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Residents' Association
Newsletter



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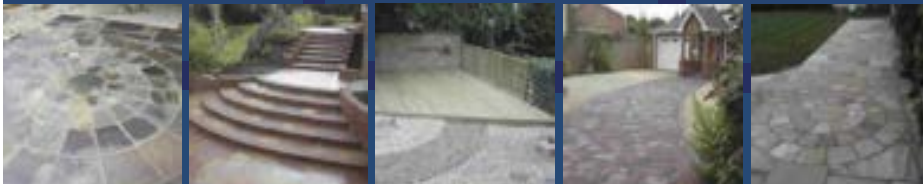
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Contents

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Editorial and Residents' Association Officers |
| 2 | Diary of Events and GKRA Committee Report |
| 3 | Great Kingshill Summer Fete |
| 4 | Village Hall Report |
| 8 | Great Kingshill School Celebrates 150 Years |
| 10 | Hughenden Street Association |
| 12 | Hide And Seek by Tony Marshall |
| 15 | Hughenden Community Support Trust |
| 21 | Chiltern Hills Cycling Group |
| 22 | The Amazing Benefits of Strength Training |
| 24 | Chameleon Singles Group |
| 25 | Hughenden Parish Council |
| 29 | Neighbourhood Watch |
| 31 | GK Village Hub News |

Front cover photograph by Chris Goodfellow
Young goldfinch begging

Welcome to the Spring edition of the GKRA Newsletter

Dear Reader,

The winter should now be well and truly behind us and we can look forward to better weather, longer days and being able to get out and enjoy the beautiful countryside in which we are lucky enough to live.

As you will see we are starting to plan our main events of the year – a Summer Fete to be held on the Common on Sunday 14th July. If you would like to get involved then please come along to our first planning meeting (see events diary for details).

New contributors to the newsletter are always very welcome, and we are very pleased to have a contribution from Great Kingshill C of E Combined School in this edition. You may be able to help with their celebrations, so do read their article! I would also love to receive photographs that could be included in the publication. If you are a budding photographer and would like to have a photograph (appropriate to the season) considered for the front cover then please send it to me. The format should be jpeg and be of good enough quality for printing. You will receive a £10 gift voucher if your photograph is chosen, so it's worth having a go!

Copy for the summer edition is required by mid May please.

Jackie

gkra.newsletter@gmail.com

RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| ACTING CHAIRMAN | John Golledge | chairman@greatkingshill.org |
| SECRETARY | Shirley Challis | shirleyannchallis@gmail.com |
| TREASURER | John Holwill | john.holwill@gmail.com |

Diary of Events

Thursday 21st March

Summer Fete Planning kick off meeting
in the Parish Council rooms at 7.30pm

Saturday 23rd March

Quiz in the Village Hall

Sunday 14th July

Great Kingshill Summer Fete

Friday 1st November

Bonfire and Fireworks

Please look out for posters around the village and on the notice board by the pedestrian crossing for more details and confirmation of dates and times.

GKRA Committee Report

As we currently have no chairman we have no usual chairman's report, but instead a general report written by a member of the committee:

During December we were very pleased to have many villagers attend the carol singing outside of SPAR, and then continuing in the Village Hall afterwards to enjoy some well earned mulled wine and mince pies. Many thanks to SPAR for supplying the mince pies, and thanks to the musicians who kept us all on track and singing in tune. A collection for Little Kingshill Baptist Church's Christmas charity was taken - thank you to all who contributed.

On 23rd March we will be holding our spring quiz – contact Shirley Challis by email at shirleyannchallis@gmail.com if you would like to attend – there may still be a few spaces left!

We are also just starting planning for the summer fete which is to be held on the Common on 14th July. If you would like to get involved see the advertisement on the next page for more details.

We are always looking for new members to join the GKRA committee. Meetings are held on the first Monday of each month in the Parish Council Office on the Common at 7.30pm. All are very welcome.



