



# the NEWS

Bradford on Avon Town Council  
Winter 2020



St Laurence School's new science block is now complete and, although Covid-19 restrictions mean an official opening will have to be delayed, students are already benefiting from the new facility, which replaced a very outdated 'temporary' block with limited facilities.

The Town Council donated £10,000 towards the project, and in a letter of thanks, headteacher Fergus Stewart said: "The new facilities are really excellent, a splendid addition to our campus which provides state of the art accommodation for our students and teachers."

Leader of the Council, Cllr Dom Newton, said: "Modern and well-equipped facilities are critical to making sure that young people have positive experiences of science in school, and can grow the skills they need to help develop new technologies and ideas.

"The Town Council providing funds for the new science block at St. Laurence represents an investment in the future of young people in the town, and highlights the importance of science in addressing so many of the challenges we face today, and into the future."

In acknowledgement of its donation, the Town Council was given the opportunity to name a lab in the new block - a task it opened out to the community in the form of a competition. The winning suggestion - proposed by two local residents, Andy Parsons and Rachel Ferguson - honours environmental



■ St Laurence School's new science block, and (inset) a peek inside the Thunberg lab

campaigner Greta Thunberg, whose 2019 address to the US Congress included the plea to "listen to the scientists" and take real action on climate change.

Cllr Alex Kay, Chair of the Environment & Planning Committee and Deputy Mayor, said the name was selected because "Councillors felt that Greta Thunberg represents the fearless tenacity of youth in challenging us to build a better world, and that she inspires young people to learn and to lead.



"Climate change is a scientific challenge, needing new generations of scientists to address it; to restore and protect the precious ecology of this planet for the future wellbeing of all its occupants. We hope that the Thunberg lab will nurture and inspire budding scientists in our community for many years to come."



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# Shop takes plastic free one step further

Bradford on Avon was awarded Plastic Free Community status 18 months ago by marine conservation charity, Surfers Against Sewage - the result of an initiative led by Plastic Free Bradford on Avon, and the Waste Group of Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon.

The aim was to encourage local businesses to find ways of cutting down or eradicating plastic packaging and sundries, and the initiative was fully supported by the Town Council.

Now Christine's Sustainable Supermarket, in the town centre, has gone one step further and installed a dry goods refill station, so you can take your own containers (or use paper bags provided if you've forgotten them) to buy loose foods such as lentils, nuts, rice, muesli, beans and seeds.

Jessica Thimbleby, a member of both Climate Friendly BoA Zero Waste Group and Plastic Free BoA, said: "It's great that Christine's now has a refill station and we have more opportunity in BoA to reduce our rubbish at home.

"We've got used to the convenience of buying everything in packets but it uses lots more resources. Our mantra on packaging is to **REFUSE** it where you can, **REDUCE** your use, **REUSE** any packaging where you can - and **IF** you can't do any of that, recycle it."

Christine Giles, who has run the store for



more than 10 years, says the refill station has proved very popular. "While we've had many products available as refills for a while, such as cleaning and cosmetic items, along with loose fruit and veg, I'm thrilled that we've been able to go one step further to include dry goods now, and it's a pleasure to see so many people enthusiastic about it."

Leader of the Council, Dom Newton, added: "It's really great to see a thriving local business leading by example in

this way, and showing that a sustainable and eco-approach to business can really be successful. As a Town Council, we're proud to be backing Plastic Free as an initiative, and grateful to be working alongside businesses like Christine's to highlight the need for this change."

The Town Council continues to work on projects related to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies that it has declared, and while there are many areas of concern to address, reducing plastic use or going plastic free altogether, is one significant way that we can all have a positive impact through consumer power. Shopping locally, with businesses that make efforts to address the problem of plastic packaging (among other issues), is a powerful action individuals can take for the benefit of both the environment and the economy of the town.

Cllr Alex Kay, Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Environment & Planning Committee, said: "We are very lucky we have Christine's in the heart of our town, helping us to refill and re-use containers for so many great products; encouraging us all to make headway on the avalanche of plastic waste."

● Find out more about reducing plastic use, or sign your business up to become plastic free, at <https://plasticfreeboa.wordpress.com/>

Photo: Lydia Booth Photography

## 'Focus on the many things that unite us'

A message from the Leader of the Council, Cllr Dom Newton

2020 has been an incredibly challenging year for us all, with Covid-19 dominating almost all aspects of our lives. It is probably safe to say that most of us do not anticipate viewing this year with a sense of nostalgia.

