most physically and mentally demanding challenges for the boys and they are welcoming as much support as possible to help them

get across the finish line, either through sponsorship of the vehicle or through donations of equipment they will need such as jerry cans, a tool kit, medical supplies and much more! Get in touch with the team through their website page: <https://www.facebook.com/LivinOnASpare/> or by email: obbfrisby@gmail.com.

Among the competition will be another local duo, "Team Saxosaurus" with Thurning residents, Katie Baranyovits and Oliver Crawley. Katie went to school near Huntingdon while Oliver grew up in Kent and now works in Oundle.

The couple selected a little gold Citroen Saxo called "Nugget" as their rally car and have plotted a route that sees them drive through more than 20 countries, covering over 14,000 miles to Ulan Ude in Siberia and back.

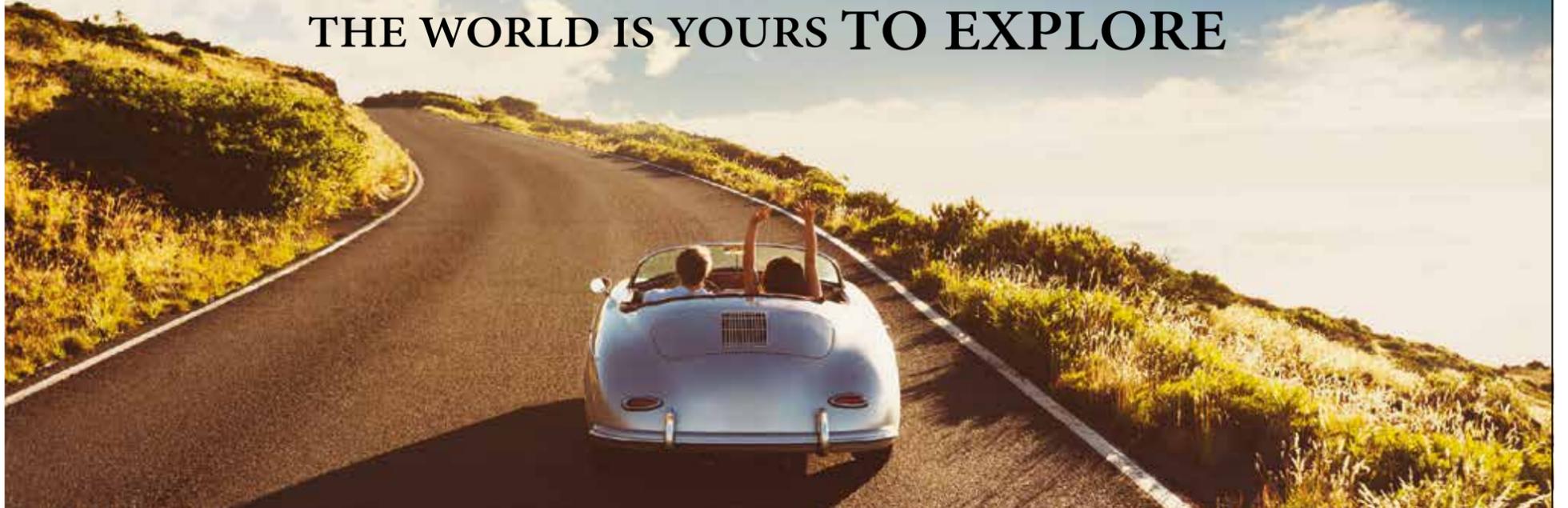
The team has a target of £1000 it must raise for charity. As animal lovers, Team Saxosaurus will be giving half of the funds raised to Wandsford Dogs home, a donation funded charity which specialises in the caring and rehoming of mistreated, abused and unwanted dogs. The other half will go the rally's charity, Cool Earth.

Team Saxosaurus welcome support to achieve their £1000 target and complement their rally effort with donations to their charities via their JustGiving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/katie-baranyovits>

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Volunteer opportunities across the community

Clemmie Preston

There are many volunteering organisations in Oundle that strive to help all those who are struggling with the simple things in life such as food, transport and enjoyable activities. People who volunteer are using skills they could otherwise monetise and use for their own benefit. Whether it is helping at a food bank, driving the elderly or disabled, helping at nursing homes or visiting a homeless shelter, volunteers do what they do to help improve the lives of others. In a recent survey, 61% of people said the reason they volunteered was because they wanted to improve the communities they live in and help people.

