

Happy Christmas from Jerry and Neil



WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL – UPPER MEON VALLEY WARD

Parish update for December 2024

National Park Tree Planting Scheme

More than 20,000 tree plantings and a new woodland the size of five football pitches are part of a major nature recovery drive this winter by the South Downs National Park. Among the tree planting efforts will be over 400 new disease-resistant elms, helping to return the iconic English elm to the South Downs landscape after it was decimated by disease. As National Tree Week gets under way, scores of trees are going into the ground at 20 new sites across Sussex and Hampshire.

The 20,294 trees being planted this winter bring the Trees for The Downs initiative ever closer to smashing its target of planting 100,000 trees by the middle of this decade. The total is currently almost 75,000 and the National Park hopes to reach the target as it marks its 15th birthday next year.

Some 20 sites across the length and breadth of the National Park are benefiting from tree planting thanks to Trees for the Downs, which launched five years ago and is led by the South Downs National Park Trust, the official charity for the National Park.

The planting this year has been made possible by a number of generous donations from the public and donors, including Boomtown – whose support has funded more than half of the trees with planting focused at sites in and around the festival. Support has also come from American Express, South East Water, Sykes Cottages, University of Sussex, and the London to Brighton EV Rally.

In order to hit the 100,000 target, the South Downs National Park Trust is inviting expressions of interest for tree planting for the winter of 2025/2026. To make an application for potential tree planting next year, visit <https://southdownstrust.org.uk/trees-for-the-downs-fund/>
The deadline for applications is 31 March 2025.

To donate to Trees for the Downs
visit <https://southdowns.enthuse.com/TreesForTheDowns#!/>

Rough sleeping support

One of our residents recently raised their concerns with us about the level of support provided to people sleeping rough across the district, particularly at this time of year as the thermometer plunges. We thought it would be good to share this response from officers at Winchester council.

“The council operates an outreach service in partnership with Trinity and The Beacon and this service engages with individuals to try and reconnect them with their family/home, makes offers of accommodation where appropriate and provides other forms of support. Our outreach worker is out every day Monday – Friday. The council also offers an out of hours service for any individuals who need to reach the council regarding accommodation out of office hours. Our partners also provide warm spaces, hot food, advice and assistance 7 days a week and the churches also assist with this.

Every individual sleeping rough who has a local connection to Winchester maybe offered accommodation in the form of either supported housing, bed and breakfast accommodation and council owned temporary accommodation, whilst long term accommodation options are explored. For those who don't have a local connection we provide support in reconnecting to their hometown (if it is safe to do so) and the council can offer travel warrants if this is a barrier to returning home.

The housing service work very closely with other internal services such as community safety and car parks to address the concerns that you have raised, and this work is always on going.

I can assure you that the council engages with all those known to be sleeping rough but some individuals for many reasons do not or don't feel they are able to or want to engage with our services and accept offers of accommodation, however our outreach service continually engages with them in case they feel they are in a position to take up the council's and partners offers of support/accommodation.

The council also enacts the severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP) when the temperatures are either at freezing or extreme heat and we offer accommodation to any individual during that period. The council cannot make/force any person to take up this offer but it is made to anyone who the council knows is sleeping rough or to individuals who approach the council or partners directly.

For individuals who often sleep rough, their situation is very complex and there has often been severe trauma experienced by the individuals, so any support the council offers has to have regard to that, respectful of the individuals wishes and needs, and any response has to be trauma informed.”

Boomtown Festival licensing review

We reported in last month’s parish update that Hampshire Constabulary had requested a Licensing sub-committee hearing to review the licensing for the Boomtown Festival on the grounds of crime and disorder, sadly due to another death at this year’s festival. This was scheduled to take place in the Guildhall on Monday 25th November. To everyone’s surprise on Thursday 21st November the Police withdrew their representation to review Boomtown’s License.

In view of the Police’s withdrawal of their representation, council officers’ recommendation was to adjourn the hearing in order to provide additional time to reassess the resubmission of an updated subcommittee information pack and the manner in which the adjourned subcommittee hearing will be heard at a future date to be agreed.

It is our understanding that the Police felt that they had jumped the gun slightly by calling for a licensing review without first consulting with Boomtown Festival’s management regarding potential improvements that could be made to the Event Management Plan.

Now that the Police have withdrawn from this particular licensing review, the issues raised in their representation will no longer be considered when the committee resumes, possibly, in January. However, the 17 other representations from Parish Councils and individuals will be considered when the committee reconvenes to review the existing licence which they could either withdraw, do nothing or apply new conditions to.

We will have to see what the Police agree with Boomtown management, in terms of any changes to the Event Management Plan, but for these to be enforceable as conditions to the event licence the Police would have to apply for another separate review and resubmit their representations.

Kind Regards

Jerry Pett

Neil Bolton

Winchester City Council Ward Members for Upper Meon Valley