Great Kingshill
Residents' Association

Summer Fete 14th July On The Common

A Planning Meeting for the Summer Fete will be held on Thursday 21st March at 7.30 in the Hughenden Parish Council rooms on the Common.

If you are interested in getting involved in any capacity then please come along with your ideas, or email your interest to gkra.newsletter@gmail.com



Great Kingshill Village Hall Your Community Centre

Thank you

The Village Hall team wishes to thank Peter Jackling for his tireless work in chairing the hall committee over the last 7 years. An outstanding period of service to our village. He continues to be a valuable source of knowledge for all things hall related, so we appreciate him being on hand for any information. Debra Main will take on the role of chairperson in 2024.

The Christmas tree and decorations have come down – wasn't it wonderful to see the hall full of laughter and joy during the village Christmas event organized by the Village Hub? It also continues to be a warm space for the community every Friday morning where coffee/tea and homemade cakes are available 10.45am – 12midday. Drop in if you are walking past, or even working from home and fancy a short break. Wi-Fi is available!

Looking ahead

The committee's priority for the months ahead will be to continue to enhance the hall and its facilities. A recent survey of hall users helpfully suggested several improvements including some minor repairs, additional power sockets, simplification of the AV system, as well as painting and freshening up the entrance foyer and small hall. If anyone has any other feedback for the hall, please email bookings@gkvillagehall.org

Date for your diary – Medical Emergency Demonstration

On Sunday 21st April at 6pm, there will be a presentation held at the village hall that will include a demonstration of use of the defibrillator

that we are lucky enough to have installed at the entrance to the hall. Management of other common medical emergencies will also be covered. This event is free to attend but we will be taking voluntary donations to the Thames Valley Air Ambulance on the night.

Committee Opportunities

We always welcome new members/trustees to the committee, so please get in touch by email if you wish to find out more.

Hall space for Hire

If you are looking for a space for an upcoming celebration, a meeting, or a regular activity, please visit the website for information and booking. www.gkvillagehall.org

An updated schedule of regular activities at the hall can be found on the village noticeboard by the crossing.



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Great Kingshill School Celebrates 150 Years



This year, Great Kingshill C of E Combined School celebrates its 150th anniversary. It is an exciting time and preparations are underway to celebrate this milestone in the school's history in style.

The school has come a long way since 1874 when Queen Victoria was on the throne and the Industrial Revolution had transformed the country. It was a time of huge social reform and, with no organised schooling in place at this time, the Elementary Education Acts of 1870 decreed that school attendance was to become compulsory for children between 5 and 10 years of age. This required local authorities to build new schools and saw the beginning of Prestwood Infant School at Moat Lane and Great Kingshill Church of England School at the top of Cryers Hill. Many local landowners, including Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, made monetary donations towards the building of Great Kingshill School and the land was donated by Mr E.M.M. Lucas of Rowsham. A local article claimed that 'A better spot for a school could scarcely be found.'

In the 1870s, attending school cost one penny per week. Boys and girls were separated, and all ages shared the same classroom, with up to 90 pupils enrolled across the whole school. Morning learning focused on the 3 R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) and slates were used to copy what the teacher dictated. Afternoon learning featured lessons on geography, history and nature as well as drill sessions. Religious teachings and understanding of the British Empire were also central, and the school day ended at 5pm. The school regime was strict; pupils who were disobedient, lazy, slow or who played truant were often caned or made to wear a dunce's cap and stand in the corner!



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Fast forward 150 years, and Great Kingshill is now a thriving school at the heart of the local community with over 400 children enrolled aged between 3 – 11 years old. Our curriculum celebrates and values every subject, giving all children opportunities to find their talents and passions, and aspire to succeed and be their best. We enjoy close links with St Michael and All Angels' Church in Hughenden, participate in tournaments with other local schools through the HGJS School Sports Partnership and thoroughly enjoy our on-site Forest School visits each week.