Friends of Barnwell Country Park work to help conserve the park in Barnwell, at the edge of Oundle. Mary James founded the Friends of Barnwell Country Park, a now thriving organisation that helps with park conservation and fundraising. The Friends have driven successful projects to extend paths and improve access for wheelchairs. Mrs James said: "I started doing it because when my children were little we always used to walk around Barnwell Country Park, and it is a beautiful place. I wanted to give something back." Mrs James is very hands-on in the park, and takes a small band of students every week to help with pruning, trimming and brush-burning.



Mary James established the Friends of Barnwell Country Park, where she goes with student volunteers every week to help the park Rangers

First Responders help out in medical emergencies whilst the emergency services are on the way. The idea is that the time between when the accident happens and when the emergency services arrive is crucial and there is so much that can be done in that time. First Responders are trained by the NHS to stabilise the patient and provide the appropriate care. In Oundle, First Responders have nine members led by Paul Brackley, who has been with them for 14 years. He enjoys helping people and wanted to give something back to the community, and First Responders had a purpose that Mr Brackley felt was vital: "Knowing that Oundle is quite rural, ambulances take a while to arrive and in an emergency situation, minutes count."

Another volunteering program is the **Oundle Food Bank**, with a distribution centre at the Methodist Church. A driver and a van are provided for free by the Oundle Carpet Weavers to transport food

donations from Waitrose and the Cooperative to the main food bank in Stamford, who then return with the food requested by the team at the Oundle food bank. The duties are shared between 25 volunteers. Volunteer member John Hewitson said: "When the work is spread around a large number, it is much more enjoyable and satisfying." At first one would think that Oundle does not need a food bank, however, there is always something that can be done to help people at crisis points to live more comfortably. Mr Hewitson said: "There have been Tuesdays when more than 50kgs of tinned food has left the Methodist Church to be taken into the homes and shared amongst the families of some of our most needy neigh-

Leicestershire and Northamptonshire". She said: "I enjoy being involved in Scouting and being able to give young people the opportunity to be involved in Scouting, and all it has to offer."

Volunteer Action is an organisation that aims to provide private transport for those with mobility problems who cannot drive to access medical appointments, shopping or social events. There are around 75 active drivers in the organisation, and along with other members who work for them, there are 120 people involved. The organisation was formed in 1996 and has been going strong ever since. Mel Lee is a member of Volunteer Action. As the Befriending Co-ordinator he recruits, trains and allocates people who want to help. Mel said: "I started driving because I wanted to help people in the area. I had been ill and was a passenger first, then wanted to help other people in my situation."

The **Festival of Music and Drama** observed its 100th anniversary this year. Gwen Radcliffe competed in the drama section 40 years ago and then was asked to join as a volunteer. There are around 50 people involved during the festival itself, as well as eight committee members. Although the festival is held once a year, the post-festival work and preparation for it are continuous throughout the year. Gwen deals with festival queries and problems just about every day of the year. "In six weeks



Gwen Radcliffe has been volunteering with the Festival of Music for 40 years

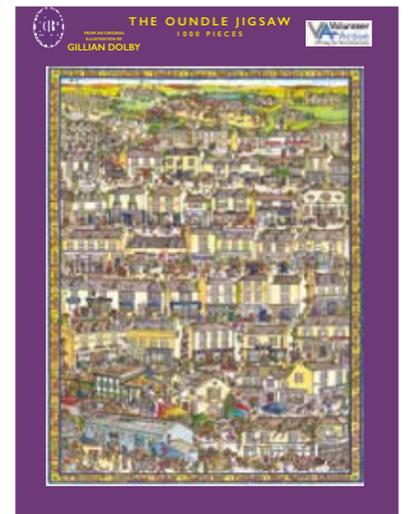
of the year, the time commitment is more like a daily double shift." Mrs Radcliffe said: "I want to see the Festival continue to provide performance opportunities for amateur performers of all ages, and hope there are younger members of the community itching to take over and share my tasks!"

Volunteer Action launch a limited edition souvenir of Oundle

Iris Cecil

Local charity Volunteer Action has released a limited edition Oundle themed jigsaw puzzle.

The puzzle's image is an original illustration of Oundle by Gillian Dolby, featuring the much loved shops and buildings in the town centre with busy streets of residents and visitors, both real and imaginary, going about their daily business.



There is no doubt that the puzzle will become a collector's item to be cherished by current and former residents in and around Oundle.

VA have predicted that the 1000 piece puzzle "is likely to prove a real challenge, even for seasoned 'dissectologists' (the name given to jigsaw enthusiasts)".