As winter approaches, usually a period of celebration and festivity, this year it is less clear how some of our traditions and rituals will be maintained. However, because of that it's perhaps more important than ever to cleave to the positives that exist in our lives - our friends and loved ones; our beautiful town and surrounding countryside; our supportive community - and take opportunities to care for and share time with others in whatever ways restrictions allow. We are a small community, and showed in the opening months of the pandemic how resilient we can be when we come together. And it is so important that we continue

to do so, as we address multiple challenges: the global pandemic with its health and economic impacts; the uncertainty as transition arrangements with the EU come to an end; and, of course, the challenges of the climate and ecological emergencies that face us and the wider world.

Despite the challenges, our community continues to pull together. Community Emergency Volunteers have resumed support of our pharmacies, and will no doubt meet the challenges of harsh weather conditions over the coming months; key workers - in the NHS, schools, care sector and many others - continue to work to support and keep us safe; street champions who volunteered in the spring to help their neighbours and continue to do so. We also saw businesses step up to fill gaps and help our more vulnerable neighbours, along with charities that supported those facing loneliness, isolation and financial difficulty. Every

act of kindness has been a credit to the community.

As a Council, we have allocated extra resources and adapted our provisions. We'll continue to work with and support those who volunteer their time and energies for others, and will develop further schemes to assist the town's businesses and community. As we head into 2021, it seems clear that we will always stand stronger as a town if we focus on the very many things that unite us, rather than those elements which can divide. When we look back at this period in years to come, it will be the acts of compassion, bravery and kindness that will make us proud of how we worked through it and, perhaps, give us some sense of nostalgia after all. For now, on behalf of all at the Town Council, I wish you a joyous and healthy festive period. Stay safe and may 2021 be filled with hope and renewal.

# Hub offers wide-ranging support

Long before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, many local families and individuals were benefiting from the support offered by The Hub in Church Street.

The organisation, now in its sixth year of operation, is run by volunteers who provide a wide range of support services, from debt and welfare advice, and help with filling out forms/applications, to food bank provision and school food boxes during holidays.

Based in the former HSBC bank building, it was furnished with donations and surplus equipment from Wiltshire College, local churches, Wiltshire Council and Selwood Housing.

Chair of The Hub and Town Councillor Laurie Brown said: "It was fantastic that we were able to kit the building out through the generosity of others and by reusing items no longer required elsewhere, yet perfectly fit for purpose."

Running costs and maintenance also have to be covered, and the Town Council awarded The Hub £5,000 earlier this year to help with such costs.

Affiliated to the Trussell Trust, The Hub continues to provide services and food thanks to financial and consumable donations from the community. About 30 food parcels a week were given out during lockdown, as well as further food box distribution to boaters and schools.

As the social and economic impacts of Covid-19 continue to affect a growing number of people, the Town Council has provided additional funding in recent months to help meet the higher demand for food boxes, donated via the town's Covid-19 Response Fund, a crowdfunding campaign set up by the Town Council in March.

If you would like to support The Hub, there are many ways to do so, including making donations of food and/or money. At this time of year, though, donations of Christmas items - such as mince pies, Christmas puddings, crackers and other treats - would be particularly welcome. To find out more about how and what to donate, visit: <http://www.boahub.co.uk>



Photo: Lydia Booth Photography

## Rescue plan for weir

More than 60 volunteers, including the town's Mayor and Deputy Mayor, spent five weekends in August and September labouring downriver of Bradford on Avon, to install temporary repairs to the weir at Avoncliff with the aim of preventing possible collapse this winter. The repairs saw more than 4,000 sandbags manually lifted into place and secured by the teams of volunteers.

The structure, believed to have been in place in one form or another since around 900AD, helps to create the unique habitat of the river valley between Avoncliff and the town, supporting species including kingfishers, otters, herons and swans.

The weir was identified as needing repair late last year, with local residents asking the Council to take action to preserve the eco-system of the river below the town bridge.

The weir holds back significant quantities of water, and a complete, or even partial, failure could have major consequences for river levels in the town, and consequent effects on river-users, wildlife and the local economy.

Although the structure is in private hands, Councillors took the view that the impact from its collapse would be profound, and that it was therefore worth potentially underwriting the cost of a temporary repair while a long term solution is found.

Public support was sought to finance the

project, and donations totalling more than £21,600 were received from private donors, with the Town Council providing an additional £2,259, plus logistical and administrative support to the project.

As well as financial support from the community, the Bradford on Avon Rowing Club and other volunteers turned out in force to support the on-site repairs, while search and rescue charity ServeOn provided training and in-water expertise.

John Potter, Chair of Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust, which donated £10,000 to the fund said: "Our town's heritage, as the name implies, has the integrity of the River Avon at its heart, and protecting that is vital.

"Preserving an historic building within the town would certainly elicit our backing, so it is without hesitation that we support this maintenance to the weir which keeps the river, which has had such an impact on our community for hundreds of years, healthy and intact."

