

## A COMMUNITY CHAMPION WITH A KNOCK-OUT IDEA!



Right: Gavin Brackett of Nemesis Boxing

**GAVIN BRACKETT** is a man on a mission. The father of five from Blackbird Leys has spent lockdown planning the next stage of his successful community boxing club and is now ready to take it to the next level.

Although the club, Nemesis,

cannot meet inside at the moment due to social distancing measures, Gavin has dug deep and found an ingenious solution so that he can keep training the 25 children who belong to the club, and help them stay focussed and positive while they stay

active and have fun at the same time.

Gavin told us: "The boxing club started in 2017 when me, and my uncle and a couple of other trainers got together and thought it would be a really good idea for the estate. There was a definite need for it, and I am still

really passionate about it now. Lockdown has shown us that children and young people need to be out and about and not stuck in front of screens all the time – our boxing club makes a big difference to us all."

Continued on page 2

### Leys News

#### The next 25 years

Readers' questionnaire on page 3

## LEYS NEWS NEEDS YOU!

**LEYS NEWS** will be 25 next year and has seen a lot of changes to life on The Leys in that time, but the unprecedented events of 2020 have had a huge impact on everyone and now the future of your much-loved community newspaper hangs in the balance.

Many businesses and community groups have struggled to keep going since lockdown in March and some will never recover from the huge impact Covid-19 has had. **Leys News is no exception and we have had to manage some significant challenges this year, to ensure we can keep providing our readers with local news and information to keep you up to date with what is going on here.**

Continued on page 2



**Aurora James,**  
55 years on  
the Leys  
page 5



**Air Cadets  
Radio and  
Cyber Success**  
page 10



**Message  
from your  
Neighbourhood  
Policing Team**  
page 10

Editor's Letter 2  
Council Tax scam 4  
Citizens Advice 7  
News from the Hub 8  
BBL Regeneration 9  
The Wildlife Garden 10  
Useful contacts 11



## ISSUE 163

September/October 2020

Leys News is an independent newspaper and a social enterprise. It is funded through a mixture of grants and advertising revenue. It is delivered free to homes and businesses across the Leys.

Leys News is produced by a team of volunteers who attend free Community Journalism Training courses.

If you would like to volunteer as part of our team and help to produce your local, independent newspaper please email the editor (*details below*) for more information and an informal chat about how you can help.

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## EDITOR'S LETTER

## Hello everyone,

I hope you are well and coping as lockdown measures continue to change. The year has certainly been a challenging one so far with circumstances that none of us could ever have planned for.

Times continue to be tough for many people, but as ever on The Leys there continues to also be a great sense of community. Our inspirational story about Gavin Brackett and his Nemesis boxing club that has continued to thrive during lockdown, is proof that a positive outlook can make a massive difference to your own life as well as the lives of others.

In this issue of Leys News we are also asking for your help to shape the future of your independent community newspaper. We have done well to survive some significant changes within the media industry over the last few years, with many newspapers going out of business at a time when Leys News was thriving.

Your support has always been vital to the future of Leys News, and now more than ever we are asking you to get involved and tell us how you want your newspaper to look in the future. You can take part by filling in the survey on page 3 and sharing your views with us. Of course if there are stories or issues that we are not covering then we need to know about that too so you can always email me [editor@leysnews.co.uk](mailto:editor@leysnews.co.uk)

We are proud to be an independent publication that represents the views of its readers, but we also need to generate revenue to cover our printing and production costs. Keeping our editorial fair, accurate and balanced is of utmost important to us while also striking a balance with how our business survives financially.

We ALWAYS want to hear your views so please get in touch and tell us what you think – the good, the bad and the ugly!

We will be back in the autumn with more community news and an update on our survey.

Happy reading!

*Sarah Edwards*

## Leys News 164

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If you would like to submit an article or letter, or contribute in another way, please email [editor@leysnews.co.uk](mailto:editor@leysnews.co.uk)

## LEYS NEWS NEEDS YOU! Continued from front page

Newspapers across the country are closing at an alarming rate and we do not want Leys News to be another Coronavirus casualty. To ensure we can keep going and stay in business we are calling on all our loyal readers to help us by taking part in our reader survey which you can find on page 3.

Your opinions and ideas about the future of YOUR community newspaper really matter to us and we need to know what you think about some of the ideas we have had so far to secure the future of Leys News.

The way we receive news and information has changed enormously in the last 25 years, and with the introduction of smart phones and mobile devices, many of us can access all the latest information that we need with a quick click or tap of a screen or keyboard.

## A COMMUNITY CHAMPION WITH A KNOCK-OUT IDEA! Continued from front page

The club is currently meeting in the car park at The Leys Pool, but Gavin hopes to be able to move back inside as soon as restrictions are lifted. He said "It's better than nothing and it is working really well. We have had the support of local people including the police and the children are loving it. It's empowering especially for the girls and really helps with confidence and self-esteem as well as fitness and it is lots of fun too."