Once completed, the puzzle will most likely be left on display to be admired before being broken up and stored for a rainy day.

Volunteer Action provides an indispensable service for Oundle residents. It organises 75 volunteer drivers to take elderly people to medical appointments, social events, or shopping trips. Without a means of transport of their own, even everyday trips can cause difficulty for the elderly or those with mobility limitations.

Another service they offer is what they call their befriending service: volunteers providing companionship and support for those struggling on their own, whether due to age or disability.

The work of VA, which is funded in part by the NHS and local authorities, relies largely on donations and the success of fundraising initiatives.

The Oundle jigsaw puzzles are on sale at £20 at the Oundle Bookshop, Colemans Stationers and the Dolby Gallery. All proceeds of what is sure to be a popular souvenir of Oundle will contribute to Volunteer Action's effort to assist people in Oundle, Thrapston and 46 surrounding villages.

There's something for everyone at legendary shop in the Market Place

Zara Abdullah

Stu-Pots in the Market Place is packed with every imaginable household item to help with every task and need from cleaning and maintenance to cooking and

Stu-Pots is run by Stuart Blow and his assistants Naomi and Tina, who have been working at the shop for 23 and 14 years respectively.

Mr Blow, originally from Lincolnshire, bought Upton's shop



There are thousands of stocked items in Stu-Pots, and Mr Stuart Blow knows exactly where each item can be found in his shop

dining. Far from being fashionably minimalist, the purpose of this shop is to stock every household item one might possibly need for any situation.

The 6th of June 2018, will mark the shop's 25th anniversary.

at the corner of the Market Place and New Street 25 years ago. After trading there for a few years, they needed more retail space and moved to their current premises.

With items for the professional chef and the cooking novice, it is

possible to wander through the crowded aisles for hours. The shop promises a journey of discovery, particularly to new home owners who make a bee-line to Stu-Pots when they move to town.

As Tina puts it: "They all want new door mats, keys cutting, washing up bowls. Amazing what you need when you buy a new house."

In addition to this, Oundle is a rural market town, and the requirements of their customers reflect this. Moth and rodent control supplies are in as much demand as jam and chutney making equipment. "A lot of people have fruit trees," says Mr Blow. "We sell fruit presses because people do so much bottling."

Trade accounts with local farmers are also maintained, and the changing seasons are reflected in what gets sold. For example, during the hunting season, popular items include flasks, sloe gin supplies and baking equipment for shoot lunches.

They have many regular customers who prefer to come to them rather than a big shop; their

service provides familiarity and comfort. Tina said: "A lot of people come here because they know us and can have a natter. It's quite nice."

The stock on offer is wide and varied, from top-quality knives and cookware to ironmongery, dustpans, brushes and picture hooks. As a small independent shop, Stu-Pots has the flexibility to stock what they want, when they want it.

"If someone wants an asparagus steamer, we can stock it!" Tina said.

Wandering through the narrow passages, past shelves with teetering heaps of high quality pots and pans of every shape and size, it is only natural to feel a bit lost, especially if you are a first-timer.

But if you feel at all confused about where to begin, Mr Blow will know exactly where to find what you need. The shop assistants also know where to go. Their personal service is something that cannot be replicated at a large chain store.

And, as to how they know where to find every last item? "A good memory! We put it away. We know where we put it."

25th anniversary year

We would like to thank all our customers for their support over 25 years in Oundle.

Stuart, Tina and Naomi



36 Market Place
Oundle
01832 275414

Businesses in Oundle report on their gender pay gap

Elinor Nikolova

From April 2018, businesses with 250 employees or more are now required to publish a report documenting their employee pay by gender. This law was developed to make businesses more transparent about pay and to reveal any existing gender pay gaps.

The new law has raised questions about structural inequalities in the workforce and may hold the answer to closing the evident gap.

More than 9,600 firms nationwide had 12 months to gather statistics about the proportion of male to female employees and their pay. They were then required to publish their reports on their company website and a designated government website.

There are three businesses in Oundle that are big enough to be required to file a report.

Companies are required to make six basic calculations that include the mean gender pay gap; median gender pay gap; mean bonus gender pay gap; median bonus gender pay gap; proportion of males and females receiving a bonus payment; proportion of males and females in each quartile band.

The mean gender pay gap is the total wage bill divided by the number of staff. The median gap is the difference between the hourly wage of the man in the middle of the male range and the hourly wage of the woman in the middle of the female range.