The school will be celebrating its anniversary in the Summer Term. As part of our celebrations, we would love to hear from anyone in the village who has links to our school. Our aim is to collect and collate memories from anyone who was a pupil at the school, sent their children to the school, worked or volunteered at the school or has had a part to play in our rich history. If you know anyone who has relocated but would have something to share, please do pass this on to them too. Anything from a paragraph to a more detailed account or photos are welcomed, and we would be grateful for reference to specific dates, names and events to help us piece together a timeline of our school.

If you feel you can contribute, please get in touch!

You can send any memories to us via email: contact@gkcs.school, via post: Great Kingshill CofE School, Cryers Hill Rd, Cryers Hill, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP15 6JP or please feel free to hand-deliver anything to us at the School Office anytime between 08:30 and 15:30 on weekdays. Alternatively, you could scan the QR code to complete the online Google Form.

We look forward to hearing from you.



The Thoughtless Few

There is such a lot of splendid work being done locally to ensure that our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty remains attractive and accessible. Climate Groups and Litter Pickers work hard to raise awareness and to mitigate for the thoughtless few. It is sad that some people seem determined to undo this work. Chucking empty drinks bottles, wrappers and hot drink containers on the ground is dreadful; however, there is one piece of 'rubbish' that is more dangerous: dog poo. A recent stroll in Hughenden Valley revealed a snapshot. Two bags of poo were placed at the foot of a tree – is there some sort of Poo Pixie waiting to collect it when the humans and their dogs have left? Another was chucked over a fence to nestle in the overgrowth. Another hanging on a tree. There are bins readily available, so why just dump the bags? A bigger issue is the poo clearly visible on the ground. Too often a small minority of dog owners are not being vigilant, or they simply do not care. Either way, it is not acceptable. It is annoying for humans, interesting for other dogs to sniff (lots of information can be gained apparently if you are a dog!) and downright dangerous for wildlife and our rivers and streams. A recent article in the Guardian newspaper explains the impact:

Dog faeces and urine are being deposited in nature reserves in such quantities that it is likely to be damaging wildlife, according to a new study. The analysis found that the resulting over fertilization of the ground with nitrogen and phosphorus by footpaths could reach levels that would be illegal on farmland. The scientists reached their conclusions by counting dog numbers over 18 months in four nature reserves on the outskirts of Ghent in Belgium. They said the situation would be similar across Europe, which is home to about 87 million dogs.

Dogs are fed at home and then excrete nutrients while on walks, leaving

an annual average of 11kg of nitrogen a hectare and 5kg of phosphorus, the research estimated. That is a similar level of pollution known to be transported through the air from farming, industry and traffic fumes, which ranges from 5kg to 25kg of nitrogen, meaning the impact of dog faeces and urine is significant.

Many dog walkers think that leaving their pet's excretions in nature will not do any harm. But most ecosystems are naturally low nutrient environments and over fertilization reduces biodiversity by allowing a few thriving plants, such as nettles and hogweed, to drive out others and the wildlife that depends on them.

"We were surprised by how high the nutrient inputs from dogs could be," said Prof Pieter De Frenne of Ghent University, who led the research. "Atmospheric nitrogen inputs from agriculture, industry and traffic rightfully receive a lot of policy attention, but dogs are entirely neglected in this respect."

The researchers estimated the illegal levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in situations where dogs must be kept on leads and can only stray 2 metres either side of a path. "Those levels are quite staggering, as our study concerned nature reserves," he said. "Of course, there are a lot of beneficial effects [to walks in nature], both physically and psychologically, for owners and their dogs but the drawback is bringing in significant amounts of nutrients."

De Frenne said the level of dog ownership is very similar in many countries in western Europe, so he saw no reason why the situation would be different elsewhere to that in Ghent. British charity Plantlife has warned that nitrogen pollution is "one of the greatest threats to our wild plants, lichens and fungi, yet little is being done to tackle it."

Please be responsible if you are a dog owner. Our environment is depending upon you.

