

District Councilor's report for West Hendred PC 09/11/2023

Sarah James

Funding boost available for rural businesses and organisations

A new grant scheme has launched for rural businesses and organisations based in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.

The fund is designed to support capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure that help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

Interested parties are encouraged to submit their application before midday on Friday 24 November 2023 by visiting the [Vale of White Horse District Council website](#).

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have secured this funding through the government's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) as part of the levelling up agenda.

Grant funding is available for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas, growing the local social economy and supporting innovation, investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.

Example projects include the diversification of farm buildings outside of agriculture, establishment of rural community businesses and net-zero infrastructure.

Who can apply?

Town and Parish Councils, public sector organisations, higher and further education institutions, private sector companies, registered charities, constituted community-based organisations, social enterprises (like CICs) are eligible for the scheme.

A grant panel will then meet in February 2024 to discuss each project and assess which projects should receive funding.

Please note that to be eligible for REPF funding, a business or organisation must be located within an eligible area as defined by [Magic Maps](#). To check if your postcode is eligible, please follow the link, select 'Administrative Geographies', 'Other Administrative Boundaries', then 'Rural England Prosperity Fund' from the list of the left of the screen.

(I have checked the map and all of Hendreds Ward is an eligible area.

Time to comment on Oxfordshire's health and wellbeing strategy

Oxfordshire County Council are asking residents to comment on the new county wide draft health and wellbeing strategy. The survey is open until 12 November.

A partnership across the county has worked on a strategy that gives power to our communities to help deliver what is needed to support people to make healthy choices, live independently and stay happier and healthier for longer.

Get involved and [have your say via the county council's website.](#)

Free carbon emissions calculator tool for Town and Parish Councils

VWHDC have launched a free simple-to-use carbon emissions calculator tool for town and parish councils to measure their current carbon emissions using energy and fuel bills. It makes it easy to work out where carbon and cost savings can be made.

For more information, email climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk

Online forum about energy efficiency in homes

We are hosting a free online forum aimed at town and **parish councils** and community groups to help residents bring down their energy use and costs. There will be outside speakers and a Q&A session. It takes place on Tuesday 14 November at 6-7.15pm. To register for the event, people should email climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk

Do you know of residents in properties without gas boilers?

The good news is that they may be eligible for energy efficiency upgrades for their home, such as insulation, solar panels and heat pumps, all funded by the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2). These upgrades can help to reduce energy bills and make homes easier to keep warm. The grants are available to homeowners and landlords whose properties are not heated by gas boilers, with a household income of less than £39,000 and with a low energy rating (D-G).

Please help spread the word – [for more details, see the Welcome the Warmth website.](#)

Extra garden waste

The brown bin service is taking extra garden waste with the normal garden waste collection day between 30 October and 10 November. People can leave out a maximum of up to four standard sized (60L) sacks worth per brown bin subscription, or in boxes / containers equivalent to a bin full. But please, no rubble or builders' waste bags.

More information can be found on the [the Vale garden waste page.](#)

Real Living Wage Motion passed at Council

Thanks to motions put forward by Green Councillors, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have pledged their ongoing commitment for paying staff at least the Real Living Wage.

Both councils currently ensure all directly employed council staff receive at least the Real Living Wage and have done for several years. The Real Living Wage (currently £10.90 with an update due to be announced on 24 October this year) is based on the cost of living – looking at the current cost of household goods and services.

At Vale's Council meeting on Wednesday 11 October, and South's Council meeting on Thursday 12 October, Green Party councillors with cross-party support put forward a motion on the Real Living Wage, which were both passed unanimously.

The councils are now working towards accreditation as a Living Wage employer with the Living Wage Foundation.

This will include setting out a plan of action so all future companies seeking to win council contracts are committed to paying, as a minimum, the Real Living Wage. Whilst it is not in our power to change existing contracts, we will urge our current suppliers and contractors to follow our example and commit to the Real Living Wage.

GARD update following Thames Water's decision to increase the reservoir size

GARD met with the Environment Agency and RAPID recently.

They are advising that if you feel Thames Water have ignored anything in your submission to the Water Resource Management Plan do raise this with Ofwat and the EA. That's because they have until 20th November to go through the response and then will advise DEFRA on whether Thames Water have dealt satisfactorily with submissions to the consultation.

Please keep cc'ing your MP if you do and don't consider it a done deal yet!

Planning application submission for reservoir trial work

The Vale of White Horse District Council is due to receive a planning application for clay compaction trial work early this week in land to the South of Hanney Road, Cow Common (within Steventon Parish).

We understand that the results of these trials will form part of the evidence base Thames Water is likely to submit for the construction of the proposed reservoir in the district. The planning application for the work, which seeks temporary consent for engineering works, will be determined following the normal Vale planning process. We anticipate the process will run for around 13 – 16 weeks, with a view to a committee date in January 2024. We will update you with the link for the planning application once it is available.

Improved process for S106 affordable housing grants

As part of the councils' work to help meet the urgent need for affordable housing in the region, VWHDC is improving the process for developers, registered housing providers, Community Land Trusts and self-builders applying for Section 106 affordable housing grants. The revamped application process includes clear evaluation guidelines and free expert consultation services for applicants.

The new application form will be available online soon and includes questions on minimising energy use and carbon emissions, as well as identifying tree-planting plans, and biodiversity protections and improvements.

See our websites for application forms and more information: [visit Vale website](#). If you have any questions, please email affordablehousingteam@southandvale.gov.uk

Cost of Living Help

<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/cost-of-living-crisis-advice-and-support/>

Summarises help from the district council and other sources.

The Community Hub can also point people to a range of help:

- Tel: 01235 422600
- Email: communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk