

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS – MARCH 2021 BY CLLR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE – PART TWO

National allocation day for secondary schools

I am very pleased to be able to give you the results of our secondary schools' allocations for next September. All those Oxfordshire children needing a place have been offered one.

The Education Service sent out 6,703 emails regarding the results of the applications. These were sent between 2.30am and 6.46am this morning – 1st March. Letters are now only sent through the post to a minority of parents.

88.99% (6,371) received an offer of a first preference. This is both a slightly higher percentage than in 2020 when 88.56% received a first preference and a higher number – 6,321 in 2021 compared to 6,048 in 2020. This year the group of primary school children making the transfer to secondary school is 7,103 – as compared to 6,829.

The level of housing development in the County has led to a building programme of nearly 30 new schools and the expansion of many existing schools. The Council is also building three new special schools in Didcot, Littlemore and Bloxham.

Filthy gully contents can be recycled

Now Oxfordshire County Council is recycling in a completely different area – road repairs and gully cleaning. Over a four-year period, the approach could potentially stop 1,000 tonnes of CO2 being emitted and save £4.3 million of council taxpayers' money. It will also cut the amount of waste that is sent to landfill sites and reduce the amount of new material that is dug out of the ground.

It's difficult to imagine anything useful being salvaged from the dirty water and solid matter – largely silt – recovered by tankers during the process of cleaning gullies. But you'd be surprised. Oxfordshire County Council contractor Skanska is currently taking part in a trial with the company Combined Drier Technology to reprocess and reuse the waste, thereby reducing the amount that has to be disposed of expensively.

Using purpose-built de-watering bays in the county council's depot in Drayton, near Abingdon, water is removed and filtered. Depending on the quality, the water can be re-used or discharged into the foul drainage network under a trade effluent discharge consent.

The de-watered gully waste is then dried, allowing it to be screened and graded, recovering as much of the original waste as possible and removing any non-recyclable contaminants. These recycled materials could then potentially be used in highways works as fill material for resurfacing, topsoil replacement, or be fed into the production of recycled aggregates, subject to appropriate material and chemical testing results and stakeholder agreement. During the trial period, this drying and screening is being undertaken at a third-party permitted facility. However, the equipment used is mobile which would allow it to be deployed to the Drayton depot if the trial proves successful.

Oxfordshire produces approximately 1,000 tonnes of gully waste annually. If successful, the new methods of dealing with it could save up to £27,000 a year and prevent four tonnes of CO₂ being released into the atmosphere.

One of the by-products of road and path resurfacing – created as a result of asphalt being removed from a surface sub-base – is known as ‘asphalt planings’. Annual maintenance of Oxfordshire’s highway network produces significant quantities of this material, which can be recycled. However, approximately 8,000 tonnes of this are classified as ‘asphalt waste containing coal tar’ (AWCCT), a toxic material which makes it expensive to dispose of safely and difficult to recycle.

All these changes, and many more, feed into Oxfordshire County Council’s ambitions to tackle climate change. Last year, the council approved its [Climate Action Framework](#), which set out its plans to make itself a carbon neutral authority by 2030, and to enable Oxfordshire as a whole to become zero-carbon by 2050.