



Laxfield
PARISH COUNCIL

Laxfield Annual Parish Meeting

**Monday 19th May 2025
at 7:30 pm
in Laxfield Village Hall**

*Working for
our Community*

This booklet contains all the reports from across the parish submitted for the annual parish meeting. If you have any questions resulting from the information contained within, please don't hesitate to contact the clerk, Peter Lowe on 07711 822503 or parishclerk@laxfield-pc.gov.uk or the relevant contact from the report.

After the Annual Parish meeting, this report will be distributed to all households and is available on the website –

www.laxfield-pc.gov.uk

YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS AND CLERK

David Alchin	Hayley Scorey
Pen Bicheno	Lisa Sharman
Sarah Ellis	Rae Smith
Ollie Hackett	Rob Sutton
Sue Innes	Sally Sutton
Debbie Martindale	Peter Lowe (Clerk)



LAXFIELD PARISH COUNCIL - CHAIR'S REPORT

This year's report begins with a mixture of goodbyes and welcomes – we say goodbye to Karen Gregory, who has been our outstanding Parish Clerk for the past six years, and who has undoubtedly been the lynchpin of the Parish Council. On behalf of all the Councillors – and I hope of residents too – I'd like to say a huge thank you to her for the contribution she has made to the planning and delivery of so many of our projects as well as the very efficient running of the administrative and 'back office' functions of the Parish Council. And of course this means we also have a welcome to extend to our new Parish Clerk, Pete Lowe. He has a vast range of experience which is very relevant to the role, as well as bringing some new skills which the Parish Council will undoubtedly benefit from. I'm sure the Councillors are looking forward to working with him as existing plans are implemented and new ones developed.

I too am saying goodbye this year and handing over the role of Chair to a new Councillor. I'm sure they will bring a whole raft of new ideas and approaches which will benefit Laxfield and its residents. My heartfelt thanks for all the energy and sometimes sheer hard slog our Parish Councillors have put into the work they do for Laxfield while I have been part of the Parish Council: I admire them all hugely.

We've delivered a great deal as a team over the last twelve months, as usual a mixture of new projects and support for existing ones. In addition to our normal grant process, we've funded (and actively raised funds for) some short- and long-term plans: for example, we've been able to deliver the playground refurbishment which is bringing such a lot of enjoyment to children of a wide range of ages. It seems to be very well-used now and has equipment which is flexible enough to allow for imaginative play as well as encouraging the development of strength and motor skills (as well as sheer fun!). Our wildlife and biodiversity plans, which we know are important to many people in Laxfield, are continuing to develop well. Our Biodiversity Action Plan was agreed by the Parish Council as a whole, having been written under the aegis of the Green Spaces Working Group, so I'm sure that will be promoted more widely soon. We've funded several Barn Owl nesting boxes and have benefited again from Mid Suffolk District Council's tree scheme this year, and several wildflower areas have been set aside. An exciting new venture is the purchase of power tools for use around the Parish, with the intention of

arranging monthly working parties to carry out projects which will help to improve biodiversity in the area.

The Good Neighbour Scheme which was mentioned in last year's Annual Report is now up and running, and providing valuable support when needed to help people who may, for example, find it difficult to find transport for medical appointments.

Short-term projects which we have supported include, of course, the D-Day commemorative events in June last year. Laxfield residents throw themselves wholeheartedly into celebrations of this kind, and it's always wonderful to see the enthusiasm, energy and enjoyment they bring to so many people. Our scrap metal collections continue to be a many-layered success story: environmentally-sound and reasonably easy disposal of what would be waste for many people in the Parish, while also raising a very satisfying amount of money to put towards supporting a wide range of projects that other people have put in place. The litter-picking sessions also continue to be well-supported - and to collect a worryingly large volume of unsightly and potentially damaging litter from the verges and ditches around Laxfield. The senior residents' Christmas Lunch, which was reinstated last year, also looks set to become an annual event and the Parish Council will be supporting this again in 2025.

Finally, I'd like to bring to your attention the introduction of a Parish Council 'stall' at the Community Market, which began last month to (amongst other things) publicise the Laxfield Design Guide. The idea was very well-received, with lots of people visiting to ask questions and discuss concerns: so much so, in fact, that the Parish Council has decided to do this twice a year from now on. The next stand will happen at the September Community Market.

Sue Innes – Chair, Laxfield Parish Council



LAXFIELD PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE

The Parish Council ended the financial year 2024-25 with bank balances as follows:

Current account:	£ 24,636.87
Saver account:	£ 751.46
Reserve account:	£ 101,149.25
TOTAL:	£ 126,537.58

This indicates a very healthy bank balance; however the earmarked reserves, (Neighbourhood CIL money) form the vast majority of this and have gone towards funding a number of projects during 2024-25 as identified in the neighbourhood plan and PIIP (Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan). Please note that all financial information, including audit reports, for the Parish Council are shown on the website (www.laxfield-pc.gov.uk) and updated monthly.

The precept is the main income source for the parish council. This remained at £46 357 for this financial year as it has done for a number of years due to a variety of factors. For information, this has been increased to £53,000 for 2025-26 due to increased running costs.

The following receipts exceeded budget expectations during 2024-25:

- Grants (specifically for the playground refurbishment project)
- MSDC CIL monies
- Bank interest
- VAT claim

CIL money provided funding for a number of projects including:

- Major playground refurbishment project
- Biodiversity projects in the churchyard and cemeteries
- War memorial refurbishment
- Establishment and set up costs for the Good Neighbour Scheme
- Purchasing a number of owl boxes
- Purchasing a number of new dog litter bins
- Support for a number of Laxfield cultural events
- Rehousing the hearse and bier from Stowmarket Museum

In addition to the above, the parish council funded a very popular D-Day event at the playing field attended by many residents.

For a number of years now, the council has also been proactive in accessing free native hedging and trees from MSDC which has enhanced numerous areas across the parish at no cost!

The rebate from the Rix oil syndicate of £207 enabled the Parish Council to support three local groups with various projects:

- Laxfield pre-school
- FOALs
- Laxfield Art Club

The annual scrap metal collection organised by Ollie Hackett and Rae Smith raised £1 040, a great amount of money and enabled the parish to support the following local groups with a grant each:

- Fressingfield Scout Group
- Laxfield football club
- FOALs
- Laxfield pre-school
- Laxfield Arts Club

As the above demonstrates, the parish council is keen that any monies gained through different activities is ploughed back into local groups and organisations.

See next page for Parish Council accounts summary for 2024-25. Please note however that, because the council uses a receipts and payments system the overspends in the payments section are not 'true' as they are offset by the receipts.

Snook Bequest

This is a fund held by the parish council in a separate account. Its objective is to help the needs of the older members of the community. This year the Snook Bequest funded a very successful older residents Christmas lunch in the village hall. The balance of the fund at 31 March 2025 was £12,368. If anyone has any projects that could potentially tap into this fund, please let Peter Lowe, the parish clerk, know.

Laxfield Playing Fields Association

This is a registered charity that has the parish council as its custodian trustee. All its expenses are met by the precept, so the only figure supplied to the Charities Commission is a cost. During the 2024-25 financial year the expenditure was £10,050.

Reporting period end date:	31/03/2025		
BANK ACCOUNTS YEAR BEGINNING APRIL 2024			
Current	£ 2,553.86	31/03/2024	
Saver	£ 133,129.36	31/03/2024	
Reserve	£ 49,587.49	31/03/2024	
Opening Balance Total	£ 185,270.71	31/03/2024	

RECEIPTS	BUDGET	ACTUAL	VARIANCE	% v Bud
Cemetery Fees	£ 2,500.00	£2,265.00	-£235.00	90.60%
Grants	£ 3,000.00	£29,460.68	£26,460.68	982.02%
Groundworks Nbhnd Plan	£ -	£0.00	£0.00	
MSDC CIL	£ 30,000.00	£38,021.34	£8,021.34	126.74%
Miscellaneous	£ 1,500.00	£6,687.28	£5,187.28	445.82%
Bank Interest	£ 1,000.00	£2,585.05	£1,585.05	258.51%
Precept	£ 46,357.00	£46,357.00	£0.00	100.00%
VAT Reclaim	£ 3,500.00	£26,528.45	£23,028.45	757.96%
Transfer from Reserves	£ 131,174.00	£0.00	-£131,174.00	0.00%
Total	£219,031.00	£151,904.80	-£67,126.20	69.35%

PAYMENTS	BUDGET	ACTUAL	VARIANCE	% V Bud
Clerk's Salary	£15,500.00	£14,249.15	-£1,250.85	91.93%
Expenses/Stationery	£750.00	£77.24	-£672.76	10.30%
Chair's Allowance	£500.00	£300.00	-£200.00	60.00%
Parish Room Cleaner	£400.00	£329.60	-£70.40	82.40%
Street Lighting	£3,300.00	£3,303.07	£3.07	100.09%
Pond/Vill Hall/Paths	£60,000.00	£15,023.97	-£44,976.03	25.04%
Street Cleaning	£1,116.00	£988.80	-£127.20	88.60%
Parish Room Lighting	£500.00	£362.58	-£137.42	72.52%
PWLB	£11,290.00	£11,289.18	-£0.82	99.99%
Neighbourhood Plan	£5,000.00	£0.00	-£5,000.00	0.00%
Cemetery Caretaker	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
Subscriptions	£1,500.00	£1,034.31	-£465.69	68.95%
Insurance	£3,250.00	£2,485.15	-£764.85	76.47%
Churchyard/War Mem	£6,000.00	£2,870.50	-£3,129.50	47.84%
Section 137	£10,000.00	£6,938.76	-£3,061.24	69.39%
Bin emptying	£950.00	£1,035.07	£85.07	108.95%
Rental fees	£1,100.00	£500.00	-£600.00	45.45%
Training	£500.00	£435.60	-£64.40	87.12%
Cemetery Expenses	£30,000.00	£11,195.25	-£18,804.75	37.32%
Repairs & Maintenance	£1,500.00	£1,810.12	£310.12	120.67%
Playing Field	£60,000.00	£129,649.31	£69,649.31	216.08%
Village Hall	£300.00	£72.50	-£227.50	24.17%
Church clock	£200.00	£268.80	£68.80	134.40%
Miscellaneous	£3,500.00	£5,386.97	£1,886.97	153.91%
Audit	£1,200.00	£978.00	-£222.00	81.50%
PAYE	£175.00	£54.00	-£121.00	30.86%
Election	£500.00	£0.00	-£500.00	0.00%
TOTAL	£219,031.00	£210,637.93	-£8,393.07	96.17%

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH REPORT - CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

2024-25 was another busy year for the church with opportunities for mission and some challenges. Rev. Enid Pow moved to Felixstowe at the end of September and just before Christmas Rev. Chrissie Smart was licensed as our new Priest-in-Charge at a joyful service in the church. We continue to have weekly services and are pleased that we have been able to restart a monthly evening service in Hartismere House.

We are very grateful to all our clergy and lay elders for their commitment and hard work.

The church building has been used for a wide range of social and fundraising activities during the year, as well as the monthly Community Market and lunchtime concerts during the warmer months. A new venture for 2024 was 'Saturday Social'. Held in the chancel on the 3rd Saturday morning of the month, it is an opportunity for people to get together, enjoy delicious cake and coffee, and meet friends and make new ones! The donations are given to a different charity each month and during 2024 over £1500 was raised. It looks like an event that will go from strength to strength! Meet Up Friday, our monthly get together for coffee and cake in the Royal Oak, continues to be popular with approximately 30 people attending each time.

The church continues to have a strong link with All Saints Primary School. We welcomed the school, and a good number of family and friends, to the church for Easter, Harvest and Christingle services. Prior to the end of the Spring term, the pupils came in class groups for 'Experience Easter'; a chance for them to relive the events of the first Easter from Palm Sunday to the Resurrection on Easter Day. Collective Worship in school is occasionally taken by the Priest-in-Charge and our Lay Elder visits the Pre-School on a regular basis.

We are very grateful to the large group of volunteers who help and contribute to the life of the church in so many different ways; cleaners, flower arrangers, bell ringers, newsletter deliverers and those who organise and support our fund raising events.

And, of course, those who assist in the leading and running of our weekly services. It would be impossible to maintain and run the church without all this help, and the PCC is very grateful.

Jackie Turton, Churchwarden

LAXFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH

During the year, the roofs of the chapel, vestries and toilets have been overhauled. Approximately 60% of the tiles used were new, the remaining were tiles that were reused. In conjunction with the painting of the woodwork, guttering etc. the work to the roof has given the chapel a new tidy look as well as ensuring that the buildings are safe from the rain!

We are very grateful to all the people who have given so generously over the past few years to provide the funds for this work and to the skilled trades people who have done such a great job. This is (hopefully) the last of any major building work that needs to be done at the chapel for the foreseeable future. We now have some great facilities in which to worship and work for the Lord and they will hopefully serve their purpose for another 200 years!