Gavin was brought up by his dad and has had a chequered past. After getting involved with drugs and crime he ran away from home and spent time in prison. He knows how hard it can be for children growing up on The Leys, and has devoted his time to making a difference to his community through his boxing.

He added "My childhood was not good, and I don't ever want any children to go through the times that I went through. People wrote me off, but I have succeeded and now I want to help inspire other young people to do the same. During lockdown when we couldn't meet at all it was very hard for people. I tried to support everyone by being positive and sharing positive affirmations and messages in our private Facebook group. I really believe that if you put your mind to something it is possible to manifest really positive changes in your life. The work I do in the community is driven

Leys News has been available to read online for many years and this has become a quick and convenient way for many of you to read the latest issue of the paper. However, we also know that not everybody has access to the internet and rely on receiving a printed copy of the paper through their letterbox.

Our primary objectives are to provide a news and information service to local residents, cost effective advertising for local businesses, free advertising and support for local community groups and charities and free community journalism and personal development training for volunteers.

Without significant funding we are going to struggle to do all of these things. We have looked at different options for making sure

that we still deliver the news to you, and in the survey you can find out more about those ideas.

In an ideal world we would be producing a monthly newspaper as we used to a few years ago, but things are no longer ideal and to survive we must change.

Please read the survey on page three, complete it and send your answers to me. I promise to read every response personally and respond to you personally if you wish.

I hope I can count on your support and together we can secure a successful future for YOUR community newspaper.

Please always email me with any questions or just to say hello [editor@leysnews.co.uk](mailto:editor@leysnews.co.uk)



Young member of Nemesis Boxing

by passion and it is time to take Nemesis Boxing to the next level so I can help even more people."

Gavin has the backing and support of his community and says this is one of the most important parts of the work he does.

"We bring all different kinds of people together and the club is a very positive place to be. I am working with other agencies now to try and develop the club further because I know there is so much more that I can do. Everybody on The Leys appreciates what I am trying to achieve. I had such a hard childhood, I don't want anyone to feel like that. The young people

who come to the club burn off their negative energy and their behaviour and outlook really changes quickly. I love what I am doing, and I love seeing the changes in the lives of the people who come and train. It's a really positive activity with amazing rewards and results for all of us who are involved."

Nemesis sessions are available for children and adults and take place on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 6pm at The Leys Pool carpark.

For more info contact Gavin on [nemesisboxing2017@outlook.com](mailto:nemesisboxing2017@outlook.com)

# LeysNews the next 25 years

## Please complete our survey and help shape your newspaper's future

LEYS NEWS will celebrate its 25th anniversary next year! For a quarter of a century we have been working hard to deliver community news and information to everyone who lives on Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys, and we want to continue to do that for many years to come.

However, as you will have seen in our front page story 'Leys News Needs You!' times are challenging and ever changing both for the media industry and for community groups and social enterprises, and Leys News is no exception.

With a heavy reliance on grant funding and a decline in advertising revenue times are difficult for us, but we want to continue to bring you the news and information you have come to rely on and also continue to be an important part of life on The Leys. We are looking at different ways to see how we can move forward, but we need YOUR help to do this. THANK YOU!

Please complete the questionnaire below and drop it off at any of the following venues:

- Leys News Office, 26 Kingfisher Green, Greater Leys, Oxford OX4 7BX
- Blackbird Leys Community Centre
- Leys CDI Clockhouse Project in the Clockhouse, Long Ground, Greater Leys, OX4 7FX
- The Farmhouse (Catalyst Housing) in the letter box next to the front door of the Farmhouse

You can also send your responses via email to [editor@leysnews.co.uk](mailto:editor@leysnews.co.uk)



1. What is your name and where do you live?

(Please note you do NOT need to give us your full address)

2. How long have you lived here?

3. How old are you?

4. What do you like most about living on The Leys?

5. How important is Leys News to you?

6. Does everyone in your house read Leys News?

7. What type of articles do you most enjoy reading?

8. Did you know that Leys News welcomes volunteers and offers free community journalism training? Yes  No

9. Would you be interested in finding out more about volunteering with us? If you are then please include your contact details.

10. Do you have access to the internet via a laptop, PC or mobile device?

11. How long do you spend reading online each day?

12. Do you use/access social media platforms? If yes, which ones?

13. Do you read local news online? Yes  No

14. Do you enjoy receiving a printed copy of Leys News? Yes  No

15. Did you know that you can read Leys News online at [www.leysnews.co.uk](http://www.leysnews.co.uk)?  
Yes  No

16. How would you feel if Leys News could no longer be printed due to budget constraints?

17. Would you prefer to: (tick appropriate box)

Continue to receive a printed copy of Leys News?

Be happy to receive a printed newspaper sometimes and access an online version sometimes?

Access an online version only?

