



Winter 2023/24

SIGNPOSTS

News and views from Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling group
Issue 10

HADDENHAM-THAME GREENWAY: 'DOING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE'



Buckinghamshire Council, taking the lead working with Oxfordshire County Council

We are assured by Buckinghamshire Council officers in the transport strategy department that background work is progressing on the Haddenham-Thame Greenway, the longed-for off-road link between our two communities that will provide a safe connection for those who chose to walk, wheel, cycle or ride rather than drive.

Cabinet member for Transport **Steve Broadbent** was recently at pains to point out that the lengthy investigations

currently underway are in no sense a delaying tactic but simply a case of the council 'doing what needs to be done', in line with its ambitions to promote active travel around the county.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS? Please write to us ...
What do you see as a reasonable period for negotiations following the Councils' completion of their 'Detailed Options Review' this autumn 2023?

The extreme scarcity of any concrete public information on their website might suggest otherwise¹, but the explanation is a simple one: land. To make the project a reality, they will have to deal with landowners, and giving away any detail might jeopardise their negotiating position. So, frustrating as it might be, we are unlikely to receive much information for some time.

Yet officers are optimistic that a proposal could go to the two councils' leadership within 2024.

WHAT CAN WE DO WHILE WE REMAIN STUCK IN LIMBO?

(Comments of Alan Thawley, Chair of Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling group, [continue on the back page](#)) / Firstly ...

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¹ See <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-transport/walking-cycling-and-wheeling/plans-to-improve-walking-cycling-and-wheeling/the-buckinghamshire-greenway/northern-greenway-connections/>

MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS WAIT – WHY?



A rallying cry from a former chair of Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling group:

It is not for want of trying! Both Haddenham and Thame have been campaigning for a safe walking and cycling route between the two places for 24 years. Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling Group was formed by Robyn Thorogood in 1999 and, working with a group in Thame, got in touch with both Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire County Councils.

This is the first problem: there are two councils involved. For the first few years Oxfordshire was in favour and was creating other cycleways, but car-fancying Buckinghamshire opposed it. By 2008, Oxfordshire cooled, just as Buckinghamshire was won over and financed a study of possible routes.

Problem 2: which route? Three main options were initially considered, all with their own pros and cons. A direct link to the station is an important factor, which makes the southern route via Tythrop, problematic. The other main possibilities were (from Haddenham) alongside Thame Road and the busy A418, or via the bridleway to Scotsgrove Mill, then across the flood plain to Moored Lane.

Problem 3: landowners. Some are implacably opposed but the need to deal with several different landowners along any potential route inevitably brings complications. We are relying on the councils not to take no for an answer.

“ We, in Haddenham and Thame, have campaigned with petitions, a mass bike ride, joined official committees, written articles, used local radio, developed relationships with consultants, contacted Council officers and Councillors ...

Problem 4: the Cost. One previous estimate was £2-million. Both councils have set aside developers' money but will need to apply for external funding on top of that.

Problem 5: A process that has been allowed to drag on endlessly. Since 2006 numerous public consultations, expensive outside consultants and reports must have cost a fortune but delivered no real progress. This needs to stop.

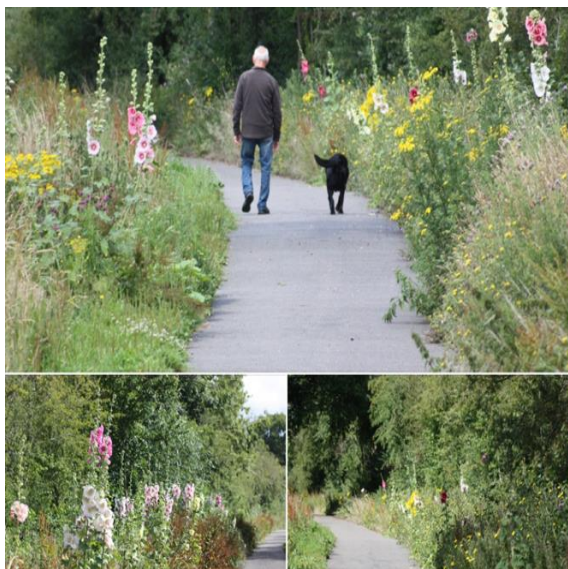
We, in Haddenham and Thame, have campaigned with petitions, a mass bike ride, joined official committees, written articles, used local radio, developed relationships with consultants, contacted Council officers and Councillors trying to persuade them to act; and all to no avail so far.

What next?

- Keep pushing.
- Ensure no more opportunities are wasted.
- Never give up.
- Join us.

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WHO WANTS THE HADDENHAM-THAME GREENWAY?



Green Lane in 2020. Photo's: by kind permission, Sharon Butler.

Some seven years ago there was controversy in the village as to whether to upgrade the footpath west from the Post Office towards Dinton, now called Green Lane, to greenway standard. Overgrown at the time and used mainly by adventurous walkers and blackberry pickers, many people wanted to keep it that way. But today, five years on from completion as a greenway, it's a notable village asset and peopled by walkers and cyclists of every ilk, joggers, disabled, families, children learning to ride, horse riders and more.

Which is strange because it doesn't go anywhere. Serious walkers can proceed over muddy fields to Dinton or perilously along the A418 to a side road to Cuddington, but for most people it is a safe and quiet walk of up to 20 minutes out, then back to Haddenham.

A greenway to Thame on the other hand, linking two substantial settlements, would not only attract all this 'leisure' traffic, starting from both Haddenham and Thame, but also a serious amount of end-to-end 'economic' traffic: commuters to station, commerce and industry; teenagers to school; consumer trips for shopping and services etc.. Much of this traffic, now entirely car-borne, would, at least in fair weather, be



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removed from the roads and car parks, with consequent benefit to personal and public health, our own surroundings and the planet.

It is this economic traffic, the potential for 'modal shift', which most interests government and potential funders, but the leisure traffic is also important, if less measurable. There is no better local example of a well-used and highly valued greenway than the Phoenix Trail between Thame and Princes Risborough.

Opened now 22 years ago as a leisure and cycle path along the old railway line between Thame and Princes Risborough, the Phoenix Trail now attracts users of all kinds starting from various access points along its route. While there are cyclists who commute the 7-mile distance to Risborough, this traffic is small compared with the daily use of the path by hundreds for exercise and pleasure.

Haddenham-Thame, by contrast, is less than half the distance and a much easier destination journey for all levels of ability. It is such an obvious missing element in our local infrastructure that we shall find it difficult and embarrassing to explain to our grandchildren why its realisation took so long.

AG

Learning from Others:

VIKING BIKING



Photo: Louise on her cargo bike in Malmö ©2023

Imagine! Overnight. Bikes become the natural choice for short trips. The school run or shopping trip means getting out the cargo bike. A weekend jolly to support the local football team is as likely by bike as by bus. Owning a car becomes a luxury.

This was the transformation my friend Louise experienced, moving with work to Sweden. One minute in car-centric, leafy commuter-land of southeast England; the next, across the North Sea and Øresund Strait, in Malmö, where it is reported that 30 per cent of the local population's trips are by bike.

The everyday landscape is so different, with most larger roads having clearly designated cycle paths: separated from motor traffic by a raised or lowered curb (no paint-only jobs), and from pedestrians by a bold white line. Cars give way to cyclists at crossings. Housing estates are criss-crossed by paths exclusively for bikes, connecting purpose-built cycle garages to main destinations.

Louise has lived in Malmö for a year now – so how is she finding it?

Now proud owner of a blue, three-wheeled electric cargo bike – no car – she explains a challenge:

“ 30 per cent of the local population's trips are by bike ... this has depended upon an initial vision and enduring commitment ...

'... a car driver will expect a cyclist approaching a crossing point to cross without stopping and will brake in anticipation ... When transporting my two young children I cannot make myself cross without stopping – other cyclists show no such hesitation.'

So, still adjusting to the practicalities but fully converted to a new way of moving around.

Malmö is a city – not a rural centre like Haddenham. But could we imagine Aylesbury becoming significantly more cycling-friendly, as our 'Garden City'? Could we imagine more cycling spreading beyond Aylesbury-town as people see the benefits – independence for young people, money savings, better health and better environment?

In Malmö the cycling infrastructure has been developed over years to give cyclists confidence and convenience, but this long haul has depended upon an initial vision *and* enduring commitment.

A lesson for all of us ...

DS

UPDATE FROM HADDENHAM SCHOOLS



Image: Logo of St Mary's School Travel Plan ©2023

Did you know that the number of children at Haddenham schools has increased by more than 50 per cent in the last ten years and now stands at about 650?

More than 10% of these children live outside Haddenham and have to be driven in, putting pressure on Woodways and Church End². In addition to this, even some Haddenham families drive to school, for all the reasons set out in our October 2020 parents' survey³, especially safety concerns.

The survey showed very high support among parents (79%) for a 20mph speed limit on village roads. Some of the new housing is a long way from the schools and, with poor pavements and high volumes of fast traffic, walking and cycling is a real challenge for young children.

MEANWHILE, at the national level ...

Bikeability, the government-supported charity which provides cycle training for young people, has just been awarded £50 million over two years, which is an increase in real terms of about 10 per cent from what it was getting before. There is a further £5 million to support walk-to-school programmes and £500,000 for awards to schools and other organisations which show particular success in delivering active travel in their communities. The government claims two million children will benefit⁴. - DS

All three schools work hard to encourage parents to use the car less. They produce 'Park & Stride' maps and ask parents to park away from congested areas near schools. They run regular walk and cycle to school events which are generally well supported. Scooter and cycle training sessions are arranged.

Despite this there are ongoing concerns about congestion in Woodways and inconsiderate parking near all schools.

What can we do to help?

- if you're a parent please follow school advice
- drive considerately in the village, e.g. at 20mph, especially when families are on journeys to and from school
- if at all possible, avoid school areas, Woodways and Church End at these times.

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² This compares with St Mary's School experience in 2020 of around 40 per cent coming from outside Haddenham.

³ Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling group: *Survey of Parents' Views on Travelling to Schools in Haddenham* (February 2021).

⁴ Funding see: <https://tinyurl.com/mr2nvm9a> and <https://tinyurl.com/38rxwtfh>; equivalent to about £1,000 per school per year.

CLOSE PASS



Photo: From the police campaign to raise driver awareness.

An everyday story

Pedalling along the main road towards Longwick one sunny Thursday afternoon, I hear a car approaching behind me. *I hope they wait*, I think, given the oncoming cars. But as sometimes happens, instead of slowing down for a few seconds, the driver decides to squeeze through, whooshing past my right elbow. Probably around a foot and a half away. At speed it feels closer.

And on they went, presumably oblivious. Unless of course they heard me shouting, or saw me gesticulating in their rear-view mirror (I'm not proud of this; road rage may be cathartic but the cumulative effect is just to increase ill-feeling, mutual suspicion and reckless behaviour).

My anger subsided fairly quickly. I find your response to a close pass varies between disappointment, anger and shock, depending on the level of recklessness. The worse it is, the bigger the adrenaline spike and the longer it takes your heart to stop racing.

Anyone who rides a bike will experience hundreds of close passes – some much worse than this. Some friends say they've grown used to it, but I find it

Small wonder then that we struggle to convince people to swap car for bike on short journeys! ... Locally, our highway authority should be doing a lot more to provide safe, car-free routes ...

worries me more with age. In the worst cases, cyclists can be forced off the road. Even hit.

This wasn't the only example that day. Just the worst. And memorable because it made me change plans. I was heading to Princes Risborough School to pick up my 11-year-old son and cycle home. The idea had been to go back on the road, as it wasn't a busy time. Now though, we reverted to the safer but longer (and admittedly much more pleasant) Phoenix Trail route.

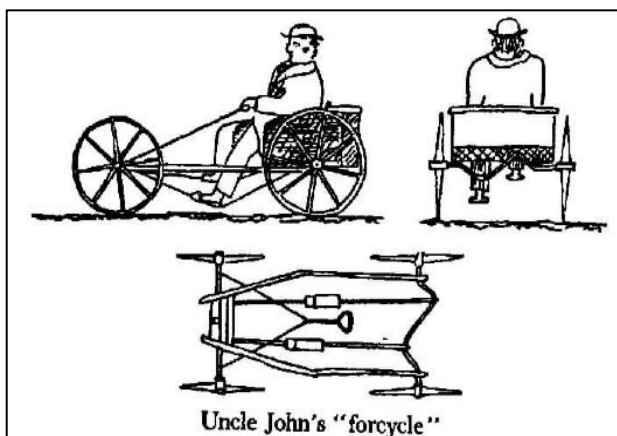
As our readers will know, the Highway Code now calls on drivers to leave at least 1.5 metres (about 5 feet) when passing cyclists at speeds up to 30mph, more if they're going faster. Most drivers are considerate and comply but far too many do not, mainly through lack of awareness of the rules or the effects of their behaviour, I'm sure. A minority, however, appear to want to scare you by deliberately passing too close.