Hilda Stearn
Communications Coordinator
Hughenden Street Association

Hide and Seek

Our woodlands are full of birds and mammals. But when you walk through a wood, how many do you actually see? If you are like me, the answer will be "very few". Apart from plants, our wildlife seems very reluctant to show itself. The reason is obvious – the first principle of nature is survival. Everything is potential food for something else. So the first rule is not to be observed by anything bigger or fiercer than you are. For most of our wildlife, perhaps all, this includes people. (A bird cannot tell if you are vegetarian, and anyway they would not stop to think about it – "hide first, ask questions later", to adapt the old cowboy adage). How those birds must hate those ornithological parties with their fearsome binoculars! If I see birds nearby and raise my binoculars, they all vanish at an instant.

But the survival principle comes into conflict with another basic principle. It is all very well for the individual to hide and survive, but if the species as a whole is to survive, those individuals need to get together and reproduce: what is known in human circles as having fun, "play now pay later" to paraphrase another maxim. (I am not so sure that we may not be the only species that does see it as "fun" – I do not see any sense of enjoyment in other species engaged in the act, rather the necessary exercise of a biological imperative, normally to be got through as quickly as possible).

To act on this second principle it is no good just hiding all the time. You have to show yourself off, and you have to show, moreover, what a grand fellow you are too. This is called displaying and many of our birds are masters at it. Male birds of paradise have the most extravagant displays of all, involving flashy colours or extravagant feathers, some with tails or crowns so out of proportion that they make hiding from predators the rest of time quite problematic, which is why of course they live in dense jungles. Peacocks are the same – they look absurd strutting their regal trains around a country park, but their habitat in the wild is thick dark forest.

I was inspired to these thoughts the other day at the end of January, on the eve of St Brigid's Day, the old traditional end of winter and preparing

for spring. Rituals included spring-cleaning and the blessing of ploughs brought out from winter storage. They also once included more rumbustious practices by the Celts at this time, the beginning of their month of Imbolc, dedicated to the promotion of fertility, both in the land and the community. On the last day of January, then, I looked out my window and saw a robin displaying. We had recently had a week of hard frosts but we had entered a warmer period, no doubt seen by wildlife generally as the end of winter for them, too, and the time to prepare for spring. This robin was seeking a mate, and I have never seen one put on a better display. Perched on a prominent bare branch, he jerked up and down, puffing out his orange-red breast and then turning round and raising his tail and wings to show off brilliant white underparts – quivering up, down, around, flashing red white. I do not know about the unseen female robin who was the object of this energetic performance, but I was certainly mesmerised.

So I thought more of the Celts, too, the ancient Iron Age tribes that populated Britain before militaristic Romans, crazed Vikings or dour Anglo-Saxons invaded their pitch and sent them off to hide in Welsh and Scottish mountains or Cornish moors. Unlike these later inhabitants, the Celts were immersed in a culture that placed nature at the heart – trees, creatures, landscape features all had their spirits, each to be propitiated and venerated, both feared and admired. They too had to observe the first principle of nature, even before those well-armed human invaders, as the forests then abounded in wolves, bears, wild boar, red deer and large horned aurochs (quite apart from the dragons and giants featured in their folk tales). Unlike us, they were perpetually potential prey. or at least subject to defensive attacks by animals more powerful than themselves. The necessities of life, moreover, were not on tap or switch as we are used to. Life was more contingent. Water, running tumbling vital water, and the ardent but unpredictable sun were gods, because they could not be controlled and yet were essential to life. Megalithic monuments were aligned to both the hills and the skies, while every spring was decorated and subject to annual rituals to ensure its continuance. The latter practice continues to this day in the Peak District with village Well-Dressing ceremonies, now predominantly run by churches, the old Druidic traditions taken over, as so many were, by

the succeeding Christians. And as for sun-worship, take a look at our beaches in midsummer – if you can get through the traffic.

And as for personal display, the wearing of tribal woad designs was long suppressed, but there has been a resurgence of tattoos in today's populations and these often constitute communal badges (gang, estate, prison, town). Watch pop-singers gyrating in extravagant clothes or the celebrations of footballers after scoring a goal. See TikTok. Display is still alive and well, especially among the young, so the future of our species should be ensured. As for survival, we got rid of those pesky wolves, but there are things less easy to escape – floods, fires, pollution, belligerent nations, deadly cults, collapsing economies. We destroyed the forests – where is there to hide?





Hughenden Community Support Trust (HCST)

Charity Number 248607

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 - (b) providing or paying for goods, services or facilities for them; or
 - (c) making grants of money to other persons or bodies who provide goods, services or facilities to those in need.

We are in a position where we can offer grants for residents in our area of benefit, Hughenden Parish, who may need some help, e.g. school trips, special equipment, respite care, etc., particularly, in these difficult times. Grants have to be awarded to those in need who cannot afford such items.

Application forms for grants can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary by email to lyn.marchant@btinternet.com or to the address below.

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Cycling with the Chiltern Hills Group

Chiltern Hills Cycling UK group offers both led rides and coffee pots every Sunday. With spring on the way now is the time to get out on your bike and enjoy the warmer days after winter. There are a variety of rides along with coffee stops all taking place on quiet routes in the countryside that surrounds our local area. Spring means we can go a bit further but there is still time to enjoy your cycling and make new friends.

There is something for everyone of all ages and abilities who wants to get out with both pedal bikes and e-bikers welcome. Cafes such as Hughenden Valley Coffee Shop, Hildreths at Prestwood, The Potters Arms at Winchmore Hill and Costa or Matilda's in Great Missenden regularly feature in the club rides list so you are never far from home.

While most rides are easy paced and suitable for all the group does have some moderate and slightly longer rides in the monthly rides list too. Occasionally there is also a chance to do some off-road riding.

Chiltern Hills Cycling UK have a Zoom social on the 1st Thursday of each month at 8pm and a meet up clubroom at Little Kingshill Baptist Church, on the 3rd Thursday 8pm –10pm.

Hope you can join us!

For more Information:

Web: www.southbuckscycling.org.uk

E-mail: publicity@southbuckscycling.org.uk

For general information about Cycling UK visit: www.cyclinguk.org

The Amazing Benefits of Strength Training

We all want to be the fortunate ones that live to a good old age. But only if we have quality of life, right? We tend to associate senior citizens with being shorter, bent over and with little mobility. But we are seeing this less now and it doesn't have to be this way! What can we do to ensure a longer, and better quality life, as we age? Eating well, more plants and less processed food, is one thing. Exercise is another. Any exercise or physical activity is good, but I want to specifically talk about the benefits of strength training. Firstly, how do we define strength training? It is also called resistance or weight training and it involves exercises that increase muscle strength by working against an outside force. This can be a weight, resistance band, weight machine (gym) or gravity/body weight. Any activity that makes your muscles work harder than usual and to the point of fatigue will increase its strength, size and power. But what are the benefits of this increased strength?.....

1. Longevity and Better Quality of Life: Stronger muscles will enable independence, the ability to continue tasks and perform normal daily activities. It will improve balance, to avoid falls and reduce the risk of injury.
2. Increased Functionality: If strength exercises mimic your daily jobs, chores and movements it will make it easier to perform tasks like lifting your shopping, climbing the stairs or carrying and playing with children.
3. Chronic Disease Management: Regular training can help manage or reduce the risk of conditions such as heart disease, arthritis, diabetes and back/joint pain. It can also improve insulin sensitivity (reducing inflammation), cholesterol levels and blood pressure.
4. Better Bone Health: Muscles under load place stress on the bones which stimulates bone growth and density. Therefore, strength exercises will reduce the risk of osteoporosis and fractures.
5. Enhanced Mental Health and Sleep: Resistance exercise has been shown to release endorphins (our happy hormones) which improve mood, anxiety and reduce symptoms of depression. Sleep is often found to be greatly improved (as long as you don't exercise too close to bedtime).

6. Improved Metabolic Rate: Building muscle can increase resting metabolic rate, which means you are burning calories even when you are resting. This shows why strength training can be beneficial for weight management and for changing your body composition.