18. If you have anything else you want to tell us please write below or on a separate piece of paper. Include anything you would like to see more of in Leys News.



# FRAUD: Alarm raised over new council tax scam

**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL** is warning residents to watch out for Council Tax scams aimed at getting their personal bank details and conning them out of their money.

One new scam email purports to be from the "Government Digital Service Team," and alerts the recipient to a council tax reduction, before directing them to a malicious site set up to harvest personal information.

Cybersecurity firm Absolute Software has warned that since the start of the coronavirus, the cyber threat facing adults has surged, and the latest attack is one of many designed to prey on individuals' vulnerability and fear during this trying time.

Oxford City Council's Investigation Service works with fraud prevention organisations to highlight current and emerging types of fraud and scams. Many follow a similar pattern, preying on the most vulnerable in society.

Cllr Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management said: "Scammers may contact people by phone, text or email, or they may knock on your door. They may pose as staff from the Council, the

Valuation Office Agency or the Tax Recovery Bureau to lure people into their scam. Don't be taken in!"

He added: "They may tell people that they have paid too much Council Tax and are due a refund that fraudsters offer to claim on their behalf for a fee. But please take note – the Council will never ask for payment to make a Council Tax refund."

Scams may also involve telling people that their home is in the wrong Council Tax band, offering a refund in return for a fee. But genuine Council Tax band reassessments are free. Another scam demands payment for supposed Council Tax arrears.

Oxford City Council does ask for information from residents to administer their Council Tax accounts, including refunds or arranging arrears collection. Residents who want to verify genuine contact from the Council should call 01865 249811 or email counciltax@oxford.gov.uk – all Oxford City Council email addresses end with @oxford.gov.uk

**More info about scams can be found on the GOV.UK website**

# Residents can now get help through digital meetings

**THE NEW WORLD** following the coronavirus pandemic has meant a greater reliance on the use of digital technology to meet daily needs. It also presents an opportunity to accelerate the use of digital communication tools in communities.

Oxford City Council is developing another way for residents to access Council services that will help them stay independent and keep safe in their homes.

Residents with access to digital communication technology on their computers or smartphones can now meet Council officers, virtually, in the comfort of their own home. When a customer contacts the council to make an appointment, the council can assess if a Customer Service Officer can meet with them digitally from their home.

If they cannot do this, another option is to use the new video booth at Rose Hill Community Centre where a Customer

Service Officer will be at the end of the call. The video booth has been set up with the help of Rose Hill and Donnington Advice Centre.

The video booth has been located at Rose Hill Community Centre as data indicates that in the past over 50 per cent of the Council's face-to-face appointments were from the postal area that includes Rosehill, Blackbird Leys, Littlemore, Iffley and Cowley.

An on-site member of staff will meet and greet customers and show them how to use the booth if they need help, as well as making sure all accessibility needs are catered for.

The most vulnerable customers, who may need a face-to-face appointment, can get one at Rose Hill in a suitable setting, socially distanced, with a Perspex screen separating the participants.

Cllr Ed Turner, Oxford City Council Deputy Leader (Statutory) said: "Oxford City Council has long been at the

forefront of extending digital and online access to its services. The current coronavirus crisis has proven how valuable these methods of delivering services are and I look forward to seeing the video booth at Rose Hill providing a new and convenient way for residents to access the information they need.

"Increased use of digital communication tools will improve digital inclusion and helping residents become more confident with digital tools and services and support the most vulnerable to access essential services, and develop digital skills. And at a time when social distancing is paramount it will help to safeguard the community and staff by limiting travel and potential exposure to the coronavirus.

"This is a pilot scheme and we'll be listening to users' feedback so we can review and improve this initiative based on their suggestions."

# HAVE YOUR SAY: Council consults on behaviours around the control of dogs and alcohol in the city's parks and public spaces

**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL** is asking residents, businesses, and visitors for their views on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour around the control of dogs and drinking alcohol in public spaces across Oxford.

The consultation, which launched on Tuesday 18 August and is open to comments until Friday 18 September at midnight, aims to identify anti-social behaviour that people are concerned about in order to help the council address it in the future.

Oxford currently has two city-wide PSPOs, one tackling the control of dogs and dog

fouling, and the other tackling alcohol consumption in public places.

The orders enable the City Council to address dog fouling and alcohol related disorder in parks, open spaces and streets across the city.

Both orders were automatically introduced in Oxford three years ago when the Government replaced the previous dog and alcohol control orders.

The orders are due to expire at the end of November, and the consultation will help determine whether or not they are extended, amended or allowed to expire.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthy Oxford, said: "We all have a right to feel safe when we are in public areas and we should not have to encounter anti-social behaviour on our streets. We have launched this consultation to find out what residents, businesses, and visitors think of the current dog control and alcohol orders in the city. We encourage everybody to share their views, and let us know whether or not we should extend or amend these orders, or allow them to expire."