Small wonder then that we struggle to convince people to swap car for bike on short journeys! The benefits are countless, from better health and lower carbon emissions, to less congestion for those who have to drive! But until we can address both real and perceived danger, cycling on our busy roads will remain mainly the preserve of the experienced and/or foolhardy, delete as appropriate.

Locally, our highway authority should be doing a lot more to provide safe, car-free routes. Particularly for school students. Ultimately, there should surely be a safe option for every student who wants to cycle to school. Starting with the Haddenham to Thame Greenway, but also catering for those who travel to Princes Risborough and Aylesbury.

AT

HADDENHAM RIDES INTO THE FUTURE



Walter Rose⁵ (1871-1960) tells us Haddenham was called 'silly' because it thatched its ponds to keep the ducks dry. Similarly Long Crendon was said to put hurdles in the road to keep smallpox out. Xenophobia ruled. A favourite pastime for Haddenham youth was 'bird-wopping', stoning the hedgerows. Small wonder that visiting strangers might expect a hard time. And a stranger on a 'bone-shaker' or a penny-farthing? Even worse! He (sic) would be greeted with laughter. And stones! At first a 'velocipede's' tyres were solid, then it might have a pneumatic saddle. Soon local craftsmen were making their own versions of two-wheeled transport or even going further: Walter's Uncle John had a 'forcycle' made for him (see image above).

But when even the likes of Quaker Denchfield arrived from as far away as Weedon on a 'Safety' (see image in right hand column) for his Meetings, the laughter and the stones stopped. In 1886 Walter had observed the first 'Safety' in Haddenham. With wheels of equal size and a chain drive! And when the first steamroller appeared to flatten the ubiquitous flint, jaws dropped. Bicycles became all the rage. And the rage was fully exploited. Twelve Pounds or more for a 'Safety' was a lot of money (not far off Two Thousand Pounds now), but enterprising folk in nearby towns rented out

“ HG Wells: 'Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race.'

bicycles. Even to women! By 1896 there was a national 'Bicycle Bubble' as people rushed to invest in the pneumatic tyre.



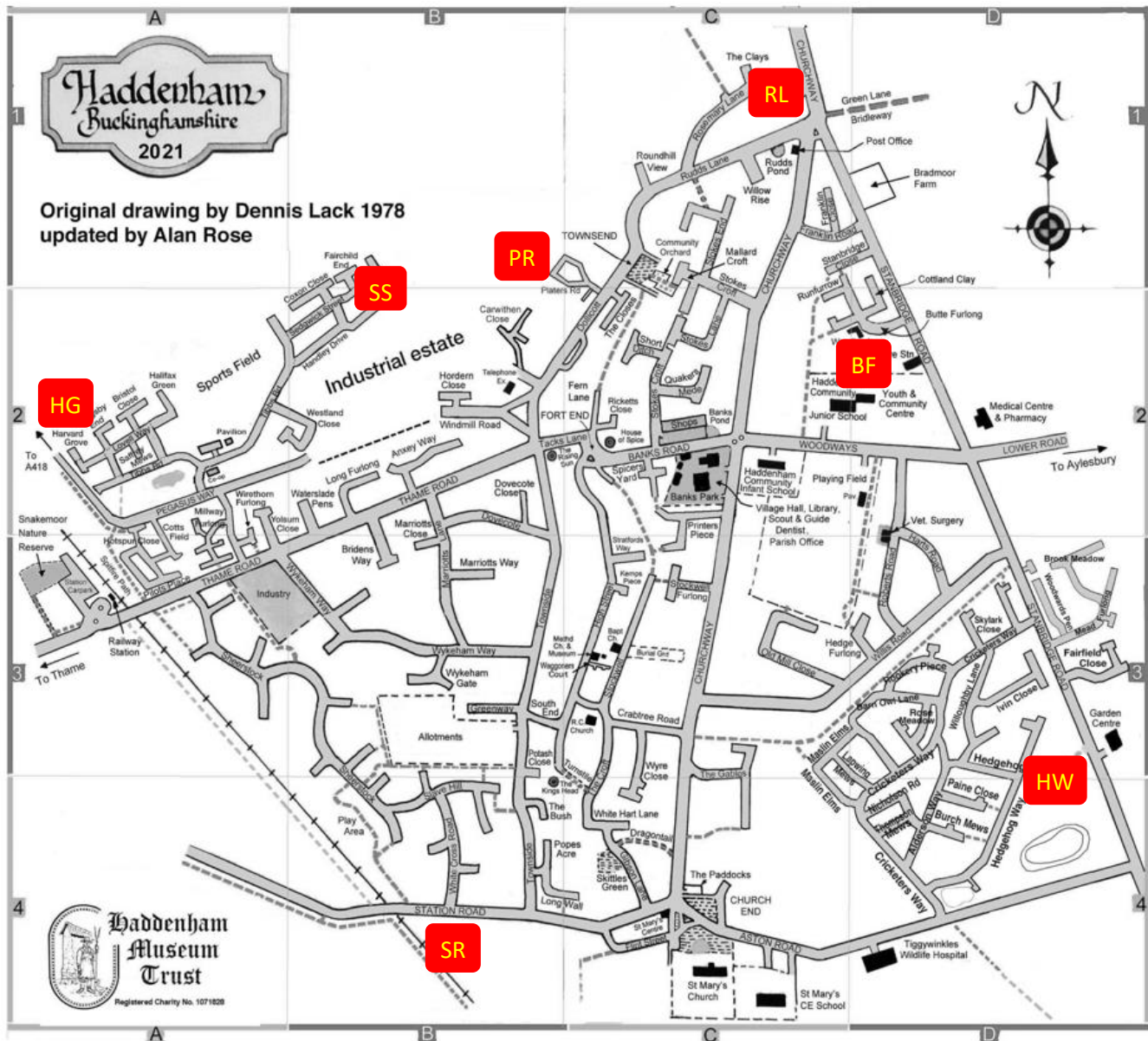
HG Wells wrote: 'Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race.' And in 1899, a woman cyclist declared: 'The bicycle is... the women's emancipator. It imparts an open-air freedom and freshness to a life hitherto cribbed, cabined and confined [calling up *Macbeth*] by convention.'

