



The Buckingham Society
Campaigning for a Better Buckingham

Newsletter August 2025

Chairman's Notes – Ian Orton

In praise of societies, voluntary sector and civic pride

Welcome to the summer edition of the Buckingham Society's Newsletter. He certainly didn't invent it but President Reagan's quip about the nine most terrifying words in the English language: "I'm from the government and I'm here to help," still maintains a resonance, 29 years after he made it at a press conference in 1986.

More pertinently given the events of the past five years or so it still seems very relevant. Irrespective of which party is in power, policy initiatives along with the normal exercise of government power have a recurring habit of going wrong or not being delivered at all, despite the expenditure, in many instances of billions of pounds.

A week rarely goes by without new headlines announcing yet another policy failure, a missed deadline; or a huge increase in costs associated with implementing a cherished project.

And even if the government manages to implement a policy it can often unleash a plethora of unintended pernicious consequences.

Don't get me started on the Online Safety Act, a bequest inflicted upon us by the last conservative government (Virtual Private Networks anyone?) What is surprising is that notwithstanding a litany of failures many people still have an endearing and seemingly enduring faith in the ability of the government to solve any problem in a timely and cost-efficient manner. The evidence often suggests otherwise, however.

I'm not trying to advocate the abolition of government or restricting its activities to the very basics such as the maintenance of law and order or defence. As a sometime economist I can provide any number of justifications for government involvement in

the economy most of which have something to do with addressing market failure and its associated problems. A similar case can be made for government involvement when it comes to health, education and social welfare provision.

Providing a justification for government involvement in a wide range of policy initiatives, is one thing, however. Actually delivering - always assuming, of course, that the correct policy response has been selected - is something else completely.

The reality is that for a variety of reasons there are often multiple failings by both central and local government along with their agencies in implementing and administering agreed policies.

Below: Thornborough Bridge – Roger Newall



All this stands in stark contrast to the efforts of voluntary groups and societies. These often seem to be very capable of delivering or discharging a wide range of functions and services in a timely and extremely cost-efficient manner.

Moreover, they can often do things that are completely beyond the scope of government, not least because they tend to lack the strangling bureaucracy typically associated with government and its agencies.

I am not trying to argue that great chunks of government should be taken over by charities and voluntary clubs and societies. It would be completely impractical for a variety of reasons. Nonetheless, the activities of voluntary organisations often make a tangible improvement to the quality of life in general.

Just consider the impact of the voluntary sector in Buckingham, for example.

Thanks to the efforts of voluntary bodies, we have a cinema (The Film Place), a local radio station (3bsradio), and a museum (The Old Gaol). A host of other organisations, church-based organisations, charities, clubs and societies have helped expand the range of experiences and facilities available to the local population.

One of the reasons that these groups flourish is that their active members are both enthusiastic and knowledgeable. The level of expertise they can provide matches and, in some instances, can exceed anything that central and local government can provide.

This often means that these organisations and individuals can respond efficiently and quickly to many situations. Wait for a government agency to turn up if something goes wrong and it is often a case of passing around the Rip Van Winkle pills (emergency services excepted).

Clubs, societies and other voluntary organisations, also help to provide companionship for their members. Indeed, it could be argued that they provide the glue that helps keep “society” together as well as providing evidence of civic pride.

“Civic pride” is something that the Buckingham Society and Civic Voice, the umbrella organisation to which the Society is affiliated, is very keen on.

Back in June 2011 the Civic Trust, Civic Voice’s predecessor organisation, launched the first “Civic Day” to provide a focus on “civic pride”. We organised an event for Buckingham and continued to do so for a number of years until Buckingham Town Council (BTC) decided to organise its own event, to be held more or less at the same time as ours.

We decided to fold our event into BTC’s “Celebrate Buckingham Day”. Held annually in Bourton Park it provides a showcase of sorts for clubs and societies active in Buckingham and its hinterland. This year’s event took place on 22nd June.

As well as trying to boost civic pride and the organisations (and individuals) that help sustain it the Society has made its own contributions this year, not least by underwriting the very successful Buckingham Ablaze event and taking over the planting and maintenance of the big flowerbed outside the Community Centre see a succeeding article for details).