The median is seen as more representative than the mean, reflecting the difference between men's and women's average hourly pay. In 2017 the male and female median hourly earnings gap was 18.4% and the mean pay gap was 17.4%.

The statistics reveal that not only is there a gender pay gap, there is a gender occupation divide. Jobs in the lower quartile are primarily occupied by women, and are also rewarded with lower pay than other positions in the lower quartile which are primarily occupied by men.

Fairline Yachts employs a wide range of production workers and engineers. Their report says: "Our success depends on securing the best talent. Gender balance in the workplace is an essential element enabling us to build the best team possible". Yet, only 17% of Fairline's workforce is female. In the highest quartile, 7% of Fairline's employees are women

and in the lowest quartile, 8% are women. In the upper middle pay quartile, which might comprise skilled engineers, only 2% are women. None received bonus pay, compared to 2% of men, who did.

The Corporation of Oundle School, which also includes Laxton Junior School, employs approximately 750 staff with a split of 38.5% male and 61.5% female. The School's median pay gap is 30% and its mean gender pay gap is 21%.

The School wrote in its report: "The gender pay gap is also attributable to the range and volume of roles offered to staff at the lower grades of pay." There are more female applicants for jobs represented in the lowest quartile of pay which included cleaners and catering assistants. In the lowest quartile, there are 273 female employees compared to 24 male employees.

Among the cleaning staff, there are 91 females and 6 males who are paid £8.33 per hour. In comparison, among the grounds staff there are 18 males and 1 female who are paid £8.89 per hour.

The EMLC Academy Trust report includes statistics for Prince William School as well as its

other schools. The data available on the gov.uk website reports that women's median hourly rate is 56.4% lower than men's, even though the majority of the employees across all quartiles are female: 73.7% in the top quartile, 80.9% in the upper middle quartile, 87.2% in the lower middle quartile and 92.6% in the lower quartile. Furthermore, while the number of women and men who received bonus pay is nearly evenly split at 15% and 14.1%, women's median bonus pay is 68.4% lower than men's. The full EMLC Academy report is not available on their website.

The Office for National Statistics reports that male financial managers and directors receive 32.4% more than women in the same occupation.

Sam Smethers, chief executive of the Fawcett Society said: "It's a game change. It forces employers to look at themselves and understand their organisations.

"Finally women realise that they have a right to talk about pay and cannot be silenced. By finding out what their colleagues earn, they can challenge any pay inequality. It is much more common than people realise."

The business case for working from home

Harry Squire

In an era where worldwide communication is as simple as the click of a mouse, businesses in the UK are evaluating the advantages of shifting away from traditional workplaces. This shift is seeing annual increases, with an estimated 1.5 million people working from home in 2016. In the last 20 years Oundle has seen an increase of residents who commute to work, but this may now be changing.

The advantages for home workers are obvious, such as the elimination of commuting costs, and the opportunity to work in a more comfortable and familiar environment which allows for more flexibility and the ability to spend more time with the family.

However, there are potential drawbacks to running a business where workers are based at home and not in a managed office environment. Studies have shown that over 50% of communication influence is visual, meaning presenting ideas while talking on the phone or through an email is much more difficult than a face-

to-face discussion. The argument could be made that productivity decreases outside of an environment specifically designed for work.

Pete Barford is the owner of a hospitality events planning company that works on international events such as Vanity Fair's Oscar night party in Los Angeles and conferences and charity fundraisers. He coordinates his business on a day-to-day basis from his home in Northamptonshire. He says that a "nice working environment" is a big benefit of working from home, as well as flexibility with working hours. However, being on site is essential for his projects, which means international travel to meet his clients.

Simon Page works from home in Oundle for Titanium Fireworks, which organises both private celebrations and national displays such as the London New Year and Edinburgh Hogmanay. He said that reducing his daily commute from 30 minutes by road to 8 minutes from kitchen kettle to home office

was efficient and satisfying.

"If I need to think something through I can go into the garden with a coffee, and I can discuss any issues with Spud my Norfolk terrier who is a great listener."

For both homeworkers, knowing when to leave the office is important. Mr Barford said that always being on call, with the office just a step away, can be a problem. Mr Page said: "The challenge for anyone working at home is to get the balance right and either literally or metaphorically shut the door to the office at a sensible time."

Both Pete Barford and Simon

Page said that communication is the biggest difficulty, discussions and projects are not easy to co-ordinate without a central office. Mr Page said that "constructive conflict" with colleagues was important.