7. A Better Brain: New studies have shown that working the muscles of the body can help improve our memory and even reduce the risk of dementia. It showed that it was even more beneficial than doing mind puzzles like crosswords and sudoku!

Strength training leaves you feeling stronger, younger, more confident, functional, and less dependent on others. It will help you to grow old with vitality. It is never too late to start but what is important is consistency. Try to get in 2 sessions of weight/resistance training a week. A cardio workout or a walk and maybe a more gentle workout in-between, like yoga or pilates, would be a perfect week of exercise to keep you healthy and feeling great.

if you want any extra advice, would like to join a regular class or need help on starting a strength training program please get in touch.

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CHAMELEON SINGLES GROUP

The winter months have seen us doing more indoor events including in December our Christmas Lunch Club and an evening out at Wycombe Town Hall. Shopping for the festive season was not forgotten as we made our way to Stockbridge on the River Test and then onto Salisbury to look at the Cathedral and Christmas Market.

Early events for 2024 included a Coffee Morning in Princes Risborough, our regular Lunch Club and an evening social held over Zoom. The Pub Night at the end of January serves as our AGM. This is a chance to look back at the year just gone and plan events for the future. No doubt several of those ideas suggested at the AGM will be included in our programmes during the year.

We plan once again this year for some day trips out including one to the coast and to Guernsey. Our walks will continue on a regular basis throughout the year. Walked at a gentle pace it's the perfect way to meet with others and enjoy a chat along the way.

At home evenings, take-away food nights and the occasional Quiz Night also feature in our bi-monthly events programme. The Pub Night on the last Thursday of the month is held at The Crown in Hazlemere. Lunch Club is on the second Friday at the Spindle & Thread in High Wycombe. Both events are ideal for newcomers giving a chance to meet other members in an informal location.

If you are single, 40-60's, looking for new friends and a great social life why not give Chameleon Singles Group a try? There are no strangers at Chameleon, just new friends to be made. The group has several local people from Great Kingshill, Widmer End, Hazlemere, Prestwood and the surrounding areas and you would be very welcome too.

To find out more call contact Terrie on 01494 445816, Trevor on 01494 529067 or e-mail: info@chameleonsingles.org.uk. Visit the group on-line at www.chameleonsingles.org.uk or search Facebook.



The Parish Council has set its budget for the year from April 2024 to March 2025. The budget covers items that the Parish Council has a statutory duty to carry out, and some activities that it has the power to undertake beyond its duties. As parishioners will be aware, the Parish Council was effectively reformed almost two years ago inheriting many long-standing issues that had not been resolved during the Pandemic and a period of disruption affecting the Council itself. The Council has made great progress in bringing these issues to a resolution, and the current budget addresses the final two open issues; the potential renovation of the playgrounds at Great Kingshill and Templewood, and the restoration and management of many meadows, ponds and woods owned or leased by the Council (more on this below).

In summary, the Parish Council is setting the local precept, or tax, at the same level as the past three years. For a Band D household the precept is £53.42. Different Parishes can be of very different sizes and shapes, with different demands, but it might be helpful to know that nearby Parishes such as Downley, Great Missenden, The Lee and Chenies had Precepts between £52 and £60 this year. Little Missenden and Little Marlow were between £65 and £70. Penn was a bit lower, Lane End was much higher. Hughenden is bang in the middle. We know a few residents would like the Parish to do less and reduce the Precept, and that others think we should be doing more – and better – without increasing the Precept. We would welcome new Councillors to join us and challenge the balance that we have struck, and believe is about right.

Among the long-standing issues that we have resolved are the land ownership dispute with Hughenden Community Support Trust, the repair and securing of vandalised speed monitoring equipment, adoption of the streetlights in Widmer End, the installation of secure gates at the Garden of Rest, the replacement of defective play equipment at Hughenden Valley

Village Hall, the lease of the cricket pitch to Great Kingshill Cricket Club and the pruning or felling of a number of unsafe trees. In recent months the Parish Council has made grants to support the Ward newsletters and gazettes, a defibrillator at Hughenden Valley School, ongoing work at Bryants Bottom Community Trust and Grange Area Trust and resurfacing of the car park at the Village Hall at Hughenden Valley.