I hope that other Society members will help with its maintenance now that the “heavy lifting” has been completed as well as participating in future initiatives.

Sunset over the New Inn – Roger Newall



Planning Report – Carolyn Cumming

Neighbourhood Plan: We are promised a date in the autumn for the referendum on the newly revised Neighbourhood Plan. Do look out for this and be sure to cast your response. It is important to record a good turnout to reflect a majority view from the residents of Buckingham.

HMOs, 4 London Road: We are pleased to report that the Planning Officer refused the applicant's request to vary the condition that was imposed on the original application (23/03405/APP), which specifically forbade installing kitchenettes in the individual rooms. The property continues as a house in multiple occupation with shared facilities.

Development at Manor Farm, Bourton

An application (24/03426/AOP) was received for outline planning permission for 200 dwellings on the triangle of land that is currently pasture between the old and new Bletchley Roads. This site was not considered in the revised Neighbourhood Plan, but the Council did nonetheless recommend that *"the application be deferred and delegated to the Service Director of Planning and Environment for APPROVAL subject to publicising the application as a departure from the Development Plan, satisfactory completion of a S106 agreement seeking to secure various matters"*

The outcome of the very lengthy development committee meeting on 23rd July, discussing the implications of the scheme, is that a decision has been deferred pending further information and a site visit. Yet again one of the negative aspects of the development is the lack of confirmation from Anglia Water that sufficient upgrades to the wastewater system will take place. As with all current applications (and developments half completed), Anglia Water will impose a condition that occupancy of the dwellings does not take place until such time as Ofwat will give approval for an upgraded scheme within the next 5 years.

We have reported at some length on the status of the sewage/waste-water position, which has also been the subject of national reporting. This fundamental lack of investment is an issue that has blighted existing development and the environment. Without proper scrutiny of the infrastructure that will be needed to make our waste water for purpose, it is the height of irresponsibility to continue to approve large scale residential development. It is a subject that will receive judicial review at the Court Hearings set for October when Wildfish present their findings on water pollution.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan – Anthony Ralph



2024 - 2040

At the meeting of the BTC (Buckingham Town Council) meeting held on 28th July 2025, Chairman of the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, Mark Cole presented the final recommendations of the working group. He commented that the group first met in January 2023, and in the 30 months since then, had held 41 meetings or

consultations to bring plan to completion. BTC agreed last December to trigger the Regulation 16 final Public Consultation, which ended in January.

The plan was then sent to an independent examiner to check its conformity with current planning policies. He stressed from the start that the policies of the 2023 National Planning Policy Framework will apply to the revised plan, and not the December 2024 policies now mandated by the government, as it was submitted before March 2025. Following his examination, the Examiner recommended approximately 20 minor technical modifications to the wording thus aiding both clarity and legality. These the Working Group agreed to at its meeting on 10th July this year, and as a result are recommending BTC accepts the examiner's recommendations in full, noting that further advice which was awaited on two points raised with the examiner by our consultants ONH have also been agreed.

BTC voted unanimously in favour of accepting the examiner's recommendations in full. Buckinghamshire Council will now schedule a public referendum for the acceptance of the plan, possibly as soon as September.

The Inspector commended Buckingham Town Council on the high standard of the Plan and Design Code and two examples of his positive comments are worth noting: *“the Plan is commendably focused on a clear set of locally distinctive issues”* and *“the Design Code is an excellent document, which captures the character of the town.”*

Full details of the plan can be found at...

[Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan - Buckingham Town Council](#)

Member News – Ian Orton

Russel Popee and Roger Newall, two members of the Society’s executive committee have both been co-opted onto Buckingham Town Council as full members. Russell is currently our membership secretary. Roger is our planning guru and a member of the planning special interest group (SIG).

Andrew Lester, one of our long-standing members passed away on 16 May. He was buried at St Mary’s Church Leckhamstead on 16 June.

Water and sewage update

The ability of Anglian Water to provide sewage provision for new houses built in Buckingham and the surrounding area has been raised on a number of occasions in recent months.