"The telephone is a poor replacement for face to face communication, email is a terrible medium for communication. Regular face-to-face meetings are therefore a given if you are part of a team, but work at home," said Mr Page.

He spends two days a week meeting with colleagues and clients at the company's production facilities.

However, it is possible that these problems can be overcome by further developments in technology, with high speed broadband and platforms such as Skype and FaceTime making quality face-to-face interaction possible.

This change in work culture has really only just begun, and it is likely that it will be made more convenient in the future. Smallbusiness.co.uk predicts that by 2020, 50% of the UK's workforce will be working from home.

We truly are witnessing the beginnings of a shift that could affect perceptions of work for the next generation, possibly changing Oundle from a town from which people need to commute to work, to one where people can stay at home to work.



Spud is a helpful home office companion for Simon Page

New book delves into Oundle memories

Sienna Rushton

A new local history book, *Oundle Memories and Moments: a Peek into the Past* by Anna Fernyhough, offers both a fascinating historical and contemporary treatment of Oundle, full of shared stories about local lives.

Mrs Fernyhough was born in Oundle and went to school here. After university in London and the University of Illinois, she taught abroad in Ethiopia, the US, Spain and then in Northamptonshire.

When she returned to Oundle she and her husband bought a

bridesmaids."

For her research, Mrs Fernyhough interviewed many of the older residents and individuals about the war years and their school days. Some of the individuals she interviewed attended clubs and societies, where she would meet them to be interviewed in groups. She met others in their retirement homes and their personal retreats.

Local historians are very supportive of each other's work and Mrs Fernyhough is grateful to them. "I was helped and aided by the encouragement and support



Anna Fernyhough's book draws on the stories and memories she has collected from friends and family in Oundle

house in 1987 that coincidentally turned out to be the home of her great aunt. Mrs Fernyhough realised that she even had "the monogrammed wedding cutlery that my great aunt had used in the same house."

She has had many generations of family in Oundle and through her mother's side of the family she can trace relatives who have lived here over five generations. Her family's names include Nicholson, Chester, Palmer, Craythorne and Hooton. However, she wistfully told the Oundle Chronicle, "There won't be any more of my family in Oundle, because my sons have moved away."

But while her sons have moved away, her sister was born at their home on North Street and her nieces are still local.

She still feels well connected to Oundle due to the many old families who still live here, including long-time resident David Wills who was featured in the December 2017 edition of the Oundle Chronicle. These two families have very strong connections.

Mrs Fernyhough said: "David Wills' wife, Sheila and her sister Margaret, were my mother's

of friends, particularly Margaret Brewster (who has her own book: *A Collection of Oundle Families* that was published in 2016) and Sharon Cottingham, who has outstanding organisational skills and knows how I frequently get side-tracked!"

Her book largely concentrates on the town of Oundle where her maternal family lived for many centuries. The aim was to make the collected history and stories of the volume into a celebration of Oundle people. The book is intended to amuse and inform by encapsulating the memories of people who have lived here. For newer residents it provides some answers to questions such as: Who lived in my house? Who were their neighbours?

It tells stories of the churches, societies, tradespeople and homes of the people who lived here. The book also describes some of the quirky town events including visiting fairs, lively dances, pubs and plays, stories about the local vet and his family, and a fully-grown lion called Mushie who walked around the town until the 1960s.

Oundle Memories is available at The Oundle Bookshop. They will be hosting a book signing at on Saturday 9 June.

Museum presented with rare roman coin from Barnwell

Lucy Cairns

In August last year, Mr Glenn Lister discovered a Roman coin through the use of a metal detector on land near Barnwell. It was presented as a donation to the Oundle Museum, following a complex procedure to determine an item's status.

In the case of this coin, Mr Lister and the landowner decided to donate the coin to the Oundle Museum.

The coin found was classed as "a find of note" and has been designated regional status. It is a copper-alloy Roman Q-Radiate of Allectus, dating from circa AD 293.



The obverse (left) depicts the radiate head of Allectus. The reverse (right) depicts the emperor holding a spear and globe

If an item containing precious metal is found, it must firstly be taken to a local coroner who decides whether it is classed as an item of note. After this decision has been made, the item is sent to the British Museum, where it is examined, valued and recorded.

The usual outcome of this is that it is offered to a local museum for purchase. If the museum cannot or does not desire to purchase the item, it can then be kept by the finder. Under the Treasure Act 1966, the finders and/or the landowner are awarded equal share of the market value of the treasure.

