

Oxfordshire County Council News October/November 2025

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Next Full Council on 9th December 2025

For the last Full Council on 4th November our Green Party group tabled a motion opposing the proposed Abingdon Reservoir.

While recognising the likely increased water scarcity caused by the Climate Emergency, we feel the SESRO (South East Strategic Reservoir Option) with its forecast cost of £7.5bn, changing the landscape of the county for miles in every direction while only providing water for London, should very much be a last option.

The motion ran out of time on the day in spite of being second in the running order - the Independent Alliance (Conservatives) speaking thoroughly (all day) on their motion to ban the temporary congestion charge in Oxford, six days into its implementation.

We consider SESRO such a gargantuan project for so many of our residents we are bringing the motion back to Council on 9th December.

Rail Improvements

Just weeks after it was announced that Oxford's **Cowley Branch Line** would reopen to passengers, an ambitious plan to improve rail transport and connectivity across Oxfordshire and the wider region over the next 15 years has been approved.

OxonCC's Cabinet has adopted the OxRail 2040: Plan for Rail, which was developed with stakeholders, including the rail industry, and followed a **public consultation**.

OxRail 2040 proposes a wide range of interventions, but at the heart of it are four priorities that are critical to achieving the overarching vision of a modern, inclusive and sustainable railway:

1. An Oxfordshire Metro: creating an integrated transport network that brings together rail, bus, walking and cycling in a better co-ordinated and seamless user-centred travel offer.
2. Electrification: building a zero-carbon rail network for Oxfordshire, anchored by the 'electric freight spine'.
3. Oxford railway station: increasing capacity to support more services across the county, improving its mobility links and upgrading its appearance and facilities.

Five proposed new stations: at Oxford Cowley, Oxford Littlemore, Begbroke, Wantage & Grove and Ardley to support growth.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy announced

In mid-November, OxonCC launched its **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** – an ambitious, evidence-led roadmap influenced by local people and organisations.

Since 2023, Oxfordshire County Council has been working in partnership to reverse the decline of wildlife, restoring habitats, and ensuring that coordinated nature recovery is embedded in Oxfordshire's future.

Partner organisations span nature conservation, farming, forestry, rural and local businesses, local authorities, education, and community groups.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy is designed to restore and reconnect the county's natural environment to build local resilience against flooding and climate change to benefit for generations to come.

Over many months, this partnership has met people, listened to local priorities and crafted a set of targeted actions.

These include an innovative, interactive map that guides nature recovery efforts to areas that could become particularly important for biodiversity, offering every corner of Oxfordshire the chance to play its part in this collective endeavour.

Agile approach to highway maintenance and improvements in Oxfordshire

OxonCC and its principal highways contractor M Group, has announced the deployment of Highways Asset Response Teams (HARTs) to carry out minor repairs, cleaning, and other work in towns and villages where they are most needed.

Work carried out by the HARTs includes cleaning street signs, removing damaged railings, clearing vegetation, resetting uneven slabs and kerbstones, cleaning debris from footways, patching road defects, repairing footway defects, and removing fly posters and redundant street barriers.

In the first 10 weeks of the programme the teams cleared vegetation from 313 sites, cleaned 213 signs, removed 63 illegal signs or posters, repaired 128 potholes, fixed 17 footpaths and completed 87 other tasks such as cone removal, general tidying up, and installing barriers.

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Local Government Reorganisation

The County Council's response to the above instruction by national government is published [here](#). The three different proposals in play in Oxfordshire were submitted to government on 28th November.

Local Government Devolution

Leaders from across the Thames Valley including Oxfordshire County Council are progressing plans to pursue a mayoral strategic authority for the region, a new combined authority made up of a number of council areas, which would be led by a directly-elected mayor.

Through an **expression of interest letter** to government, leaders will set out a shared ambition to secure new powers and funding.

This would enable local councils to plan and deliver more integrated and effective transport, infrastructure, the right type of housing – with an emphasis on social housing – creating the conditions for faster, more inclusive growth across the region.

The MSA will make decisions locally and closer to the communities and businesses affected, with local councils continuing to deliver critical and wider public services for the benefit of all residents.

If agreed by government, devolution has the potential to unlock up to £18.7 billion for the Thames Valley economy by 2040, generating £7 billion in additional annual tax revenue*, and create new opportunities for residents and businesses.

It will also support coordinated investment of housing, roads and public transport, expand skills and training, and ensure research and innovation translate into jobs and growth across every part of the region.

Councillor Priority Fund

As previously mentioned, my fund is now open until the end of November 2026. I have £10k to award over two years, but parishes are applying in rapid order and about half the fund is spoken for already.

There are nine parishes in the division so the average amount I'm granting can be easily imagined.

Individuals are not eligible, only groups with a committee and a constitution (or rules governing their operation).

The application must demonstrate community benefit. Applications can only be made online through:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/councillorpriorityfund. Please talk to me/email in the first instance before applying.

Road re-surfacing

The County Council's re-surfacing programme continues and the details are [here](#).

Improving our fire service

OxonCC is asking for your views on proposed changes to how we respond to emergencies, ensuring that we have more fire engines consistently available and to overall enable us to get to incidents across Oxfordshire more quickly than we can now. To participate enter [here](#). Closes 20th January 2026.

Tree planting

1,100 trees are being planted throughout Oxfordshire in the next five weeks. Find out if one is coming to a street near you by logging on at: tinyurl.com/TreePlotterOCC (Username: Tree Planting, Password: oxontrees) You can also request trees if you think a piece of highways land is suitable by emailing: tree.planting@oxfordshire.gov.uk