**healthwatch**  
Oxfordshire

## Do you care for a friend or relative?

Do you look after a friend or a relative in their home or yours? If so, Healthwatch Oxfordshire wants to hear from you!

As an independent champion for people who use health and social care, we want to know what it is like to be an unpaid carer and about the help and support you receive or need.

Even if you only help someone for a few hours or you don't see yourself as a 'carer', your views are important.

If you are aged 18 or over and care for an adult relative, friend or neighbour who is elderly or has an illness, disability, mental health problem or addiction please share your views by completing an anonymous survey at [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Unpaidcarers](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Unpaidcarers)

If you'd prefer to talk this through over the phone, or to ask for a paper copy of the survey to be sent out to you, please call **01865 520520**.

To find out more about Healthwatch Oxfordshire see [www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)





Meeting William and Kate at the Queen's 90th Birthday Party at The Mall 2016

# Life on the Leys and 55 years of change

BY DEREK JAMES

**FOR MANY OF** you on Blackbird Leys, Mrs Aurora James is a well-known face. As an easy to identify character with her trademark sailor's hat and shopping basket, Mrs James has been raising funds for the British Sailors Society (The Merchant Navy) on the Leys since 1988.

This will be the last year that Mrs James sends any funds to the society as she is not in the best of health and in this article, written up from an interview conducted by her son Derek, we will find out more about this amazing and inspiring woman, and see how things have changed on the Leys over the years.

**MY FULL NAME** is Aurora Isabel James but I am commonly known as Urma. I was born on 31 October 1941, on the island of St Vincent in the Caribbean, which makes me 79 years old. I moved onto the Blackbird Leys estate in 1965 where I have resided ever since on Field Avenue.

Having lived on Blackbird Leys for 55 years I have seen a number of changes. The biggest changes have been the transformation of the old farm to the new estate and the demographics.

What is now known as Greater Leys was once a working farm with livestock. You could see cattle, sheep and horses from our window or you could walk through Bulrush Road and be 20 feet away from the animals. Bonfire nights were held in a communal area between the brook and the Farm which no

longer exists. In terms of the makeup of the estate, when I moved here, our part of Field Avenue had people from England, Wales, Spain, Jamaica, Scotland, St Vincent and Ireland on one street, which was a kind of mini United Nations. Over the 32 years as a door to door fund raiser on the estate I have seen the addition of people from all parts of the world. Africa, Asia, America, Europe, China, and East Timor.

I got involved with the Sailors Society as a result of a phone call from their head office but I was afraid to give volunteering as a door to door fund raiser a try because of the fear of rejection. With the encouragement of my late husband, Eli James I gave volunteering for the society a try. In my first year I raised £51.73p. Over the 32 years the annual

house to house got bigger and more successful as people got to know me. Last year I raised just over £2000 but in total the estate has raised over £20,000. People see me in the street and drop loose change into a tin and so in total I have collected £26,700. The generosity and loyal support of the Blackbird/ Greater Leys residents over the years has been great and I am very thankful for that support.

Because I have stage four cancer, I won't be able to continue with the collection as my mobility is not what it used to be.

One of the best pieces of advice I have been given has come from the supporters who have always encouraged me to continue with the good work which is always good to hear.

Receiving Award for 25 years of fundraising in 2013 at St Columbus



Planting memorial flags for those who perished at sea in the last world war





## UPDATE FROM THE SOUTH LOCALITY RESPONSE HUB FOR THE LEYS AND LYE VALLEY

**WE HOPE** that despite the heat you are staying well and taking time to look after yourselves and each other. Over the past months we've heard so many incredible stories from our local community; acts of kindness, people going the extra mile and examples of the amazing support which has been offered during the past five months across the Leys, Lye Valley and further afield.

The community spirit and selflessness so many have shown throughout the Covid-19 crisis has been remarkable but despite this we know the impact on the mental, physical and social wellbeing of many of us has been profound. We therefore wanted to take an opportunity to invite you all to consider your own health and wellbeing and share with you the resources and information we have found useful.

#### NHS Better Health

The NHS has created a new campaign called 'Better Health' to support and empower people to live a healthier lifestyle and lose weight if needed. We know now more than ever how important our health is and Better Health has a wide range of tools and support to help you make the small changes to your lifestyle which make a big difference. To find out more visit [www.nhs.uk/better-health](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health)

#### NHS One You

There really is only one you and most of us want to do all we can to ensure we are the happiest and healthiest possible version of ourselves. One You is full of free tips, tools and support to help you get healthier and feel better. You are encouraged to just find one small change which can fit with your life to help you feel better; whether that's stopping smoking, drinking less, walking more, making a change to your diet or sleeping better. More information at [www.nhs.co.uk/oneyou](http://www.nhs.co.uk/oneyou)

#### We Are Undefeatable

Designed to support people living with a long term health condition to find a way to be more active that works for them and helps to manage their condition rather than making it worse, this a project full of amazing ideas and inspirational stories to help you on your journey.