As much as the buildings are important, we do not believe that they are the church; rather the church is the people of God and as the people of God who meet at Laxfield Baptist Chapel we have had another good year. We thank God that we have been able to provide activities for a wide range of ages throughout the year, from Sunday Schools, and toddler's, children's and youth groups for the young along with Coffee Stop, Friends and Neighbours Lunches, Ladies and Men's evenings for adults. The chapel hall is also used for the local Knit and Natter group.

Once again, we held our Annual Holiday Bible Club. It took place during the first week of April. It was called God's Zoo, so there were lots of animal themed activities along with the Bible stories, craft and games. A good number of children from Reception up to Year 9 came along. As a Church we love to meet each week on Sunday for worship, teaching and fellowship as well as during the week for prayer and Bible study.

We particularly love Christmas and Easter services which were well attended with a good number of people from the village joining us. Most of all we want to thank the Lord for faithfully sustaining the His work at the chapel.

Tim Mawson – Pastor, Laxfield Baptist Church

LAXFIELD AND DISTRICT MUSEUM

The 2024-25 season was very rewarding. Despite the wet and cold weather early in the year, we hosted 1040 adults and 136 children. These numbers were a little lower than last year due to the inclement weather and fewer holiday makers, and that was something reported by many museums across the region, but those who came through our door were very supportive and generous.

The new bookcase with archive material proved useful to some visitors and hopefully we can expand what is available. Schools are continuing to use our loan boxes and we are still looking at ways to get the word out to local schools. We are beginning to build up a rapport with staff in three of the schools and hope to encourage more children to come to the museum. We now have a short film about Charlie, aged 8, visiting the museum and showing the things he likes there. It is now available on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com). 'A Tour of Laxfield Museum with Charlie'.

The Laxfield Hearse was returned to the village April of last year and the former Hearse House in the cemetery was cleared to receive the vehicle. It had been on loan to The Food Museum (The Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket) since 1969. By the time you read this the Hearse would have been on display on Monday 5th May outside the museum courtesy of members of the Parish Council. There is a small display about the hearse in the Parish Room this year along with two scale models of carts used to move fallen trees to be sawn into planks for the Quinton family's building business. The Quintons were also undertakers and built coffins and Bertram Quinton was responsible for making the hearse out of the old bier and a Victorian carriage before WWI.

We have also acquired records from the two old schools in Laxfield and some were on display last year. Other gifts have included baby clothes and toys; 1950s annuals (which we hope to have available in the Parish Room in the Summer Holidays for young and the nostalgic older visitors to sit and enjoy); a collection of local detectorist finds discovered over the years. The finds are displayed in 4 cases and include many coins, some of which appear to be Roman. The coins will prove a useful addition to our shops/markets' exhibition intended for next year, when Laxfield Market celebrates its 800 year old charter.

Part of our outreach programme, the coffee morning with archive films shown by Jim Cecil on Saturday 28th September, was a great success, with many people conveying how much they enjoyed it. The event raised £229 for museum funds. Another such event is planned for Saturday 12th July this year. Our opening event was a catch up with the wonderful shots and footage of wildlife on Paul Taylor's local farm, and Paul generously agreed to do the same again this year. Two more events followed as our end of season offering: the entertaining and enlightening play written by Catherine Cawood and performed by the local troupe, The Laxefeldas, called *The Taxing Issue of Tithing* on 18th October and the return of the Hosepipe Band for a Ceilidh on 2nd November.

We will be hosting parties from Aldeburgh History Society and the Lanman Museum this season in addition to twenty Suffolk museums' representatives whose museums took part in the Association for Suffolk Museum's annual leaflet exchange on 31st March. It was a great networking event and there was a lot of praise for the museum and Laxfield.

Thanks to Dawn Jeakings, one of our stewards, we now have an Instagram account, which is beginning to build its number of followers and hopefully will reach a wider audience.

