

Kidlington Parish Council Chair's report July 2021

It has been good to see that (at the time of writing) new Covid cases have been going steadily down in Kidlington, as in Oxfordshire as a whole. We are now well below the national average, having been way above it not many weeks ago. But the overall level is still a cause for real concern.

The Council has continued along the slow path to normality. Having cancelled the annual Gala Day last year because of the pandemic, we were able to hold it in Exeter Close this July, in Covid-safe conditions outdoors, and were very gratified by the number, range and interest of the attractions, and the high level of attendance throughout. Catering was provided by the admirable Cherwell Collective who, with their usual remarkable ability to find helpers, had enlisted a group of army chefs: they did brisk business.

Another summer activity has been the revision of the Council's web pages at <http://www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk/>. The main aim is to reflect better the evolving nature of the Council's activities, especially through a new section on the environment. This details our work and plans for trees, green spaces, rewilding, walking and cycling, and traffic, and highlights the eco activities of Cherwell Collective, including a new lunch club for residents on Thursdays at 12 in Exeter Hall, that uses only surplus, seasonal, or locally grown produce. We are also working with the Kidlington Churches, Cherwell Collective and other stakeholders to organize an Eco Festival in October, in the period leading up to the COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow in October/November.

One environmental issue that has been raised recently, in the last issue of Kidlington News and elsewhere, is noise from the airport. This is certainly a great deal less bad than it was when I first moved to the village, more than 20 years ago, but it can still be annoying, especially on warm summer days in the garden. Unfortunately there is not much that can be done about it. There is an Airport Consultative Committee, which Parish and District Councillors attend. This was recently reconvened at our request, and should meet regularly from now on. Councillors raise residents' concerns at these meetings, but we have no authority at all over the airport. If residents feel that there has been nuisance flying, the best thing they can do is complain direct. The airport has a Noise Concerns and Complaints webpage with a number and email address for complaints: see <https://www.oxfordairport.co.uk/noise-concerns-complaints/>.

Finally, it is sad to record that Cherwell Development Watch Alliance has lost its legal challenge to the planned development of 4,400 houses in and around Kidlington to meet Oxford's housing needs. All credit to the Alliance nevertheless, for demonstrating that Green Belt encroachments such as this will not go unchallenged. But all we can do now is work with the developers and the District Council to try and minimize the resultant infrastructure problems, and gain such benefits as can be obtained.

DAVID ROBEY