Haddenham welcomed the world – possibly including Daisy on her 'bicycle made for two'.

BA

⁵ Carpenter and author; his *Fifty Years Ago* (1931), *The Village Carpenter* (1937) and *Good Neighbours* (1942) – the first and second containing the 'forcycle' image – are still classics of Haddenham life years ago (available in Haddenham Community Library). The advert for the 'Cogent' Safety was published in Bakers Wolverhampton Trade Directory 1887, digitised and uploaded by Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies and Wolverhampton Arts and Museums Services.

HOW WALKABLE IS HADDENHAM?



Map showing selected 'extremities' of Haddenham

How walkable? ...

Ten years ago Haddenham was considered a 'large village', but its village character was maintained by the thought that we were still, just, a '20-minute village', meaning that any possible journey within the village could be walked in less than 20 minutes. Certainly, the Churchway roundabout –

standing for shops, schools, village hall, etc. – could be reached by anyone on foot well within this time.

This is no longer the case, as is shown by the table below, which shows the walking times from the current extremities of the village to various needed facilities for an unhurried person of average fitness.

Table: Residential extremities to needed village facilities (walking times in minutes)

	Sedgwick St SS	Harvard Grove HG	Platers Rd PR	Station Rd SR	Hedgehog Way HW	Rosemary Lane RL	Butte Furlong BF	Average
St Mary's Sch.	30	24	24	9	12	24	20	20
Garden Centre	36	32	22	20	6	18	9	20
Station	15	7	20	13	31	23	27	19
Co-op stores	7	5	19	15	29	22	26	18
Medical Cent.	32	28	17	22	8	11	2	17
Post Office	30	26	10	24	17	4	7	17
Churchway Rbt	25	21	11	16	12	9	6	14
Average	25	20	18	17	16	16	14	

Note: Walking times of more than 20 minutes are coloured red

Average walking times to village facilities are shown in the bottom line and give a rough index of the relative remoteness of each residential location. Walking times of more than 20 minutes are coloured red. Clearly the Aspen Park development on the old airfield has by far the most figures in red. The residents of Sedgwick Road have an average walk time of 25 minutes to each of the facilities mentioned, compared with less than 14 minutes for residents of Butte Furlong. Of the recent developments, The Grove (Hedgehog Way) is much less remote than Aspen Park.

The *horizontal* averages (on the right) give an index of the relative remoteness of the various facilities from

the people they serve. St Mary's School (and Church) score poorly, the same level of inconvenience as the Garden Centre (which by its nature is a driving destination). The Post Office and Medical Centre (and Pharmacy) appear not quite as remote from their customers overall as complained of in some quarters.

