

*Dear Editor*

I have been supporting the proposal by residents for action to mitigate the impact of the A415 through Marcham. A planning application by Try Homes for four dwellings on the Timber Yard off Packhorse Lane was recently turned down by Officers at the Vale because of access issues and lack of adequate provision for the impact of the development on traffic and pedestrians. I have been informed that Try Homes are now working to address concerns including looking positively at allocating a strip of land to improve sight lines for traffic and to provide the much needed footway for pedestrians.

The recent proposal by the Anson Trust for the provision of new village facilities with funds raised by some housing on the Anson Field will be of particular interest to everyone in the village. Marcham village is in an unusual position, for a village of its size, in not owning and maintaining a village hall. In nearby Shippon, the village is much smaller but a working group of residents is currently looking at how it can provide a modern village hall with facilities to match the needs of residents and probably funded by gain from the development of some land in the village. A detailed planning application from the Anson Trust is still some way down the line, and when received by the District's Planning Offices, will have to be considered against all the material planning guidance contained in the Government's Planning Regulations and our own local plan. All local residents will have the opportunity to respond to any planning application should one materialise and it is incumbent on the District Council to take account of all relevant issues raised including village opinion on the scheme. Following the special parish meeting in response to the Anson Trust Exhibition, the parish has received written comments from village organisations and verbal and written views from individuals. I am fully aware of all comments that have been expressed to date and would encourage all those who have not already commented to contact the parish council and/or myself.

On the future of Abingdon Community Hospital the latest news is that in spite of earlier communications this year about possible closures, the newly established Oxfordshire PCT has informed our local Health Scrutiny Committee that it will not be consulting for now on any proposal. This gives the community an important window to strengthen the campaign to save community hospital services.

**JANE HANNA** District Councillor for Marcham & Shippon

*Dear Editor*

The proposals for the future of the Anson Fields have provoked a large response, ranging from supportive through opposition to almost libellous in content! I am encouraged by the responses and ask  
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the residents of Marcham to question the Anson Trust and the company undertaking the consultation – Dialogue. There are many questions to be answered, and it is up to Marcham to decide as a village, how the future is to be shaped. I will follow events closely with interest.

It has been a busy year, and we have covered a lot of ground, meetings, briefings and open debates all about a reservoir proposal! The latest meeting at the Guildhall in Abingdon on November 1st was to give all councillors in the Vale the initial findings and response to Thames Water's stage 1 – needs and alternatives – consultation. The Vale were quite clear that this proposal must be challenged and proven, but warned that they must also begin negotiations on planning gain, should a reservoir be approved, as to wait until 2008 and a public inquiry would place them at a disadvantage. This line of thinking can become blurred and we must guard against accepting these proposals on potential planning gain alone.

The challenge is also present at County Hall, and must remain until the needs are proven and the alternatives given proper investigation.

As far as needs go, we do need a public water supply that can cope with the threat of drought and the possibility of increased consumption. Is a reservoir, so dependant on winter flow levels in the Thames, the only answer? Most certainly not, as alternatives include:

- Water metering given a much higher priority
- Re – charging the vast aquifers that surround us
- Re – evaluating water transfer, not to be confused with a water grid!
- Rain water harvesting from the roofs of buildings – Ken Livingston's London Council favour this method, as they have a lot of roofs in London!
- Spending £1000 million on fixing even more leaks instead of a reservoir – although one councillor did argue that spending on leaks comes out of shareholder's profits, whilst raising £1000 million pounds from customers via increased water bills to build a new reservoir adds to Thames Water's asset register and ultimately increases the value of the Company!

It now appears to all who have studied the initial proposals closely, that Thames Water do not need such a large reservoir, so I can imagine that they may make a "concession" and reduce the size and almost certainly reduce the height of the banks from 80 feet down to 40 feet. The resulting sigh of relief from the local population enough to encourage ministers and quango members from Guildford to Whitehall to press ahead regardless. We must not let the process stray from a position of challenge, as we must be sure that a reservoir in our area is the best long-term solution to possible South East water shortages in the future.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

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**ED VAIZEY WRITES...**

By the time you read this, the Queen will have opened Parliament (November 15th), delivered what is known as the Queen's Speech and a new session of Parliament will have begun.

The parliamentary year runs from November until the following October, and it is during this period (with the odd exception) that the Government must pass its legislation.

The Queen's Speech sets out the pieces of legislation the Government hopes to pass. Because of publishing deadlines, I am writing this a couple of days before the Queen's speech, so this is informed speculation about what the speech will contain, with a few lines giving you my views, and an initiation to all of you to write to me with any concerns you have about it. After all, the main bit of an MP's job description is to scrutinise and vote on legislation on your behalf, so I do need to hear from you!

It looks like there will be three or four main Bills. Firstly, a Pensions Bill will establish a National Saving Scheme to support the state pension. It will also make it automatic for individuals and companies to put money into a pension, unless they specifically opt in. I like this idea, as I think it will increase saving, though I am aware of the burden it could place on business. Secondly, a Mental Health Bill has been trailed. This is an interest of mine and an area where action is badly needed. As I found when campaigning to save the Park Hospital in Oxford, for which Young Minds have nominated me for a Charity Champion Award, adolescents are too often forgotten, and I will be campaigning to ensure they are included in this Bill. Thirdly, I do, of course, welcome a Climate Change Bill but will be looking closely to make sure it is not used an excuse to raise tax on people in rural areas who rely on their cars. Finally, there will be some more terrorism legislation and the government may well try and increase the time people can be held without charge. As most of you will know I voted against the 90 day limit last session. Many of you expressed anger at my decision, and many of you supported it - it was certainly the most controversial issue this year. I will vote against 90 days again as I believe this would be a huge and unjustifiable incursion into our civil liberties.

Let me know what you think of the Queen's speech - *see cover for contact details and surgery dates.*

Merry Christmas and Happy new year!

**ED VAIZEY**, MP Wantage (Con)