

August Councillor Report

Funding available for community projects in South Oxfordshire

Community groups in South Oxfordshire are invited to apply for funding in the new round of Community Grants.

The grant opened for applications today (Wednesday 14 August) and each South Oxfordshire District councillor has a budget of £5,000 which they can award to projects in their ward.

Those eligible to apply include town councils, parish councils, parish meetings, not for profit preschools and PTAs and local not for profit organisations.

In the last round of funding £165,546 was awarded to 90 projects supporting a range of charities and not for profit organisations.

The deadline for applications is midday Friday 29 November 2024. There are more details about who is eligible to apply, what kind of projects can be funded and the decision process on [the grants pages of the South Oxfordshire District Council website](#) or organisations can contact the Community Enablement teamgrants@southandvale.gov.uk.

Proposed Changes to Winter Fuel Allowance

The proposed changes to the **Winter Fuel Allowance (WFA)**, recently **announced by the Chancellor**, have sparked widespread concern, particularly among organisations dedicated to supporting older adults. The changes would see the allowance means-tested, limiting it to those already receiving Pension Credit. This has drawn strong criticism from various quarters, including **Age UK**, which warns of the severe impact on the well-being of millions of pensioners across the UK.

Age UK has launched a **national campaign** to halt the proposed means-testing, urging the public to sign their petition in defence of the Winter Fuel Payment. The campaign has gained rapid support, with nearly 100,000 signatures in just a few days, reflecting the deep concern among the older population and their advocates. Find out more about the campaign and how you can get involved **HERE**.

NFU MUTUAL RURAL CRIME REPORT 2024: ALARMING RISE IN ORGANISED RURAL CRIME

A recent report published by **NFU Mutual** provides an in-depth analysis of the latest trends, figures, and strategies to combat rural crime. The full report, which can be accessed **HERE** highlights the growing sophistication and organisation of rural crime, revealing the increasing challenges faced by rural communities and farmers.

Increasingly Organised Crime

According to the report, rural crime has become more organised and sophisticated, with a concerning 91% of NFU Mutual Agents noting this trend. The report estimates that the cost of rural crime increased by 4.3% in 2023, reaching £52.8 million. Criminal gangs are employing advanced technology, such as drones, to scout out targets, contributing to the growing complexity of rural thefts.

For the full report and detailed insights [click here](#)

Rural project funding opportunities

Here is a monthly bulletin highlighting a selection of current funding opportunities for rural projects. <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/rural-funding-digest-august-2024>

Celebrate Christmas with Cinderella at Cornerstone

If you're looking for pumpkin carriages, beautiful ballgowns and a fairy godmother this Christmas then look no further than Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot.

From Wednesday 18 December to Tuesday 31 December the classic tale of Cinderella will be performed by professional pantomime company – the multi award nominated KD Theatre Productions.

The full cast will be announced in September and there will be a chance for young performers from the area to audition later in the year to be a part of the production.

Tickets will go on sale on Tuesday 13 August from 10am and will be available via the [Cornerstone Arts Centre website](#) or in person at the box office during opening hours.

There will be special discounted tickets available on the opening night on Wednesday 18 December and for members on 19 and 20 December. See details on [how to become a member here](#). Ticket prices start from £17 – see website for more details.

South Oxfordshire District Council joins UK100

South Oxfordshire District Council's ambitious plans to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions has taken a step forward after the council joined UK100 – the network of local authorities committed to taking progressive climate action.

Members of UK100 share best practice and details of successful projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move towards net zero.

REMINDER - FREE places at green skills courses available for South and Vale residents

More than 80 fully funded places are available on eco-friendly home improvement courses for people based in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts.

For more information and to sign up for the launch event on Monday 19 August, visit [Free courses in Green Skills and Care – Abingdon & Witney College \(abingdon-witney.ac.uk\)](#)

And lastly SODC in collaboration with the Vale of White Horse are continuing with their ongoing development of the Joint Local Plan (JLP) with plans to publish a full draft in Autumn 2024 which will then undergo further public consultation. The plan focusses on sustainable development, affordable housing and addressing climate change and SODC is attempting to achieve as much protection for our District as possible ahead of the upcoming

changes being imposed with regards to new development and housing numbers.

Regards

C'llr Ali Gordon-Creed and C'llr Ed Sadler