This huge effort has already been tested and survived the autumn's first significant storm with only a cosmetic impact, despite the new structure being completely submerged by fast flowing waters.

The temporary repair will be regularly inspected during its lifespan, and Councillors will continue to work with local stakeholders to find a longer term solution.

## Safely celebrating at Christmas

With the unprecedented events of this year, the Town Council has had to rethink the traditional Christmas Lights celebrations.

Cllr Simon McNeill-Ritchie, Mayor and Chair of the Town Development Committee, explained: "Specifically, we need to balance the natural desire of our residents to celebrate the holiday period, and the importance to local businesses of attracting customers, with our responsibility for ensuring public safety as far as possible.

"So, rather than holding an event,

the annual switch-on will take place automatically at dusk on Friday 27 November. To bring a little Christmas cheer to the end of what has been a difficult year, the Town Council will cover the cost of the supply and installation of one tree to each business in the town centre.

"The Council has also put up large trees in Westbury Garden (sponsored by Bradford on Avon Lions Club), the Tithe Barn (sponsored by the Preservation Trust) and the 'Giving Tree' in Lamb Yard (sponsored by FirstPort)."



Photo: Lydia Booth Photography

## Volunteers make a clean sweep



■ CluB volunteers working on Conigre Hill in October

Clean up Bradford on Avon (CluB) is a thriving group of volunteers who work year-round in all weathers, tidying areas of the town that do not currently fall under the Town Council's remit. However, the council supports the group with tools and other equipment, communications support and hi-vis vests.

Volunteers meet every Monday morning, in small groups adhering to Covid-19 guidelines. They target specific areas - used by pedestrians - that were until recently maintained by Wiltshire Council.

Many of the steep hillside and park pathways are flanked by trees, or are host to water run-off channels, which result in blocked gullies and large amounts of leaf mulch which become very slippery in wet weather.

Since the pandemic has resulted in the need for people to socially distance, the group also manually remove plant materials that may act as obstacles to two people safely passing one another, such as nettles and smaller overhanging foliage. Wherever possible, this is done bearing in mind the need to preserve the balance with the lush greenery that makes Bradford on Avon such a beautiful and important haven for birds and insects. The Town Council's Green Spaces Officer liaises regularly with the volunteers for that reason.

● If you are interested in joining CluB, you can get in touch with them via their Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/CleanUpBoA> - or contact the Town Council.

## On board with park scheme

The project to replace the Bradford on Avon skatepark reached a new milestone in October, with the unveiling to Councillors of first-stage designs for the new park.

Based on consultation with the user group representing the town's skateboarders, the design (see below) includes elements to challenge more experienced riders, and others to encourage beginners to get involved. Councillors confirmed in January that the new facility would sit on the same site as the original skatepark, which was removed in early 2018 following long-term maintenance problems and subsequent vandalism. A public campaign for a new park, led by Fitzmaurice Primary School pupils, gathered widespread support.

The new park is planned to be part of a wider project for Poulton playing field and meadow, which could see improvements to the existing play area and enhancements such as footpaths, to improve maintenance and access across the fields to Fitzmaurice School and the Youth and Community Centre.

The site has also been part of the recently commissioned Biodiversity Survey, and in line with the declaration of an Ecological Emergency in

June 2020, Councillors are keen to ensure that the site fits well with its surroundings, and that planting around the park enhances the natural environment.

Russ Holbert, Director of Maverick Industries, the company selected in 2019 to manage the project and build the new park, said:

"If the town doesn't have a skatepark, it becomes the skatepark! Lack of facilities leads to young people on the roads and in the way of pedestrians and traffic. Having a free-to-use, dedicated space enables people to ride safely in an outdoor environment, getting exercise and socially interacting with others. These facilities allow riders to learn new skills and release energy. They are proven to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve mental health."

The Town Council will be applying for grants to help build the park, but local community contributions will be a huge factor in making it successful, and demonstrating support. More information about how you can contribute to this project will be available online very soon, so please check the Town Council website and social media.



## Keeping up to date with social distancing measures

In August, a social distancing scheme was introduced, following requests from the local community and Councillors to enable residents and visitors to follow government guidelines, while still being able to access the town centre. The scheme, designed and implemented by Wiltshire Council, has proven to be challenging in terms of rollout, and, as expected, there has been ongoing review to try to ensure that the aim of assisting pedestrians to move around the town safely was correctly balanced with impacts on the volumes of traffic, congestion, and air quality.

Since inception, Town Councillors have been working to address concerns, and an information page has now been added to the website; it will be regularly updated as elements change or are added; it can be viewed at: <https://bradfordonavontowncouncil.gov.uk/covid19-social-distancing-traffic-scheme-information/>

Contact your councillor via [www.bradfordonavontowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.bradfordonavontowncouncil.gov.uk)