It depicts an image of the emperor standing holding a transverse spear and globe.

Allectus was finance minister to British emperor Carausius. He murdered the emperor in 293 and assumed power, but lacked the ability to keep his small province separate from the empire proper. He was defeated by Constantius I in 296 AD.

There are only two other known specimens of this coin in existence: one at the Ashmolean Museum and another in the Oundle School Roman coin collection.

An architectural guide to Oundle for visitors



Visitors to Oundle who stay overnight at The Talbot Hotel will be able to learn about Oundle's historic architecture during their stay, and have the chance to fully appreciate the local history as they tour the town. The Talbot purchased David Parker's book *Oundle's Historic Buildings*, and each room now has a copy available for guests. Mr Parker (centre) signed copies of the book alongside the hotel's general manager, Neil Williams (left) and John Hadman (right), chairman of the Oundle Museum Trust. Copies of the book are available to purchase exclusively from the Oundle Museum.

Library cuts to staffing threaten Northants' John Clare archive

Hannah Wakeford

With the many cuts being made to library services across Northamptonshire, the special collections at Northampton Central Library could be under threat. Of particular concern is the conservation of and access to the internationally important collection of manuscripts and books by John Clare.

John Clare was one of the most famous poets of the 19th century, and his work regularly features in poetry anthologies taught in schools. Because of his modest origins, he was known as the 'Northamptonshire Peasant Poet'.

Clare was born in Helpston and his family's cottage was purchased by the John Clare Trust in 2005 and is now open to the public. Clare actually lived in Oundle when he was stationed here with the Northamptonshire militia in 1812. The battalion comprised 1,300 "lawless fellows" prone to public disorder. With a shortage of accommodation in town for such numbers, Clare complained that the rents were correspondingly high.

He later wrote: "I was obliged to be content with the quarters allotted to me, which were at The Rose and Crown Inn, kept by a widow woman and her two daughters, which happened to be a good place."

A large group of writers and

academics, including Simon Armitage, Hilary Mantel, Philip Pullman and Jonathan Bate, wrote to Northamptonshire County Council urging it to prevent "a permanently detrimental effect upon the care and curation of the Clare collection". They fear that the cuts that the council are proposing will result in "the loss of staff and expertise" who play a fundamental role in keeping the archive open to researchers.



Portrait of John Clare from 1821

It is of the greatest importance that this archive which is "arguably the world's greatest archive of the poet's manuscripts", and certainly Northamptonshire's most important literary asset, is protected regardless of the budget cuts being made across the county.

What's everyone reading in Northamptonshire?

Hannah Wakeford

250 million visits are made to public libraries each year in the UK. With 8.4 million active borrowers using libraries, what books have proved to be the most popular among readers?

The most obvious trend is that adult readers love thrillers, and children will always look for a good laugh. The most borrowed children's book in Northamptonshire libraries in 2017 was *Dog Zombies rule (for now)* by Liz Pichon, which was borrowed 676 times over the year.

This was closely followed by *Midnight Gang* by David Walliams with 603 issues. Jennie Poh's *Herbie's Big Adventure* and Claire Evans' *Three Little Superpigs* followed close behind Walliams.

Other highly popular children's books include *Boa's bad birthday* by Jeanne Willis and *World-famous cheese shop break-in* by Sean Taylor.

Nationwide, the most popular authors year after year include: James Patterson, Julia Donaldson, Francesca Simon, Lee Child, Roald

Dahl and Jacqueline Wilson.

In 2016 the six most borrowed books in the UK were: *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins, *Personal* by Lee Child, *Make Me* by Lee Child, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul* by Jeff Kinney and *Alert* by James Patterson.

In Northamptonshire, nearly 2m loans were issued in 2015-16, the most current data available. The most popular book loaned was *Road to Little Dribbling* by Bill Bryson, closely followed by *The Silk Factory* by Northamptonshire author, Judith Allnatt.

Although authors will always look to book sales to sustain their livelihood, popular writer Jojo Moyes affirmed the importance of libraries: "Delighted my PLR [Public Lending Right] statement shows that people borrowed my books last year. But more importantly it shows that libraries are still vital.

"Lose them, and we lose an irreplaceable thing: a community space, somewhere that anyone can both educate and entertain themselves, for free."

Friends of St Peter's Church

On approaching Oundle, the familiar skyline with the 210 foot spire of St Peter's Church is a welcoming site. It is the highest spire in Northamptonshire, and part of what Simon Jenkins rated as one of England's best churches.