Leaflets available at The Leys Community Centre or visit [www.weareundefeatable.co.uk](http://www.weareundefeatable.co.uk)

# Wellbeing in the time of Covid

#### Mind

Mind is an amazing charity that campaigns to ensure that anyone experiencing poor mental health gets the respect and support that they deserve. Mind also provides a wide range of support, nationally and locally to anyone experiencing a mental health problem. If you are struggling and don't know where to turn then call Mind's infoline on **0300 123 3393**. You can also visit their webpage where they have loads of amazing tips for day-to-day life. [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living)

#### Social prescribing

Lots of things in everyday life can have an impact on your health and can make it harder to make the changes you would like to. Rather than giving a prescription for medicine, social prescribing works with you to create your own 'social prescription'. It helps you to access activities and support to improve your health,

wellbeing and quality of life. If you would like to find out more then we suggest contacting your local GP practice receptionist.

#### Age UK Oxfordshire

Age UK work in the community to support older people, their families and carers. Their aim is to help everyone to love later life. Age UK can offer support with home help to allow people to remain independent in their own homes as well as offering a telephone befriending service and a huge number of activities, groups and events.

You can contact Age UK Oxfordshire on **0345 450 1276** or visit their webpage at [www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire)

#### The Activity Hub

Oxford City Council's Activity Hub is full of ideas to help you move, smile and stay well. The Activity Hub provides online advice on exercise, mental health, learning and cultural activities as well as on volunteering and staying

connected with loved ones. It's a completely free resource available to anyone and can be found at [www.oxford.gov.uk/activityhub](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/activityhub)

#### GO Active Outdoors

GO Active Outdoors is a website designed to help you navigate the many ways you can get active, outdoors in Oxford. It pulls together, in one place, information on the different parks and waterways in the city as well as the huge number of facilities and activities within those spaces to make it even easier for you to GO Active Outdoors. You don't have to register, there's no sign up fee and many of the options available are completely free to take part in with something for all ages and abilities. Take a look at [www.oxford.gov.uk/goactiveoutdoors](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/goactiveoutdoors)

#### Other news from the Hub

The team at the South Hub are providing information and support to businesses in the

community to ensure we are all doing everything we can to remain safe. It is important we continue to keep following guidance on social distancing, wearing face masks and washing our hands! Remember if you or anyone in your household experiences symptoms self-isolate immediately and call 119 to book a test!

#### Community Larder

Since lockdown began the Hub have been working closely with our partners at SOFEA to deliver food boxes to our community. Our normal Community Larder model needed to change rapidly, with food prepacked into boxes which were free to all! Over the period of Covid-19 the Blackbird Leys Community Larder has given around 2200 boxes to local residents.

As lockdown measures are easing, like so many other areas, the Community Larder also needs to start returning to normal. Therefore from the 1 September the free larder model will stop and a new normal will be in place.

The Community Larder is a membership scheme that gives access to food, events and services. If you wish to be a member please speak to one of your local volunteers running the larder on Wednesday at 3pm, we look forward to welcoming you back once again to the Blackbird Leys Community Larder!

**Coronavirus**

**STOP THE SPREAD**  
Cases in Oxford are rising

Help protect yourself, your family and your community

keep your distance    wash your hands    wear a face covering

If you, or a member of your household, have symptoms of COVID-19, self-isolate immediately and call 119 to book a test

Find out more - [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/stopthespread](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/stopthespread)

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

OxFed    NHS Providing NHS services

NHS General Practice  
**Social Prescribing Service**

Get a helping hand!  
When daily life gets in the way of improving your health, we can help you tackle your problems and feel better.

For more information contact your local GP Practice Reception or go online at [OxFed.uk/social-prescribing](http://OxFed.uk/social-prescribing)

OXFED Health & Care Ltd, is a provider of NHS services and the not-for-profit trading company of the Oxford Federation for General Practice and Primary Care (OXFED). OXFED is based at Northway Community Centre (2nd Floor), Dora, Carfax, Oxford, OX3 9RF.

LOVELY    MONEY WORRIES    LANGUAGE BARRIERS    FRAIL & ELDERLY    BEREAVED

# Shaping the Future of Blackbird Leys

## An update from the Blackbird Leys project team

WE RELEASED a project update in the latest issue of the Leys News, which included an update from the team, as well as plans showing the ideas the team have been working on for the District Centre and Knights Road sites that were shown in March. We also included a rough breakdown of some of the feedback received, and will be expanding on this in later issues.

The regeneration team is working hard from home to plan for the next stages of consultation, the detailed design consultation, which we will be holding later this year.

## What's next?

The team are working towards launching the first stage of detailed design engagement later this year. As we can't rely on face-to-face engagement due to COVID 19, we have been planning how we will be able to gather all of your thoughts and ideas, and give you an opportunity to ask questions to the team.