As mentioned above, we have budgeted for two substantial projects next year. The Council has long intended to refurbish the playgrounds at Templewood in Walters Ash and Great Kingshill. Some Community engagement took place several years ago, but the high turnover of Clerks and administrative staff have meant that this work has not been taken forward. The Council hopes to consider options and practical proposals for the playgrounds with a view to installing any approved facilities in Spring 2025.

The second large project is to develop Site Management Plans for the almost twenty sites around the Parish that the Parish Council is responsible for. Many of these sites have been neglected for ten or more years. The policy for managing them has not been reviewed for even longer. Some of the sites will have simple plans – to continue grazing, or use as sports or amenity fields. Others, such as Little Burnham meadow and spinney or Vincents Pond and meadow, are of considerable ecological value and require more imaginative and careful management. Our strategy is to feed these Plans into our next set of contracts for Grounds, Field and Hedge Maintenance in the Spring of 2025.

The Council has held reserves for these projects for several years. If plans are approved, reserves will be used to fund the work, and the reserves in our balance sheet will be drawn down. These projects are included in the budget, and some planning activity has been approved, but the main activities have not yet come to Council for approval.

Other than these projects, the budget reflects the ongoing maintenance of our allotments, Garden of Rest, open spaces, road safety and streetlights, as well as grants to local organisations. Staffing costs cover a Clerk (currently a part-time Locum), part time Deputy (currently advertised) and a Burial and Allotments Administrator, and part-time Responsible Financial Officer. We have two vital objectives for the coming

months. We must stabilise the executive team, which has suffered high turnover, and which has been covered by several interim appointments. Councillors give direction to the Clerk and other officers, but it is they, not Councillors, who are the executives who carry out the work. A stable team is a prerequisite for a fully effective and efficient operation. A second priority, closely related to the first, is to improve our management of basic services like trimming hedges, clearing footpaths etc. We know that many residents are frustrated by slow turnarounds for this work. It is also the case that there is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for what. We need to address both issues. Improving these services goes hand in hand with establishing a stable administrative team.

Your Input is Required

The full proposals for the future management of Little Burnham Field in Hughenden Valley, Cockshoot Wood in Four Ashes and Vincent's Meadow in Naphill have now been published.

Implementation of these proposals will require the cooperation of local residents and therefore it is important that the proposals are fully understood and that any comments are communicated to the Parish Council as soon as possible by emailing

feedback@hughenden-pc.gov.uk

Links to the three proposals can be found on our website at <https://www.hughenden-pc.gov.uk/open-spaces-plans/>

Philip Truppin
Locum Clerk
Hughenden Parish Council

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Guarding Against Rooftop Fraudsters and Van Tool Theft

As spring approaches (hopefully!), many homeowners eagerly embark on renovations and maintenance projects, including essential rooftop repairs and upgrades. However, when having work done on your roof, you should keep the following in mind:

It is possible that a minor repair is all that is needed. Always get a second opinion and a written quote if someone suggests you should have your whole roof replaced.

If you ask for quotes on the internet, you open yourself up to being contacted by anyone – reputable builders and roofing companies, but also fraudsters. It is better to ask friends and neighbours for recommendations.

Do not rely on a photo that seems to have been taken of the damage on your roof.