The Friends of Oundle Parish Church are part of a long tradition of local residents who

are endeavouring to preserve the building for future generations. They contribute to improvements which enable the community to use the church building for a wide range of events.

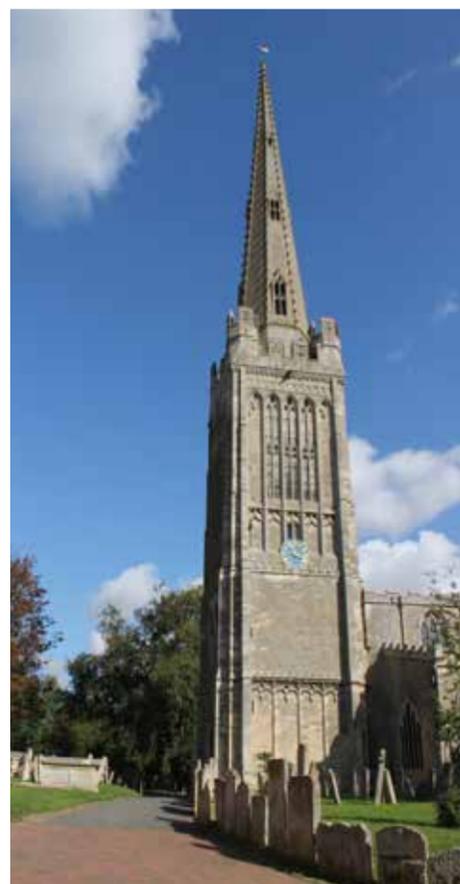
Recently the Friends of St Peter's have raised money to improve public access and provide a ramp, helped to restore stone work and floodlight the tower, overhauled the tower clock, and contributed to new accessible lavatory facilities, and the installation of the west gates.

The Friends raise money through concerts in the church, donations and subscriptions. Members do not have to be a churchgoer to be a "Friend", and the Friends association is a separate independent charity. Bequests in a will are one way of helping to preserve the church building.

The Friend's next fundraising concert is on Saturday 9 June at 7.30pm, with the return of the award winning Rushden Town Band directed by Adele Hudson.

The band is performing popular music from film and television for what promises to be a lively and entertaining evening in the church. There will be a licensed bar.

Tickets are on sale from Oundle in Stitches, in the Market Place.



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The return of the chequered skipper to local woodlands

Hannah Wakeford

The Chequered Skipper pub in Ashton is named after the beautiful brown and yellow butterfly, the *Carterocephalus palaemon*. The butterfly was last sighted in England in 1976, in Rutland. But this rare insect will soon be returning to England and is to be released in local woodlands this year.

woodlands is key to the successful introduction, allowing for open spaces for the butterflies to flourish.

The pub in Ashton was given its name by Dame Miriam Rothschild, roughly 40 years ago. Her home was Ashton Wold, outside the village that was once entirely owned by her family.

Although Ms Rothschild



The chequered skipper (15) and its underside (15a) from *British and European Butterflies and Moths* [1897]

The chequered skippers will be taken from healthy populations in Belgium and will be released into woodland sites across Rockingham Forest, which used to be the species' stronghold.

More than £7 million has gone into this project, raised by the Rethink Nature partnership and Natural England, to "bring back from the brink" threatened English species.

This is not the first time it has been attempted to bring the butterfly back into England. There was an attempt to re-introduce the species in the 1990s in Lincolnshire, but the project was unsuccessful.

Active management of the

described herself as "an amateur", she was a celebrated entomologist and regarded as one of the world's most distinguished naturalists.

Over the course of her career, she published more than 300 scientific papers. It is a given that she would be thrilled by the possibility of the chequered skipper returning to the English countryside.

The newly formed Ashton Society supported this initiative with a talk held at The Chequered Skipper pub in February to discuss the return of the butterfly.

They hope to be spotting the chequered skipper again very soon.

Recording local bird life on Twitter

In 1895 Lord Lilford listed 227 birds in his two volume book *Notes on the Birds of Northamptonshire and Neighbourhood*. He was a renowned naturalist and ornithologist and was responsible for introducing the Little Owl (*Athene noctua*) to the area in the 1880s, which is now the county bird.

The work he did recording birds in the area continues with 21st century birdwatchers reporting their sightings online and on the appropriately named social media platform, Twitter.

Dr John Hunt is a retired Oundle biology teacher who has been birdwatching seriously since 1980. During the school holidays he traveled across the world to study birds and wildlife, and this year will be travelling to South and

Central America and China.