The first stage of the detailed design consultation will show how the masterplan has evolved and focus on the external appearance of the buildings, open space, sustainability and travel. We will produce and distribute a paper consultation pack to over 5000 households in Blackbird Leys, with a survey and freepost envelopes to send back your responses. We will also launch a dedicated project website, which will have the consultation materials available to fill out online too. To support this, and to ensure residents have a chance to ask questions, we will also be running online webinars, which anyone will be able to sign up to and ask the project team about the consultation topics.

Later in the year, we'll carry out a second stage of detailed engagement on the retail spaces and community centre.

We are really looking forward to hearing your thoughts on the details of the design. If you requested that we contact your community group for consultation, we will also be doing this in the coming weeks to discuss how you would like to be involved.

*From everyone at Catalyst and Oxford City Council, we wish you all the best and hope you are keeping safe and healthy during this time.*

**Please look out for your consultation pack in September, and for the launch of our new project website!**





## THE WILDLIFE GARDEN

BY STUART MABBUTT

### Is there any such thing as nature?

**SOMETIMES**, someone says something that resonates with us. Often at unexpected times. Well, that's what's just happened, to me anyway!

Glad the conversation occurred mid-afternoon, and not in the evening. It would have kept me awake. Mind you, I still need a couple of glasses of strong whiskey to get my head around this, even in the afternoon.

On my radio show I often challenge guests' views and perceptions. Exploring if things, categories, and concepts really exist outside human consciousness. Challenging assertions that opinions are fact, when they most certainly are not in most cases.

I regularly challenge people on the concept of tidiness and untidiness in a garden. If one person thinks an overgrown garden is untidy, and someone else thinks the self-same overgrown garden is beautiful, then perhaps that indicates tidiness and untidiness don't exist beyond our own human world views. Perhaps nature is just getting on with it, and we're just putting a label on it?

Ok, so what was I challenged with just now? Well, I was discussing the fact that we humans often see ourselves separate from, superior to, in ownership of nature. Maybe persecuted indigenous cultures don't, but we do in our culture, most certainly. I argue, we are nature, not separate to it. Wildlife gardening practices highlight that. We are part of the ecosystem out there; we influence it and it influences us.

So, the person said just now, "What if there's no such thing as nature?" Maybe that again is a human construct?

A huge philosophical question right there, and one I don't have a conclusion for, and may never do either. What if nature doesn't exist? Is it then, life in all its forms, just getting on with it?

With that in mind, and understanding all life matters, it makes wildlife gardening even more engaging.

*Happy gardening*



Police Sergeant Alex Penn

### Neighbourhood policing team urge residents to look out for cuckooing

BY POLICE SERGEANT ALEX PENN

**ONE OF THE** Blackbird Leys Neighbourhood Policing Team's priorities is identifying and disrupting Organised Crime Groups and their

drug related criminality. While there is a proactive and robust element to this, we also look to protect those at most risk of harm from their activities. 'Cuckooing' is a term that is now used to identify the act of taking over a person's home, using it

to prepare and sell controlled drugs from. Very often the victims of this are vulnerable due to their own addictions and are generally lonely and isolated. The offenders can be around for just a day or may end up working from someone's home for weeks at a time.

The victims could be your neighbour or people you know. There are many signs to look out for including:

- An increase in the number of people and vehicles coming and going from their address
- An increase in anti-social behaviour and noise in and around the property
- The victim may become increasingly withdrawn and disengage from social activities or conversation
- New people turning up at addresses they've not seen before.

The community can have a real impact with helping us identify and assist the vulnerable people living around them. I would urge anyone who has concerns about a neighbour or a particular person or property to contact us either directly or through a third party such as Crimestoppers. This can be done anonymously and be assured that any information that comes our way will be followed up.

We have already identified many properties across the neighbourhood and are actively working alongside our partner agencies to provide support to victims and help safeguard their homes.

**My team: BlackbirdleysNHPT2@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk**  
**Thames Valley Police: 101 or 999**  
**Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111**

**DURING** the recent lock down period, Thames Valley Wing of the RAF Air Cadets moved to using online platforms to continue activities for 217 cadets who completed radio communications and cyber security training courses during this time. Ten adult volunteers have also trained as instructors.

The radio communications and cyber security training is highly beneficial to the cadets, as it improves their knowledge of cyber security, social media safety and how to protect themselves and their devices from malware and viruses.

Flight Lieutenant Jo Jefferiss who led the training programme and is the Thames Valley Wing Radio Communications Officer said "The air cadets have really enjoyed doing their Radio training – it increases their confidence and communication skills, and they have been really keen to be able to continue with their training during lockdown! The training experience has been more

## Air Cadets Radio and Cyber Success

realistic for the cadets, as they come from all over the Thames Valley, and it's been great for them to 'speak' to cadets from other Squadrons using an internet-based radio system.