If you are elderly and are in any doubt about work that is being offered, ask your adult children, friends or neighbours for advice before agreeing to expensive work being carried out on your property. Any fraudulent activity from gross overcharging or doing work that doesn't need doing, should be reported to the police on 101 and to Trading Standards on 0808 223 1133

There has been a spike in tool theft in the Thames Valley area, including south Buckinghamshire, specifically targeting the property of tradesmen by breaking into vans. This crime can be particularly harmful as it can have severe effects on businesses and livelihoods, due to loss of time, revenue and expenses to replace tools. Thieves are usually opportunists above all else and will take advantages of easy steals, so it is crucial it is not made convenient for them. Lock your tools in a secure van, aim to vault bolt the tools to the floor of the van; remove them at night and store them in a safe place. Always lock your van and close your windows, possibly investing in a good quality alarm. If you do have an alarm, make sure it is always set and in working order. Mark your tools by using ultraviolet pens and permanent markers and record your serial numbers and identifiable markings. You can register your tools on "Imbolise", which is the national property register and it is integrated into the police system. Security solution companies like Smartwater, SelectaDNA and datatag are very effective in helping you protect your property.

Do you live in an Easy Street?

Burglars are often opportunistic thieves who prey on houses and flats. They seek out any opening that they can take advantage of, specifically doors and windows that are left open or unlocked or are easy to force.

Point of entry is gained by burglars using ladders, garden furniture or drainpipes to get on top of flat roofs. They will then enter through a bedroom window to gain access to the upstairs of the property. Jewellery seems to be the main target, however all valuables are at risk, especially if easy to grab and go.

The best advice is to take preventative measures to minimise the chances of becoming a victim:

- Low fences at the front around one-metre high are preferable to high fences as they allow for a clear view over the top and don't provide cover for anyone wishing to hide.
- At the rear and sides, taller fencing is recommended to prevent easy access.
- Trellis, thorny plants, or a suitable anti-climb topping such as plastic spikes make it difficult for anyone climbing over a fence or gate.
- Gravel driveways and paths will make sure you hear anyone approach.

DISTRACTION BURGLARY:

Distraction burglars will pretend to be someone they are not, so it's important you are aware of the common methods they will use to get you to let them into your property.

- Pretending to be from a care agency, the council or a utility company investigating a gas or water leak.
- Seeking help to leave a note for a neighbour or even asking for a drink of water if they claim to be thirsty or unwell.
- Claiming to be in a hurry or emergency and needing to get into your home quickly.
- Working in teams, with one person distracting you while the other searches your home.

If you open the door put the chain on first, always ask for ID and check it with the company before letting somebody into your home; use the phone number advertised in the phone book or online, as the number on their identity card could be fake. For a utility company, call the customer service department. Close the door while you do this.

If you feel threatened or in danger by the presence of the caller, call 999.

Stan Jones Email: office@wdnhwatch.plus.com

Facebook: [@wycombenhw](#)

Instagram: [@wycombenhw](#)

GK Village Hub News

A huge thank you to villagers who came out in force in December to celebrate our community Christmas event. The hall was filled with melodic live singing, tantalising smells from the freshly baked cakes and savouries, plus lots of laughter and chatter. Santa's Grotto was a particular favourite and magical experience for the children in Great Kingshill. Tempting gifts from local crafters proved popular for last minute presents in addition to face painting artistry, free crafting workshops and of course the popular raffle. All money raised will be ploughed directly back into our forthcoming Village Hub events.

As we entered 2024 our attention turned to how to continue nurturing the great in Great Kingshill and we decided to concentrate on our environment, which can be enjoyed by all. We have managed to obtain a free supply of litter picking equipment for use by all in the village. If you have a spare minute or two, why not take advantage of the resources available which are located in the disused bus shelter opposite the Spar shop.

We also intend to reintroduce an annual Easter Egg Trail this year for the younger members of our community ending with an Easter surprise from funds raised in December.

The disused bus shelter is proving popular with a book swaps taking place daily. Pop down and browse the shelves and catch up on local news displayed on the noticeboard. If you haven't joined our FB community yet, we welcome you to join in our GK community page – Great Kingshill Village Hub.

Lynn & Deb - Co-Founders



Christmas celebrations in the Village Hall



Litter pickers and book swap available in the old bus shelter

“”

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent

Independent Schools Inspectorate 2023



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OPEN MORNING

Friday 26 April | Search 'Pipers Open Morning'