His bird sightings in Oundle and the surrounding area are recorded on Twitter @jhoundle with the hashtag #northantsbirds, often accompanied by short, mesmerising videos of bird life.

One unusual sighting that he said is exceptionally rare was of a lone corn bunting singing like a yellowhammer. He said it was a single bird among a flock of another bird species, and was clearly tuned to the wrong song.

Bird sightings in the county are collected and recorded on the northantsbirds.com website once the sighting has been verified.

Birdguides.com also records birding sites close to Oundle and wider Northamptonshire, as does the Northamptonshire Bird Club.

New WI chapter opens in Oundle

Pippa Bourne

After 25 years of dormancy, the Women's Institute is being revived for a new generation of women in Oundle. Its first meeting was held on 19 February, and attracted more than 40 women to join the group.

The previous Oundle branch ran for nearly 30 years from 1963 to 1992, when it folded.

together to make a giant brain sculpture in order to raise awareness for brain science and mental health.

The Oundle branch is led by the newly appointed president, Naomi Murphy, with Tina Browne, Secretary and Chris Stewart, Treasurer.

Naomi Murphy said: "There was



Naomi Murphy, Oundle WI president introduced the April meeting

The Women's Institute is a community-based organisation for women, initially established in 1915, and it has become the largest voluntary women's organisation in the UK.

A "new wave" of Women's Institute branches have shed their slightly dated outlook and are encouraging and attracting women of all ages to attend with a new range of organised activities. While traditional "vintage" interests such as needlework, jam-making and healthy living recipes are promoted, new activities include organised talks from scientists and historians.

For instance, the Cambridge Federation of Women's Institute members knitted and crocheted "neurons", which were combined

a real show of commitment from a number of women who've all been busy trying to get the branch off the ground.

"The committee really want to work to make the branch a group that is welcoming and inclusive of all women. There were lots of very vibrant women drawn from all ages, backgrounds and interests, so I am confident that the branch is going to have a lot of energy and something to appeal to all."

The April meeting was the first Oundle WI speaker event, featuring conservationist Dr Nick Askew on British birds and bird calls, which was extremely popular.

Meetings are held at The Hub, Fletton House, on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.

Maundy Thursday

continued from page 1

Zara Abdullah

David Wills was among pensioners who were invited to receive ceremonial Maundy Money from the Queen at a service at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

When he received his letter from St James's, "I didn't speak for a moment, which is very unlike me."

Mr Wills, was one of 92 men and 92 women chosen from across the country.

Maundy Thursday involves a religious service held on the day before Good Friday, which commemorates the night of the Last Supper. The origins of the ceremony, which are a part of the Easter celebrations, come from the

commandment Christ gave after washing his disciples' feet.

The Royal Family has taken part in Maundy celebrations since the 13th century, initially involving the distribution of food and clothing to the poor, but has evolved into presenting a number of men and women, each equal to the Queen's age, with a red and a white purse in recognition of their contributions to the church and their community.

This year, the red purse contained a £5 coin marking four generations of royalty, and a 50p piece commemorating the Representation of the People Act 1918, which gave women the right to vote for the first time.

The white purse included silver penny pieces totalling 92p, which represents the Queen's age.

Oundle Music and Drama Festival celebrates 100th anniversary

Pippa Bourne

This year saw the 100th annual Oundle Music and Drama Festival, in which hundreds of solo, duo and group performances took place with competitors from Oundle and across the region.

The Oundle Music and Drama Festival was founded by Lady Millicent Lilford from nearby Lilford Hall. Because it was halted during the war years, 2018 marks the 100th festival event since it was founded in 1909. It began as a music festival with classes for local choirs and ensembles. In 1968, Speech and Drama classes were added. This year there were 147 classes open to competitors.



The Mixed Quartet from Peterborough competed in the Barbershop Quartet class



The Catmose College Jazz Band from Oakham performed "Inside Out" by Michael Sweeney and "Smooth" by Santana



These competitors from Peterborough and Bourne performed in the Solo Song class



Drama pupils from Thomas Deacon Academy in Peterborough performed an excerpt from "The Accidental Death of an Anarchist" by Dario Fo in the Group Acting class



Pupils from the Malcolm Sargent Primary School in Stamford competed in the Year 3 Verse Speaking class



Soloists on violin from Oundle, Peterborough, Bourne and Spalding competed in the U18 qualifying class for Young Musician of the Year.