Although the lack of adequate sewage provision and the inability of a water company to provide it is not considered to be a relevant reason for the denial of planning permission for proposed new housing developments, it is very unlikely that a developer will proceed if the proposal is given permission because any houses built will not get a habitation certificate. As such the houses will not get sold.

But what is the current situation as far as sewage treatment in Buckingham? There have been claims, for example, that the existing facilities at Buckingham’s “water recycling centre” (WRC) cannot meet the existing demand for its facilities, let alone cope with the increased volumes that additional house building will create so, it has been claimed, that raw sewage is having to be removed by tankers for treatment elsewhere.

The good news is that this is not the case. Material is being “tankered-out” from Buckingham’s WRC. But the material being shipped out from Buckingham is sewage sludge, i.e. the solids that remain after the water element of raw sewage has been treated and deposited in the river.

This has always been the case since the WRC opened.

Buckingham’s WRC does not have sludge treatment facilities. Nor do virtually any of Anglian Water’s 1,100 or so WRCs. Indeed, just 10 “sludge treatment centres”

process all of Anglian Water's sewage sludge. The number of tanker movements at Buckingham may have increased. But according to Anglian Water this is "consistent with the population the site serves."

The potentially bad news is that Anglian Water has no immediate plans to substantially upgrade Buckingham's WRC.

"Although Buckingham WRC has received ongoing upgrades and maintenance over the last five years, we recognise it needs further upgrading to accommodate growth requirements," a spokesperson for Anglian Water told me in a written statement.

"As part of the final determination [of Anglian Water's latest five-year investment programme], Ofwat has made an allowance for growth schemes, and we are currently reviewing and prioritising these schemes for delivery over the next five years."

In other words, the Buckingham facility might get an upgrade. Or it might not: it all depends on where the Buckingham facility stands in Anglian Water's hierarchy of priorities. This seems to be contrary to the line taken by at least one prospective developer who maintains that Anglian Water will provide the necessary capacity.

And, of course, it may do so in time. It can take some time to develop a site that has received planning permission. So it is not inconceivable that the required infrastructure will be in place at the appropriate time.

Nonetheless, there doesn't seem to be spare capacity at Buckingham to meet any extra demand. Anglia Water has submitted a "holding objection" to Buckinghamshire Council, the local planning authority, as far as future development is concerned.

"Because Ofwat has not approved any dedicated funding at Buckingham WRC in our current business plan, we have submitted a holding objection to the council regarding any further development until we have been able to upgrade the site accordingly," it told me.

Whether or not Buckinghamshire Council or prospective developers take any notice of this is, of course, another matter.

The Grand Junction

As many members will know, The Grand Junction, the recipient of one of the Society's Design and Heritage awards, has a new owner. This is Brunning & Price, the pubs division of The Restaurant Group.

The Oakman Group did a fantastic job in renovating and expanding the Grand Junction and, along with the Crown Care Group, the owner of Clarendon House Care Home, helped upgrade part of the town that had been on its uppers for some time.

Given all the problems that the hospitality sector currently faces it is a relief to find that there is still a market for top quality pubs and restaurants like the Grand Junction and that firms are still prepared to invest in the licensing and hospitality sector.

The Kings Head, the Whale and the Kings Head have all been refurbished over the past year.

The Grand Junction was one of 10 ten pubs acquired by The Restaurant Group, a large restaurant and pub owning group.

Now privately owned - I used to be a shareholder when it was a publicly-listed company - it generated £824 million of revenues and operating profits of £29.8 million for the year to 31 December 2023, according to its most recently published annual report and accounts.

It did, however, make pre-tax loss of £19.6 million, primarily the result of finance costs of £50.1million to service borrowings of £226.5 million. These are more than covered by net equity of £357.9 million.

Restaurant Group's ultimate owners are funds managed by Apollo Global Management, a big US-based investment manager.

Another interesting fact about the Restaurant Group is that its current chief executive is Andy Hornby, a former chief executive of HBOS prior to its rescue by Lloyds Banking Group.

Assuming he is the most highly paid director of the company he would have received around £3.6 million during 2023, a big increase on the £1 million he received in 2022.

