

THATCHAM NEWS

THATCHAM

Keeping in touch

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Man admits stalking

A MAN has admitted stalking a woman.

Christopher Guy appeared in Reading Magistrates' Court on Thursday, July 31.

The 30-year-old, of Westfield Road, Thatcham, admitted stalking a woman, sending unwanted messages and by turning up at her home. In addition, he admitted sending a grossly offensive, obscene or indecent electronic message. Both offences were committed in Berkshire on a specific date in February.

Magistrates ordered pre-sentence reports. Mr Guy was released on bail with conditions.

Home closure extended

POLICE have successfully applied to have a home closure order extended by three months due to reported antisocial behaviour and disorder.

Officers told Reading magistrates on Thursday, August 7, that the application was made in respect of 121, Urquhart Road, Thatcham under Section 82 of the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

'Clear demand for mental health hub'

Service has met with 23 young people in its first six weeks

By LAUREN ABBOTT
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A NEW children's mental health service – caring for youngsters as young as 11 – has already met with 23 young people in its first weeks of opening.

Officials say the number of families to have sought help from the new Youth Wellbeing Hub in Thatcham in just six weeks shows there is a 'clear and growing demand' for early mental health support in West Berkshire.

Leading mental health charity Response has launched the service at its newly-refurbished Carramar site.

Designed to be youth-led and non-clinical, the Hub aims to relieve the pressure on schools and community services and help



The new hub has offered to support to 23 local children in just a few weeks

reduce NHS waiting times by offering early help to children, teenagers and their families in a safe and inclusive space.

While the Hub will officially open on Friday, October 3, 23 local children have already benefited from its expertise thanks to a soft launch of services this summer.

Jamie Douglas, associate director of children, young people and

families at Response, said: "We've seen first-hand how vital this Hub is to the young people and families in Thatcham."

"This is more than just a service, it's a lifeline."

"We're proud of what we've achieved with one dedicated keyworker so far, but we know the demand is growing and schools are asking for more support."

"With additional funding and community backing, we can extend our reach and ensure no young person feels alone in their mental health journey."

The Hub will be offering a variety of services, including after school drop-ins, one-to-one support and family sessions.

All activities will be designed to empower young people and create community connections while reducing the stigma that can exist around mental health issues.

Response, which was founded more than 60 years ago, is a charity dedicated to transforming lives through mental health support and housing, offering care to people aged eight to over 80 across Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.



Look out for the baby dinosaur

KidsFest fun is back tomorrow

GET ready to stomp and explore as KidsFest Thatcham returns with a roar today (Thursday).

The free dinosaur-themed day will take place from 10am until 3pm.

All the family fun will take place in the town centre, at Thatcham Library and on the Turnfields Recreation Ground.

Organised by Thatcham Town Council and sponsored by Picture It Framed and Gardner Leader, the event will bring the community together for a Jurassic-sized day of entertainment and activities, including a Little Dino Explorers Zone featuring inflatables, an ice cream van and Juggling Jake with his circus skills workshops.

There will also be a Dino Disco, dinosaur hunt, dinosaur arts and crafts and a dinosaur trail.

VILLAGE NEWS

Man accused of child rape

A MAN accused of raping a child has been remanded in custody.

Jamie Burke also faces other serious charges involving child sexual abuse.

The 33-year-old, of Bourne End, Pangbourne, appeared in the dock at Reading Magistrates' Court on Friday, August 8.

He faces nine charges in total. Mr Burke is accused of five counts of raping a female child.

In addition, he is accused of sexually assaulting a girl child.

Next, Mr Burke is charged with causing or inciting a child to look at sexual communications, including images of himself committing a sex act, for his sexual gratification.

He also faces a similar charge of causing a child to look at images and videos of a person engaging in a sexual activity.

Finally, Mr Burke is charged with making indecent images of a naked child.

All the offences are said to have occurred in the Reading postal area on various specific dates.

Mr Burke spoke only to confirm his details at the hearing.

Rape that involves penetration is an indictable-only offence in the UK and cannot be heard in a magistrates' court.

Magistrates therefore declined further jurisdiction and sent all the above matters to be dealt with by a judge and, in the event of a trial, by a jury, sitting at Reading Crown Court on a date to be fixed.

Mr Burke was denied bail and was remanded in custody.

Farmer leads fight against seed factory

Opposition to resubmitted Leckhampstead cleaning plant plans

By NIKI HINMAN
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A LECKHAMPSTEAD farmer is leading the charge to prevent plans for a wildflower seed factory on neighbouring land.

The resubmitted plan by CYO Seeds for a seed cleaning plant opposite Nightingale Farm in Wantage Road comes after a previous application was thrown out by West Berkshire Council planning department.

John Duffield, who farms land to the north and east of the proposed site and has been leading the fight against the plan, said little has changed with the new application.

"The application is similar to the previous plan, with a few changes including calling it an agricultural development rather than an industrial one," he said.

"The council has been quite clear that this location is entirely inappropriate for an industrial development when it rejected the previous application."

The applicant says its objective over the last couple of years has been to diversify its current operation to be more climate change resilient and grow wildflowers on its

own land and land managed by the company.

It says the operational requirements involve farming the crop, drying it within 48 hours of harvest, seed cleaning, viability analysis, then bespoke seed blending.

The site at Leckhampstead would be extended beyond the current situation of the on-site wildflower fields and agricultural barn, currently being built, to include additional farm machinery, a laboratory and administration building, and drying, processing and seed facilities.

Four seasonal workers and one permanent worker's accommodation is also required, it says, for multiple reasons, including security of invaluable equipment to the business and local farmers, as well as work processes and health and safety requirements.

The planning application before West Berkshire Council says it is

essential that the facility is clustered together in one place to ensure the harvested wildflower seeds are processed in short operating windows, potentially under adverse weather conditions.

West Berkshire Council rejected the plan in November 2024, citing inappropriate location for industrial use, plus traffic worries and impact on the landscape.

Mr Duffield continued: "I believe that little has changed in the new plan and I would urge anyone who cares about this unspoilt area of countryside to join our campaign to halt the application."

"Not only would it damage the countryside, but it would also create a dangerous precedent for this type of development and house building in the area."

The council has set a deadline of Monday, September 1, for people to comment on the new application.

A report was commissioned in 2024 by international law firm CMS. It identified 40 alternative sites for the factory, which were considered more suitable than the site in Wantage Road and were not in an area of AONB.

For more planning applications across West Berkshire, you can visit the Public Notice Portal at publicnoticeportal.uk/

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VILLAGES

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Scrubland catches alight in Brimpton Common field fire

MORE than two-and-a-half hectares of scrubland were set ablaze due to a field fire.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue received reports of a fire between Paices Hill and Brimpton Common at 8.41pm on Monday.

Crews from Mortimer and Theale fire stations were sent to the scene, alongside two off-road vehicles, a water bowser, an incident command unit and three officers.

Crews and a water bowser from Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service were also sent to the scene.

Firefighters used four hose reel jets and two main jets to extinguish the fire before returning to reinspect the area.

Crews were at the scene for approximately six hours and five minutes.