Our programme of village hall based events this year include:

- A coffee morning on 12th July particularly for those who cannot get into the museum. This year we will be displaying Michael Poole's photographs of the village, which are mirroring the ones taken by Ron Fuller in 1972/3. The cost of printing has been covered by a very generous donation
- On 19th September Charlie Haylock will be giving one of his final talks on the Suffolk dialect as he will be retiring this year. He will be speaking about his experiences on the film *The Dig* – coaching Ralph Fiennes and the cast. Tickets can be ordered by email – info@laxfieldmuseum.org.uk or bought from Elaine Nason
- On 1st November the annual ceilidh will be held and tickets will be on sale in advance

The committee continues to be grateful to our 51 stewards, our Trustees and supporters, the generosity of the Coop for raffle prizes and the Parish Council,

which contributes to the cost of hiring the village hall for our fund raising and outreach events. Thanks also to our 1176 visitors last year for their generous donations and kind words such as those from an Australian visitor: *What a wonderful experience to visit this wonderful museum.*

And from Aldeburgh:

A treasure trove of interesting things! A fascinating place – especially enjoyed free access to all the source materials.

And from New Mexico:

A fantastic educational experience. Enjoyed the friendliest museum's faculty – loved it!

We hope to see you and your families at the museum this season.

Thank you from Lynne Ward and the Museum Committee.

LAXFIELD VILLAGE HALL



*Laxfield Village Hall, The Link,
Laxfield, IP13 8DY
Charity No. 304781*

The Village Hall AGM was held on 11th April 2025. The Management Committee members for the coming year are Becky Stewart-Winn (Secretary and Marketing), Caroline Emeny (Bookings and Treasurer), Colin Emeny (Building maintenance), Monica Wilkins (Fundraising) Pen Bicheno, Dawn Jeakings, Bill Shuttle and Debi Rice. The role of Chair is currently vacant.

Activities at the hall

Regular activities at the hall included:

- Table Tennis
- Carpet Bowls
- Zumba and Pilates classes
- Fitness classes for older people
- Art Club
- Kids' Games Club

- Film Club
- Dance classes for adults and children

One-off events organised by the management committee included:

- Live music nights (Ben Bedford, Black Deek Band)
- Luke Wright poetry performance
- Music Quiz
- Christmas Dance with local bands
- Touring theatre performances (Open Space, Common Ground, Rough Cast and Eastern Angles theatre groups)
- Local history play 'The Taxing Issue of Tithing'
- The 'Confident' comedy, music and magic night.

The hall has been booked for a range of other events:

- Laxfield & District Horticultural Society Annual Show
- British Legion Coffee Morning
- Birthday parties
- FOALS (Friends of Laxfield School) Children's Disco
- Laxfield Museum opening and closing events and Ceilidh
- Community Land Trust AGM
- Senior Citizens' Christmas Lunch – Funded by the Parish Council
- YANA Charity Quiz

Hall Maintenance and Upgrades

- Routine maintenance and checking of fire safety equipment and heating/air-conditioning system has been carried out.
- The emergency exit doors from the main hall to The Link had become damaged and would not close properly so have been replaced.
- The kitchen has been refreshed and a dishwasher installed.
- 80 new chairs have been purchased.

Finance

The hall maintains a stable financial position, with income meeting running costs despite the increases in utility and service charges.

Laxfield Village Hall Management Committee

ALL SAINTS PRIMARY SCHOOL

I am pleased to report that the school is a happy place to be, and that staff continue to work hard to maintain a caring and supportive environment for our children to thrive.

We currently have 92 children on role and are regularly approached by families who are looking to move to us in September so I am hopeful that our numbers will rise despite 17 children leaving us this term at the end of year 6. We currently have 4 classes: reception/ year 1, year 2, year 3/4 and year 5/6 taught by 7 teachers, 5 of whom are part time and 8 teaching assistants.

Our OFSTED report on 24th November judged us to be 'Outstanding' in all areas. Although the progress was rigorous, we were fully supported by the CEO and senior leaders of the All Saints Trust and we were all thrilled with the final outcomes. We will continue to build upon this report as we look to further develop our curriculum and the enrichment programme we provide for all pupils.

Mr Robson, our SENDCO, has completed the work started by Mrs Clancy (currently on maternity leave) SENDCO, to create a sensory room. The room has equipment for any child to use but children who need sensory breaks from their learning, use it daily. The positive effect this has had upon behaviour and learning is already evident. In addition to this, work has begun on a small sensory garden behind the school.

Despite our location, we are determined to give our children access to great music, theatre, sport, museums and other experiences to broaden their horizons and develop their 'cultural capital'. Every child has the opportunity to visit places of worship, watch theatre productions, listen to live music, visit a museum, travel on a train, learn to play a musical instrument, represent their school in sport and perform on stage. Our clubs include Makaton (sign language), origami, diamond art, nature club, board games, choir, library, football, gymnastics and dance.