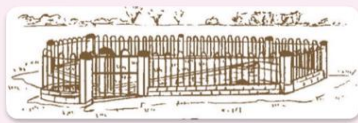
Clock and Watchmaking in Buckingham

The Old Gaol's latest exhibition, which will take place from 15-27 September will focus on "Clock & Watchmaking in Buckingham circa 1680-1900". Curated by Tim Marshall, a well-known dealer in English country antique clocks and local historian who lives in Padbury, the exhibition will consist of items from his own collection.

Tim will also be giving a talk about the objects on display on 20 September at the Old Gaol on 20 September where it will be possible to buy copies of his most recent book: "Buckinghamshire Clocks & Watchmakers". This is a beautifully produced and illustrated book that traces the history of clock and watchmaking in Buckinghamshire. Ranging from the humblest village clockmaker to some of the most illustrious names in English clockmaking, over 600 men and women in the craft in the county are featured, together with illustrated examples of their work.

Tim tells me that the mechanism of the original Town Hall clock still exists, albeit in a dismantled state, in the clock tower of what is now part of Villiers Hotel. He is confident that he can reconstruct it if Villiers Hotel would enable him to do so and asked the Society to assist him in this respect. I have contacted Villiers Hotel but regret to say that I have not yet received a reply. Tickets for admission to the exhibition cost £5; and £10 for Tim's talk.

Ed Grimsdale



The legend of St. Rumbold is told in the Church as follows:-
 "St. Rumbold was the son of a Christian Princess who insisted that her husband should be baptised before she married him. St. Rumbold was born in Walton Fields (a mile from King's Sutton Church) in the year 662. As soon as the child was born he declared "I am a Christian" and asked to be baptised in the name of Rumbold. He was baptised, a great stone being used as the font. He then declared he would die and his body was to remain at King's Sutton for one year, Brackley for two years, and then to rest in Buckingham where there was a shrine of St. Rumbold until its destruction during the Reformation."

The great political satirist, Thomas Rowlandson, drew his comical image in 1813, writes Ed Grimsdale, on a visit to the Spa at Astrop (a suburb of King's Sutton) when its wells with medicinal waters were in decline - it took a strong stomach to accept side effects such as blackened teeth and stools looking as if they were lumps of BBQ charcoal. St Rumbold's Well had been turned into a seat so the 'patients' might relax & partake of their restorative drinks brought to their rickety bodies by, seemingly, pregnant Vestal virgins and their Mums. Earlier, there were outdoor Raves, a.k.a. Balls, every Monday night. Rowlandson captures their ghostly spirits doing a Conga, middle, r.h.s.

P.S. Thomas thought he was in Bucks. In reality, his Spa was in Northants..



A Boules Court for Buckingham – Udo Dolz

For many years, Buckingham Twinning Association has been hosting a boules tournament with its French partners to celebrate Bastille Day. This has always taken place on a Friday evening in the former cattle pen site adjacent to the High Street.

The play areas have to be constructed from hay bales and sandbags provided by local farmers and builders' merchants, and then completely removed at the end of the evening to make the space clear for the Saturday flea market. This is a lot of work as I'm sure you will agree.

When I suggested the idea of applying for a permanent boules court, the response was. "What a good idea Udo, off you go". From the start my idea was that the putative boules court would open to all clubs and societies as well as the people of Buckingham.

I identified a few possible sites:

- *Chandos Park, between the tennis courts and the basketball court;
- *The unsightly concrete areas either side of the superb new skate park;
- *The area adjacent to the community hall/ Scout building on Embleton Way (owned by
- Buckinghamshire Council)
- *The Church Green, (owned by Buckingham Town Council)

I submitted my proposals to the Buckingham town Council, in February 2025. My first two site proposals were immediately rejected, on the grounds of potential flooding, and in the case of Chandos Park, because of potential conflict with the tennis club. This left two options: Embleton Way and the Church Green.

Option 1: Embleton Way

I approached Buckinghamshire Council (BC) in February and was immediately turned down because of an alleged conflict with its green spaces policy (something which I checked found no such conflict.) The picture below shows the proposed location of the Boules Court (not to scale) if it is built at Embleton Way. It's the small black rectangle on the left.