Figures in red notwithstanding, the village does remain 20-minute walkable for practical purposes for most people most of the time. There is a social need to draw Aspen Park closer to the hub of village life and, in this sense, the Co-op Stores and the new airfield pavilion have made a good start.

AG

NEWS IN BRIEF – PLEASE EMAIL HADDSWAC@GMAIL.COM WITH YOUR VIEWS!

ASTON ROAD PATH OVERDUE

The promised footway between The Grove and St Mary's Infant School was last reported on by [SIGNPOSTS in January 2023](#)⁶. We are now advised that agreement with Buckinghamshire Council on the associated drainage plan (so that the path can be built) is expected anytime ...

BENCHES: YOUR VIEWS PLEASE

Haddenham Village Society's 'Future of Haddenham' meeting generated 154 ideas (with some duplication). One was to review Haddenham's provision of benches. HaddSWAC is on the case.

Please let us know your ideas, even if you would simply like a bench in a specific location. Please email HaddSWAC@gmail.com now.

⁶ See page 8 at <https://tinyurl.com/3zwx55xn>

MASTERPLAN FOR A418?

Recently several proposals have been made to help navigate the barrier to walking and cycling that is the busy Aylesbury Road (A418). Potential elements include: an improved Kings Cross junction (the Churchway-Dadbrook crossing); a 400-metre footway link between the A418-end of the Green Lane and the footway to Gibraltar (onwards to Aylesbury); and a short footway to complete a Round Haddenham Path for casual walkers.

Good news: the Parish Council is obtaining a quote for a feasibility study for the last-mentioned footway, for possible funding by the [Community Board](#)⁷.

RAINY SEASON

Out dog-walking? Keep your dogs out of our brooks and the river Thame as weather gets wetter!

For example, over some time in the three-day period 21 to 23 October (not the rainiest time in October), eight local sewage treatment works (STWs) were discharging raw sewage into our waterways – for an average of 15 hours each.

And bad news from Stone STW. Thames Water now tells us its plans to reduce ‘spills’ upstream of Haddenham, originally by end-2023, are now postponed to ‘by March 2025’.

Sadly, [latest research from Oxford University](#)⁸ shows that even treated discharge contributes to ecological problems – more than agricultural run-off. The next step is to require thorough treatment to be enshrined in more rigorous sewage treatment work permits.

A landowner perspective:

In the next issue of SIGNPOSTS we plan to look at the evolving role of landowners as custodians of the planet’s ultimate asset, the land, supporting our recreation and nature’s biodiversity as well as producing food.

ALSO

Two ‘weatherproof’ walks of about 2½ miles each.

And, of course, latest news on the Haddenham-Thame Greenway.

⁷ See <https://tinyurl.com/ym6hatj8>

⁸ See <https://tinyurl.com/2kyb62d4>

PAVEMENT PARKING PETITION

[Living Streets](#)⁹ has organised a petition for action on pavement parking in England, highlighting that it is now over three years since the Department for Transport completed its consultation on the subject. Living Streets say that, although local authorities will need to exempt certain streets, pavement parking should be banned by default. [Like in Scotland](#)¹⁰ where this became effective from 11 December 2023.

HADDENHAM-THAME GREENWAY: ‘DOING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE’

(Continued from the first page ... [back to first page](#))

Firstly, keep the faith: Buckinghamshire is already working to expand its network of greenways in other parts of the county and Oxfordshire is similarly committed to active travel.

But we cannot be complacent: linking Haddenham and Thame will be a complex project, and it will ultimately need political will to ensure it becomes a reality. So it is our job to keep the scheme front and centre in decision-makers minds. We are supportive of the two councils’ efforts, but adamant that they must hold their nerve and push forward without delay.

To be kept informed of our campaign to promote the greenway, click [here](#).

Alan Thawley, Chair

Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling group

SIGNPOSTS is very grateful for support from Haddenham Fete and the Haddenham Beer Festival so that we can print copies of this newsletter, SIGNPOSTS: (a) so that those without Internet access can obtain a copy, and (b) to encourage new subscribers.

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To subscribe, FREE, simply email your request to HaddSWAC@gmail.com.

⁹ ‘The UK charity for everyday walking’: see <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk>

¹⁰ See <https://tinyurl.com/3vp72r6m>