The cyber security training has also been invaluable during this time, as the cadets have been using the internet and social media more during the lockdown period, for their schoolwork and to contact family and friends."

Wing Commander Colin Burrell, officer commanding Thames Valley Wing added "This is simply an outstanding achievement and a credit to our cadets and volunteers, particularly to achieve these qualifications during lockdown."

Thames Valley Wing is formed from Air Cadet units based across Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The Air Cadets are part of a national organisation, The Royal Air Force Air Cadets also known as the Air Training Corps, which was formed in 1941.

The RAF Air Cadets stood down face to face activities as part of the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March. The Air Cadets are planning to restart face to face activities in September onwards in England. Young people aged 12 to 17 who are interested in joining as Air Cadets or adults aged 20 and over who are interested in being involved as volunteers please visit [www.aircadets.tv](http://www.aircadets.tv) for further information.



Flight Lieutenant Jo Jefferiss delivering cyber security training



# USEFUL CONTACTS

## Able Centre

Cuddesdon Way.  
Free courses in Maths and English.  
T: Nicky, 01865 776334

## Agnes Smith Advice Centre

96 Blackbird Leys Road. Gives free independent and impartial debt advice and counselling.  
T: 01865 770206 or 0800 066 2218

## Blackbird Leys Bowls Club

Cuddesdon Way.  
T: David Buckwell, 01865 881735 or Gordon Roper, 01865 361047

## Blackbird Leys Community Centre

Blackbird Leys Road, Blackbird Leys, OX4 6HW  
T: 01865 402070  
E: blackbirdleyscommcentre@oxford.gov.uk

## LOCAL CHURCHES

### Church of the Holy Family

T: Revd Heather Carter, 01865 778728  
W: www.holyfamilybbl.co.uk

### Sacred Heart Catholic Church

T: Rev. Nazarius Mgungwe, 01865 776903  
E: sacredheartchurchoxford@gmail.com  
W: www.sacredheartoxford.com

### Leys Community Church

T: Andy and Nicci Longmore, 01865 779700  
W: www.leyscommunitychurch.org.uk

### Chrisco Ministries

T: 07533 845714 and 07737 564677

### Mount Zion Ministries Oxford.

T: Rev Chris Ugwu, 07877 536406 and 07932 964056  
E: mtzionoxford@yahoo.co.uk  
W: www.mtzionox.org

### Redeem Christian Church of God

T: 07825 679044  
W: www.RCCGLighthouse.co.uk

### Kingsway International Christian Centre

T: 07951 262426  
E: admin@kiccoxford.org.uk  
W: www.kiccoxford.org.uk

## Blackbird Leys Library

Cuddesdon Way.  
T: 01865 770403

## Blackbird Leys Youth Centre

Blackbird Leys Road. Variety of activities and advice for young people.  
T: 01865 772886

## BLAP Afterschool Club

Outdoor and indoor activities for ages 8 to 13 in a structured environment.  
T: 07530 933690 and 01865 236646  
E: blap76@yahoo.co.uk

## Brownies

Holy Family Church Hall.  
T: Jennifer Pleass, 07886 757338  
E: bblbrownies@gmail.com

## The Clockhouse Community Centre

Long Ground, Greater Leys OX4 7FX  
T: 01865 395908  
E: clockhousecdi@btconnect.com

## Indoor Bowls Club

Sandy Lane West.  
T: 01865 775891  
E: oxbowls1@yahoo.co.uk

## Leys Pools and Leisure Centre

Pegasus Road, Blackbird Leys, Oxford, OX4 6JL  
T: 0344 893 3222

## The Leys WI

All ladies aged 18 or over are welcome to attend.  
T: 07973 336 041  
E: theleyswi@yahoo.co.uk

## The Blackbird Leys Choir



**WE WILL BEGIN** meeting again in September. All are welcome to join and we will be using Zoom for meetings until face to face gatherings are safe.

We are singing a range of popular songs from all over the world that reflect the interests of our multicultural community.

Music is arranged by the choir leader Malcolm Atkins to suit the voices we have and any who join.

malcolm.atkins1@ntlworld.com  
07872 991287

Leys  
News

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK  
www.facebook.com/leysnews



## VOLUNTEERS ACROSS THE LEYS WANTED

Neighbourhood Watch has come to the Leys

The schemes are run by the community and we need YOU

We need volunteers to be coordinators NOW

“YOU can make a difference” Are you a good neighbour?

Do you want to help make your neighbourhood safer?

Do you care about the elderly and vulnerable in your road?

Please join on <http://www.ourwatch.org.uk> or contact

Maggie Lewis on [maggielewis@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:maggielewis@yahoo.co.uk)  
for a Registration form



YOU CAN HELP YOUR  
COMMUNITY  
JOIN NOW



You say "Peeping Tom".  
I say highly active member  
of the neighborhood watch.