Buckingham Town Council have recently written to the County to ask them to reconsider their position, and we await a response. The Embleton Way location together with adjacent parking and the Scout hut make this a very desirable choice.

Option 2: Church Green

My immediate concern was the church, so I contacted the rector. He gave me a very positive response provided we do not take-up the majority of the green or impede entry to the church. I have now held a site meeting and submitted a short summary of the dimensions, and possible location along with a description of the construction.



Next Steps

We have approached other Buckingham groups as well as the Buckingham Society to gauge support. We have received positive support from both the WI, and the U3A.

We had another meeting with Buckingham Town Council on 28 July so watch this space. A photograph of the Boules court at Winslow shows the sort of thing that we are aiming at.

Winslow Boules Court



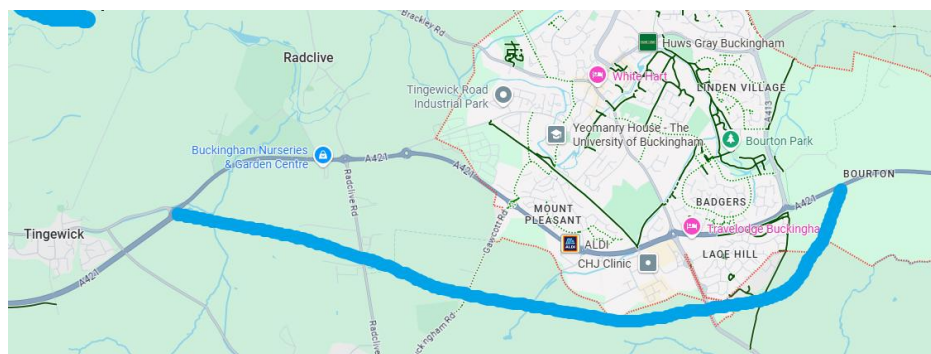
A421 Road Dualling – David Child

It has gone very quiet on the A421 road improvement between the Tingewick roundabout and Milton Keynes. It seems to have been a replacement idea because the M40 / M1 expressway has had a lot of opposition.

If the A421 project does get built the main concern is that the cheapest route will be to follow the current line of the A421. There are many problems with this, the main ones being it would further split the north and south of Buckingham and all the roundabouts will continue to continue to create bottlenecks and slow the traffic which is contrary to the purpose of the dualling the road.

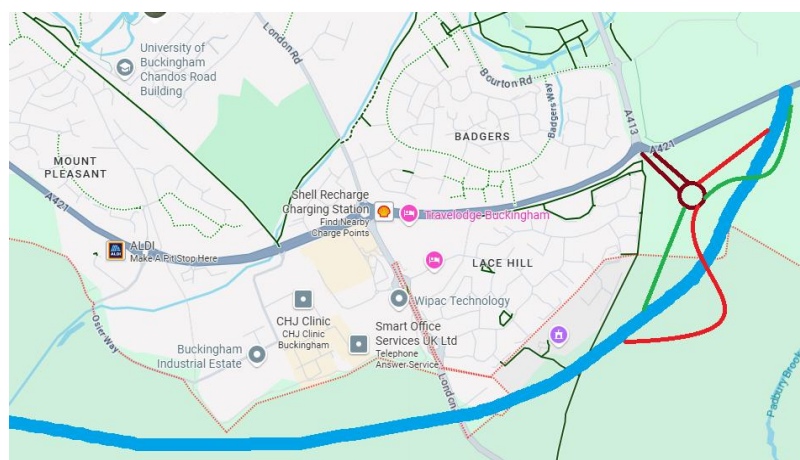
The counter to this (see Fig 1) is to have an expressway (no roundabouts) at least round Buckingham from the Tingewick roundabout to east of the A413 / A421 roundabout.

Fig 1. Dual carriageway shown in blue



To allow access to the A422 (via the short section of the A413) and to the south on the A413 towards Aylesbury there would need to be some method to link to the A413/A421 roundabout. In Fig 2 is a schematic of a possible road layout to achieve this.

