

Big plans ahead for Thatcham facilities

Memorial Foundation team will improve community access

THE new team in charge of parkland and community facilities in Thatcham says 'great changes are happening' as it takes over the running of the area.

Thatcham Memorial Foundation goes into 2026 'under new management' after a reshuffle at the charity, which has seen new trustees appointed.

Shortly after the Second World War, the seven-and-a-half acre site was bought from local landowners for below market price using monies collected by public subscription and has remained a community facility ever since, run by a charity.

The team now heading up

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Thatcham Memorial Foundation say they have big plans for the organisation and its facilities – to ensure as many people as possible in the town can make use of everything on offer.

Work to reduce the risk of flooding, overseen by West Berkshire Council, began in the fields last year leaving many areas in need of attention with the project also blighted with disagreements over access routes and pathways.

But Vicky Caws says the

team has been hard at work steadily returning the pretty park areas to a better state following the works – which has also included purchasing the alleyway near Beverley Close which has also included the purchase of the alleyway near Beverley Close by Thatcham Town Council to improve access for people nearby.

Speaking to the *Newbury Weekly News* shortly before the festive break she said: "There's a new group of trustees.

"All of us are massively about community access.

"Trees were planted this week. The benches are going back in.

"We want to see people filling the field, playing football and walking their dogs."

Vicky says the group is also considering where it might be able to reintroduce the much-loved children's basketball hoop and football goals – both of which had to be dismantled during the flood works.

Other plans include exploring better free parking arrangements in the evening to help the parents of Squirrels and Scouts more easily



Tom McCann (chairman) and Vicky Caws with residents and sport users



Residents next to the re-opened alleyway



Playing tennis on the new courts

collect their children and confirming fresh lease arrangements with groups like the Scouting Association and bowls club to give them greater certainty.

Meanwhile the Memorial Hall is currently offering an 'exciting' 50-per-cent hire discount

for new customers needing a space for events or one-off bookings until the end of April, as trustees are keen to showcase what's available.

Vicky said – with the help of Thatcham town councillors – exciting times are ahead.

She added: "There's stuff

that does need to be done, but there's much more positive movement.

"We are all so chuffed. We are putting our energy into positively going forward.

"Great changes are happening. Things are really looking up."



Thatcham Memorial Playing Fields



St Nics New Year 2026 group with mayor David Harman

Pictures courtesy of Sam Bebbington

St Nics rings in the new year

AS the year turned, the bells of St Nicolas' Church in Newbury once again marked the moment, continuing a long-standing New Year's Eve tradition.

Members of the St Nicolas bellringing team came together to ring a solemn farewell to the old year, with the bell's half muffled, then ring a celebratory welcome to the new year with the bells fully open.

This year's ringing was led by Ringing Master Martin Rice and the 12 tenor dongs, precisely at midnight, were rung by Tom Watkinson.

The ringers were joined in the tower by the mayor of Newbury David Harman and the mayoress Rosalind Harman, reflecting the strong link between the church and the civic life of the town.

Tower Captain David



Tom Watkinson ringing the tenor for New Year 2026

Bebbington said: "The phrase 'ringing out the old and ringing in the new' is often said, but to experience it firsthand, high in the tower at St Nicolas in the centre of New-

bury, is something truly special.

"It is a real honour to help maintain this tradition and to share the occasion once again with the mayor and lady mayoress."

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