# Affected by Covid-19?

## If you are in need of support please contact:

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT

#### Agnes Smith

Specialise in helping people with money and debt, welfare benefits and housing.  
Contact: 0800 066 2218 (telephone messages picked up three times a day)

#### Oxford City Council Welfare Reform

The team help people experiencing changes to their benefits or struggling to sustain their tenancy to find work, access training and get other support they may need to improve their situation for the long term.  
Contact (01865) 249811

### FOOD SUPPORT

#### Blackbird Leys Community Larder

A food club with access to a cafe, children's area, community events and of course weekly food.  
Contact: 01865 402070

#### Blackbird Leys Community Fridge

The community fridge enables free access to food kindly donated from local supermarkets and volunteers to reduce food waste.  
Contact: 01865 402070

### LONELINESS SUPPORT

#### Leys CDI

Co-ordinates both a Youth Project and a Clockhouse (50+) Project.  
Leys CDI contact: 01865 395927  
Clockhouse contact: 01865 395908

### HOUSING SUPPORT

#### Catalyst Housing

Supporting vulnerable tenants in a number of ways during these challenging times.  
Contact: 0300 456 2099

#### A2 Dominion

Supporting vulnerable tenants in a number of ways during these challenging times.  
Contact: 0800 432 0077

#### Oxford City Council Tenancy Sustainment

Provides assistance to Council Tenants who are struggling to manage their tenancy and need help to avoid losing their home.  
Contact: 01865 249811  
TenancySustainment@oxford.gov.uk

### OTHER SUPPORT

#### Homestart

There to support families who have at least one child under five.  
Contact: 01865 779 991

#### Oxfordshire Mind

Provides free advice and support for people who are struggling with their mental health.  
Contact: 01865 247788

Or contact the South Community Hub  
[southcommunityhub@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:southcommunityhub@oxford.gov.uk)



# Oxford City Council supports summer holiday activities on the Leys despite coronavirus challenges

**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL** is providing £30,000 to fund summer holiday activities for young people most affected by the pandemic and the lack of school and education opportunities this year.

Every year the council funds summer activities to support young people through the holidays, particularly those who face disadvantage. The holiday activities provide non-formal education opportunities, with certified recognition, and help build confidence and skills outside the classroom.

Funding grants were due to be announced at the end of March, but lockdown has meant a complete redesign of summer holiday activities to make sure they fit with public health guidelines.

This year, for the first time, the activities will be predominantly for young people who have been referred for support by their school or other agencies. This is to ensure the support reaches those most in need and to help to close the

academic attainment gap for young people who experience more barriers to education.

## YOUTH AMBITION

The council's Youth Ambition team will still be available to offer informal support to young people through the council's locality response hubs.

The grant funding will support youth work in Blackbird Leys, Greater Leys, Cutteslowe, East Oxford, Cowley, Leys CDI, Northway and Rose Hill.

Barton Community Association was also given funding earlier this year for youth activities. It is using this to run a summer school for those who have missed out most on regular schooling, as well as a play scheme for young people.

On 7 July the Children's Commissioner published Teenagers falling through the gaps, which emphasised the importance of summer schemes for young people who were already facing challenges at home or in school before the

crisis. The data for this publication shows that around 4% of young people in Oxfordshire face multiple challenges that put them in this category.

Some of the groups who are particularly in need of support include:

- young carers – especially those living with people who have contracted coronavirus
- young people with disabilities and additional needs
- young people involved in the criminal justice system
- young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- young people who are facing domestic abuse
- young people who have missed out on education
- young people who face social, emotional, physical and mental wellbeing issues

The council has been supporting

young people in other ways throughout this crisis. Since April it has been providing food parcels to help households in financial difficulties, and has worked with Oxfordshire County Council to make sure young people entitled to free school meals don't miss out. Staff from the council's Youth Ambition team have been embedded into the council's emergency support, helping to connect young people in need with the right help.

Councillor Marie Tidball, cabinet member for supporting local communities, said "I'm delighted we're able to support summer holiday activities despite the restrictions of this crisis. We have amazing youth groups in Oxford, and I'm grateful to them for the way they have responded to the challenge of providing activities with a whole new way of working. The range of activities they have put together will provide engaging and inspiring projects for young people in this

city who have missed out the most through lockdown.

"We know that around 4% of 13-17 year olds in the county are at risk of 'falling through the gaps', and with school education so disrupted this year the attainment gap between these young people and those doing well has widened dramatically. While we can't deliver summer holiday activities on the scale we usually do, it's vital that we do what we can to support these young people.

"In the face of huge funding shortfalls many councils have had to cancel spending on summer activities, but in Oxford we've worked hard with partners to make sure we can still provide some support. I hope that next year, when we come to plan our summer activities, all young people will have had the investment and support from the government they need to redress the attainment gap that has worsened under lockdown."

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