

GREEN MATTERS



Divers recover a shopping trolley.

Leading the way

BARLESTONE Community Centre is leading the way in going green with the installation of 36 new solar panels and three Tesla batteries. The upgrade will help the centre generate about 70 per cent of its own electricity, saving money and reducing its carbon footprint by an estimated four tonnes every year.

The project means the Leicestershire parish council can keep hire fees affordable and was made possible with support from The National Lottery Community Fund, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council's Parish & Community Initiative Fund, JBM Solar Projects 26 (RWE Renewables UK Solar & Storage), and the parish council's own funds.

Council chair Liz Kynoch said: "We're cutting costs, doing our bit for the planet, and making sure Barlestone continues to have a welcoming, affordable place where people can meet."



Barlestone Community Centre.

Bus shelters are on green line

BUS passengers in Thatcham are able to enjoy a greener, cleaner journey thanks to the installation of four new shelters featuring living grass roofs – a first for West Berkshire.

The innovative shelters create mini green spaces around the town, providing a boost for local biodiversity, while offering a modern, attractive upgrade for passengers.

The living roofs help absorb carbon dioxide and other pollutants, support pollinating insects and add pockets of greenery. They also play a role in reducing rainwater run-off and cool the surrounding air in warmer months.



One of Thatcham's green bus shelters.

The hardy, low-maintenance planting is designed to thrive in all weather conditions, ensuring the shelters will remain an asset for both the community and local wildlife for years to come.

River gets a rinse to clear out rubbish and debris

VOLUNTEERS, divers and local organisations came together to help clean and protect the River Great Ouse in **Buckingham**.

The annual Rivers Rinses initiative has been running for more than 20 years and involves experienced volunteer divers from the Stowe Sub Aqua Club retrieving litter and debris from the riverbed.

This year's two events recovered

enough waste and discarded items to fill a three-tonne skip at each session. Among the usual finds – shopping trolleys, skateboards and bicycles – were some more surprising discoveries, including an old milk churn, a pair of cattle horns and more than 30 empty sherry bottles.

Divers were supported by Buckingham Town Council's

green spaces team, who managed the removal and disposal of the debris. Additional assistance came from Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service.

A group of community volunteers also joined the effort, taking part in a coordinated litter pick along the banks, while members of Buckingham Women's Institute provided refreshments.

Newbury is looking its blooming best

THE people who keep a Berkshire town looking its best have been celebrated at The Corn Exchange.

This year's **Newbury** in Bloom winners received their rewards from Mayor David Harman, with 41 entries across eight categories.

Winners received a burn-etched garden fork, handcrafted by pyrography artist Naomi Lunn, along with a certificate and £100.

Winners were: Schools and colleges – John Rankin Schools; Allotments – James Berry, West Mills Allotment; Community Projects – The Globe Garden (The Secret Garden Project); Businesses – Baldev's Dental Care; Places of Worship – St Nicolas Newbury; Neighbourhood – Lower Raymond Almshouses; Miniature Garden – The Little Free Library, Russell Road.

Newbury is celebrating a remarkable achievement after being awarded a Silver Gilt Award at the prestigious Thames & Chiltern in Bloom campaign.

It also received the Best Large Town trophy for the first time.

Teamwork, dedication, and community spirit across the town saw graffiti removed, litter picked and the creation and



Newbury's Bloom awards, top, and allotment winners, above.

care of community gardens, environmental projects, and beautifully maintained open spaces.

Cllr Ian Jee said: "Without the help and support of all our volunteers and the excellent work carried out by our contractors, John O'Conner Grounds Maintenance, this achievement would not have been possible."

Elsewhere, 21 awards were handed out to the town's green-fingered residents.

Newbury's annual best

kept allotment awards saw Mayor David Harman and Mayoress Rosalind Harman present awards to tenants who had impressed judges with their outstanding plots.

The awards included best newcomer, best plot, best schools plot and the coveted best site overall, which was won by Southby allotment steward Shannon Carr.

A special award went to Falkland Primary School, whose pupils tend a plot at Wash Common.

Memorial haven created

AN uninviting, overgrown entrance to a public footpath in the Anglesey town of Benllech has been transformed. **Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf** Community Council has created a memorial garden, aimed at encouraging people to use the path and have somewhere to sit in peace while listening to the sound of the adjacent river.

Council principal officer Laura Sutton said: "A new housing estate was being built in the village and the company, DU Construction, in partnership with Clwyd Alyn, donated £1,500 towards the project and allowed us to utilise their man-power and machinery to make our vision come to life."



The new-look Benllech footpath entrance.

Permissions and ownership of the land were checked and the site was planned to be low maintenance, tidy and a haven for nature. An ecologist advised on best practice and which plants were native and pollinators, which fared better in the shade, where to encourage biodiversity and where best not to.