

ED VAIZEY WRITES...

At the beginning of October, we had a meeting about the impact of the July floods. Hundreds of people turned up to the Old Mill Hall in Grove, to hear from the Environment Agency and from Thames Water. Many of you may have read my views on the floods in my Westminster Report already. I am putting forward a clear programme of action which I think the Government needs to address urgently. First, I think the Environment Agency needs greater powers. I think we should consider whether they should be able to veto any development on the flood plain which could increase flood risk in any significant manner. When I put this forward at the meeting, it got a lot of support.

Second, we should look at whether it is possible to give grants to homeowners who want to fit flood defences. The easiest and most effective solution, provided the flood water is not too high or coming through the ground, is a removable barrier across the door. We already give grants to people who wish to insulate their homes. At the very least, councils should issue clear guidance when they send out council tax bills.

Third, we should look at whether farmers could play a role. Again, they already get grants for environmental stewardship. Perhaps the definition could be widened to include ditch digging and clearance. Farmers know the local land well and could put in place sensible measures.

Fourth, I will be trying to find out what help insurers could give. At the moment, premiums are going up hugely, but insurers still face big payouts if homeowners are not protected.

Finally, and it pains me to say this, the island villages it seems will take second place to large urban centres like Oxford and Abingdon. It is very much up to us to organise ourselves, and local parish councils should organise flood defence groups. These could ask key questions and take action when necessary. For example, is it worth some villages keeping a bank of sand ready to use in an emergency? Could the parish help individual homeowners with flood defence?

This is said to have been a once in a lifetime event. I hope if it becomes a more frequent occurrence, a combination of Government and local action will prevent such devastation happening again.

On local matters, I know that debate continues to rage about traffic management in the village. Iain Brown has done a great job in getting options from the County. I gather the County is sending out 800 questionnaires to find out what people want, and I hope as many people as possible will reply. There is some money available, but it will be re-allocated if we do not decide on a scheme very soon. I am applying in Parliament for a debate on the by-pass, but so far I have been unsuccessful

ED VAIZEY, MP Wantage (Con).
November 2007

NAG REPORT

The Neighbourhood Action Group covering Rural Abingdon is now well established and is meeting on a regular basis. The major concerns identified at the consultation meetings are being addressed and progress has been made on several fronts.

Speeding is an emotive issue and was the No 1 concern identified. The local hot spots were identified and the Speed Indicator Detector (SID) has been used to monitor speeds. The perception of speed is not always the result found when watching the monitor but whilst the vast majority of drivers are within or very close to the permitted speed there are a mindless few who excessively exceed the limit and these are the drivers that need targeting. When a specific location, time or regular abuse is identified we are able to call in the official traffic control officers who will provide additional support and use the official speed detectors.

Anti social behaviour is also being tackled and a major outbreak of graffiti in the Cumnor / Botley area was investigated and the culprits apprehended. Seven teenagers have admitted to various offences of Criminal Damage caused by Graffiti are now cleaning their handiwork up in their own time under police supervision. The District Council would have costs exceeding £3000.00 if they had to do the clean up work. Parking inconsiderately is another issue and wherever possible the Neighbourhood officers are discussing the issue with the individuals concerned before taking official action. The Bus Shelter in Marcham was vandalised prior to the summer holidays and once the culprits were identified close work with the parents and police has resulted in an agreement that the three lads concerned should pay for the damage caused. After 6 weeks work during the summer holidays the lads presented MPC with a cheque for over £600.00 that covered the cost of the damage. This action has reinforced to the lads the personal cost of mindless vandalism and they now fully aware of the consequences of a few minutes stupidity. We believe the action taken by the parents and police has been a far better deterrent than taking them through the courts and we are pleased the lads willingly accepted their punishment.

As concerns are identified we are working with all agencies to resolve issues that could induce crime and the adage of prevention rather than cure is working to our mutual benefit. The police coverage and contact is still a major issue that we are currently working on and I hope to be able to report an improvement over the coming weeks as new PCSOs are recruited trained and take up their posts in Rural NAG7.

MALCOLM DENTON – Chairman

NEW PCSO

Hello, my name is Laura Schmid and I am the new PCSO (Police Community Support Officer) for Marcham. I have recently finished my training and am

open to listening to concerns, opinions and ideas of how to improve the area, making it a happier community. I live in Abingdon, making me very local. Before becoming a PCSO, I completed A levels at a local secondary school. As a PCSO I hope to be able to involve myself with the community and build relationships. I aim to be the approachable, friendly face within Marcham as often as I possibly can be. I can be contacted by using the Police non emergency number or by email, if I am not on duty, you can leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

I look forward to seeing you.

Non emergency number: 08458 505 505
Laura.Schmid@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk. *See Laura's photo on the cover.*

ALL CHANGE AT YOUTH CLUB!

The Youth Club is moving to a more permanent home. The Anson Trust has kindly offered to accommodate us in the Sports and Social Club on Monday and Thursday evenings. With this solid foundation now in place we can build on the opportunities the Youth Club has to offer Marcham's young people. The Club currently offers young people between the ages of 11 and 16 the following opportunities in a safe and caring environment.

Twice weekly club sessions to • Meet up with friends and other young people • Play pool, table tennis, air hockey and other indoor activities • Learn to kickbox • Attend dance classes.

In addition to the club sessions the young people have the opportunity to take part in • Ice skating and ten-pin bowling at local venues on a regular basis • County, regional and national sporting events for both boys and girls • Visits to cinema and theatre • Residential personal development training events.

The Club encourages its members to extend the range of activities offered and to be involved in the running of the Club alongside existing adult volunteers.

We want YOU! To ensure we can continue to play our role in the personal development of the young people of Marcham we need your help. We are looking for • Young people – all newcomers welcome! • Additional enthusiastic, vibrant adults to take an active role in the running and management of the Club.

If you, adults and young people, would like to be a part of the future of the Club or would just like to know more about what it can offer, then please come to an open meeting on **Monday 12 November 2007** in the Sports and Social Club, Anson Field, Marcham at 8.00 pm. Alternatively give Dave Hutchinson a call on 01865 391964 or Chris Ricketts on 01865 391329.