Fig 2 (key Red on slip / Green off slip / Brown linking roundabout)



Community Garden Project: Mary Simons

Before we started



You may have noticed a difference to the 'garden' outside the Community Centre, opposite Waitrose. The Buckingham Society has taken responsibility for improving the look of the walk from the car park into town by replanting and maintaining this plot. Our designer, Carolyn, has incorporated some of the original plants that the Buckinghamshire Council, and owners of the plot, planted several years ago, as well as some contributions from two other residents, Fran Davies and Lucy Draper. Plants were chosen to be drought tolerant and of particular interest to bees and other insects, as well as providing a soothing colour pallet and fragrance for the occupants of the well-used bench.

Mid July



The lovely display of daffodils, also provided by Fran and Lucy, that you may have seen earlier in the year, were carefully removed, once they had finished flowering, and have been set aside for replanting this autumn. A copy of the plan as originally drawn up is available on request.

Planting in progress



Although plants were chosen for their ability to withstand a lack of water, we, of course, had a period of very hot, dry weather as soon as we had planted! Until they

had established themselves the plants needed some extra 'loving care' and so a hardy band of our Executive members took up their cans and watered. We are very grateful to Waitrose for allowing us to use their outside tap, without which we would have been stuck for a water supply.

A major part of our proposal to develop this garden was to provide ongoing maintenance without asking for time or effort from either the Town Council Green Spaces Team or the 'Shire Council Parks department. This will take effort from the Buckingham Society.

This is a call for volunteers to keep this going. We have so far been reliant on a small number of volunteers. We now need to expand our 'team' with more volunteers. You could engage with us as little or as much as you like, ranging from letting us know if you spot any damage to joining the maintenance team for an ad hoc/scheduled time, deadheading, weeding or general care!



Please let any of our Executive members know if you would like to volunteer. If you are in Well Street pop in and see **Mary at Finca El Monte** and we can add your name to the list.

And now? You will see a big
difference! Take a walk into town and have a look! There is more to follow.
Please think about volunteering to help!

Nature: Mary Melliush

March began with warmth and yellow, a welcome few days of sunshine, daffodils and brimstone butterflies; the bluetits and others began nesting. Then the weather turned cold with heavy rain. The swifts came in overnight on 30 April to 1st of May, swooping, feeding and screaming. The best count was 8. Compare that with a count of 40 over a decade ago.

As I write the river is low. A fox hunts along the banks and chased moorhens, who got away. The heron is seen in flight and fishing. Towards the end of May I watched swallows at a local farm. The same day two great egrets were seen in Bourton Park.

My own garden had several nests. The bluetits were successful. The wren hopped around my herb pots and various fledglings flew about clumsily or sat in the drinking water. I watched a young blackbird perched on the back of the garden seat with a parent on either side feeding in turn. In this warm spell I keep two sources of water fresh.

Hedgehogs are on the Red List. I have not seen one this year, but I have had a few reports of sightings. Have you seen one? Do let us know.....data is the currency of protection for them.

Following my gloomy swift report, there is improving news. As I walked to the morning recital on Friday 18th July, there were 18/19 swifts wheeling and calling overhead. I have not seen them since and I think it was their final farewell for another year.

Events

Our next event is imminent - the talk on Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) by Hugh Ellerton will take place on Tuesday next, 12th August at 6.30pm in the Vinson Auditorium. All are welcome to attend.

Don't forget that members can also attend our Planning Special Interest meetings, which are held every three to four weeks on Thursdays at 16.00 at the Buckingham Town Council Chamber (opposite Waitrose) as well as our bimonthly executive committee meetings.

Executive Committee:

Ian Orton	Chair
Carolyn Cumming	Planning
Ed Grimdsdale	Planning and society historian
Russell Poppe	Membership Secretary
David Child	Treasurer
Belinda Morley-Fletcher	Secretary
Kathy Robins	Newsletter Editor, planning and transport
Mary Simons	Planning
Sarah Goodrum	Without portolio

We would like to hear from you

Please give us some feedback - tell us what activities you would like The Buckingham Society to prioritise. Comments to kathyrobins@walnutyard.co.uk Tel: 07834484762

If you would like be involved in any of our activities or attend a meeting of the executive committee, then contact us or just come along.

www.buckinghamssociety.org.uk