

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS APRIL 2024 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

CRACKDOWN ON ANTI-DRIVER ROAD SCHEMES AND BLANKET 20MPH LIMITS

On 17 March the Department for Transport published draft statutory guidance for councils on low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs), setting out that they must gain buy-in from local residents, businesses and emergency services when considering implementing new LTN schemes. Local authorities are expected to follow the guidance and ensure local people support their plans. Recent examples where councils have implemented these schemes without public support have been shown to cause disruption and have unintended negative consequences. If local authorities fail to deliver sensible road schemes that work for local people they could see future funding withdrawn, and under powers from the Traffic Management Act, the government could ultimately take control of an authority's roads where they are deemed to be widely mismanaged. Separately, councils have received strengthened guidance on setting 20mph speed limits, reminding them to reserve them for sensible and appropriate areas only – such as outside schools – and with safety and local support at the heart of the decision. Local authorities are expected to consider this guidance, and as with the LTN guidance, this could have implications for the awarding of funding in the future. Subsequently, the [Oxford Mail](#) reported that Andrew Gant, OCC cabinet member for Transport Management, claimed “detailed and lengthy” consultation went on before LTNs were implemented in Oxford and that they “form part of Oxfordshire County Council’s vision of a safer, cleaner, greener city and county for everyone”.

OXFORD ZERO EMISSION ZONE PILOT RAISES OVER £700,000 IN FIRST YEAR

OCC has announced that the Oxford city Zero Emissions Zone pilot generated £702,940 income from charges and fines over its first full financial year of operation. Critics have labelled this ‘pay to pollute’ scheme a policy failure but a financial success. The forthcoming Expanded Zero Emissions Zone is projected to generate £25m over a five-year period.

WORKPLACE PARKING TAX

The Liberal Democrat administration is planning to introduce a tax in the region of £600 per parking space on all organisations with more than ten parking spaces in the city of Oxford. In addition to businesses, schools and other public organisations are likely to be hard hit. This matter is back in the news as BMW has controversially been exempted from the tax as it is just outside the Oxford ring road <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd14mrk2yn3o>

WALKING AND CYCLING IN COUNTY TO GET £2.4M ACTIVE TRAVEL INVESTMENT

Oxfordshire is to benefit from £2.384 million awarded by Active Travel England – the UK government agency responsible for making walking, wheeling and cycling the preferred choice for everyone to get around in England. The funding has been awarded as part of the fourth phase of the [active travel bidding](#) process (active travel tranche 4). Oxfordshire County Council has previously been awarded grants of £600,000 from phase one, £2.98m from phase two and £10.4m from phase three. As with previous active travel awards, the money is to be invested in supporting specific projects intended to improve walking and cycling infrastructure in the county.

LATE NIGHT OPENING AT RECYCLING CENTRES TO END

A reminder that Oxfordshire's household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) will no longer stay open late nights on Thursdays. The seven centres, operated by OCC, had previously opened until 8pm every Thursday between April and September. However, the extra service is being discontinued this year. Green Councillor Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader of OCC with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations, commenting in the [OCC press release](#), said: "We realise this decision will disappoint some people..."

PLANS TO SPEND £2.23M EXPANDING SEND SCHOOL IN OXFORD APPROVED

Funding to expand a school that caters for children from Oxfordshire with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) has been approved by the county council's cabinet. A total of £2.23 million was approved by councillors at the 19 March meeting of cabinet to create 23 new places at Mabel Prichard Special School in Oxford. The school provides education and support for pupils with a range of severe learning difficulties and is managed by The Gallery Trust. The school is co-located with Orchard Meadow Primary School. It is also an academy and is managed by United Learning. It is proposed that Orchard Meadow Primary School will relocate its foundation stage accommodation into surplus space elsewhere on site, enabling the provision of the additional school places for children with SEND.

OXFORDSHIRE AWARDED £3.6M TO TRIPLE PUBLIC ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

Oxfordshire will receive £3.6 million to triple its number of public electric vehicle (EV) chargers after the county's Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) bid was approved. Money from the [Department for Transport](#) will seed fund a major rollout of infrastructure worth over £10m that will see more than 1,300 public chargers delivered in the county by the end of 2025. The rest of the funding will largely come in the form of investment from the EV chargepoint operators themselves. OCC led the application in close collaboration with Oxford City Council and Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils. The programme aims to create a reliable, easy-to-use, contactless EV charging network spanning the county. This will give more people the opportunity to switch to an EV – regardless of where they live or their parking situation.

OVERSEAS CARE RECRUITMENT

Care providers across the south-east of England are being offered access to a new, Oxfordshire designed, [international recruitment system](#), helping to reduce bureaucracy and costs when hiring staff from abroad. Following a £2.54 million investment from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), OCC's innovation service has developed the initiative, which includes the creation of a portal for care providers. The portal offers support around complex areas such as immigration and compliance. The service has worked with care providers to better understand the challenges faced in overseas recruitment. The county council has now announced it will partner with Borderless, a technology company founded in 2022, to deliver and further develop the migration platform.

HOUSING PROGRAMME THAT SUPPORTS ADULTS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Four adults with learning disabilities and autism are celebrating receiving the keys to their newly developed, specially adapted home in Witney. OCC has invested £5 million into the Resonance Supported Homes Fund that has bought and refurbished the property, in partnership with housing provider, Golden Lane Housing. The home is the first of five properties planned for Oxfordshire, providing person-centred housing for adults with additional needs, with four more due to open in Banbury, Bicester, Kidlington and Horspath later this year.