Visitors to the school often comment on the calm, focussed yet happy 'feel' of the school. Supply teachers inform us that the children's behaviour is excellent and that they like coming to our school as they feel respected.

Having just replaced the flooring in the front three offices, reception area, corridor and hall we now have a much more inviting welcome to our school. Moving forwards, we will be looking to upgrade our security through new

fencing at the front and to further improve the look of the school we will be starting a programme of painting and upgrades.

Katharine Minns, Head of School, All Saints Primary, Laxfield

LAXFIELD PRE-SCHOOL

Laxfield Preschool has been really busy over the last 12 months and we've made some exciting changes to the setting. We now have 4 rooms where the children can play, learn and thrive. The number of children in our care has risen considerably and we have recruited additional staff, adding to our already fantastic team. We are utilising all the building and garden space available to us ensuring the children have an enriching learning environment. We have 70 children enrolled with us and as the village continues to grow we will be looking at ways in which our preschool can continue to evolve ensuring we can support all families within our local community.



There has been lots of fun fund raising activities over the year and we are so grateful to our preschool parents, the local community, Laxfield Parish Council and other local businesses who continue to support us. As a charity run preschool we have to continually fund raise to purchase new resources for the children in our care. Over the summer months the children's garden area will be refurbished, including having a new all weather surfacing so the children can use the outdoor area all year round. Plus there will be new equipment to support all areas of their development and encourage learning of the world around them. They have recently looked at the topic 'Our Natural World' and took part in activities looking at mini beasts, life cycles, planting seeds, building bug hotels, wildlife walks plus many more fun filled learning opportunities. We are looking forward to what the next year brings. Keep a look out for our up and coming fund raising events.



Laxfield Preschool Team. Framlingham Road, Laxfield, Suffolk IP13 8HD Tel: 01986 798091 E-mail: office.laxfieldpreschool@gmail.com
Website: www.laxfieldpreschool.org

Lizzie Flint, Laxfield Pre-School Manager

LAXFIELD COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Over the last year Laxfield CLT has been working closely with MSDC and Hastoe Housing Association to identify an appropriate site for a small development of truly affordable housing units to be used by people with links to Laxfield. These would be available for rent in perpetuity. A number of sites have been considered. Recently, Laxfield PC awarded LCLT a grant of £8000 to enable it to progress its objectives. In due course there will be a series of public consultation events, plus a new Housing Needs Survey.



Last September the CLT's first (founding) Chair stood down – David Alchin had been Chair since Laxfield CLT was started in 2019 and his hard work has been much appreciated. Subsequently Debbie Martindale was voted to replace David as Chair. The CLT would also like to thank Karen Gregory for her administrative support during 2024.

Laxfield CLT currently has five Trustees/Directors. It is actively looking for a sixth.

For any further information regarding Laxfield CLT please contact our new administrative support person Freddie Dunkley: kdunkley@laxfieldclt.uk.

Debbie Martindale, LCLT

FRESSINGFIELD SCOUT GROUP

1st Fressingfield Scouts provides wonderful opportunities for young people of all ages to contribute to their communities, gain confidence, and learn new skills. But we can't do this without input from our friends and supporters for which we are very grateful.



Regardless of the title that we have we like to think of ourselves not as just Fressingfield Scout Group but as the Scout Group for the area and it is good to see enthusiasm for what we do and to have so many members and such great support from the surrounding villages.

We continue to develop and improve our site and this year have installed more hedging for wildlife and shelter. Unfortunately, the next door building development has stalled and we do not yet have our own mains water and sewer connections and whilst the new access from New Street has been laid

out it isn't finished or accessible to us. This is making it impossible to finish our carpark and the temporary surface has suffered badly.

We continue to fundraise to fund developments and maintenance at the HQ. There are Group events like the Open Evening and Santa Run which this year finished at the Village Christmas Market, where we were pleased to provide the barbeque. There was much positive comment about Scouting and support for what we do which was very pleasing.

Other fundraising events have included bric-a-brac stalls, cake stalls, quizzes, barbeques and sponsored activities. Thank you to everyone from the many villages that our members come from for their support at these events. We have been pleased to support Christmas Tree Festivals in Hoxne and Weybread.

As you would expect camping and outdoor activities are a big part of what we do. Our biggest camp was Group Camp which was again at Eaton Vale Activity Centre. 75 Young People and 16 Leaders had a very active weekend camping, climbing, canoeing, pedal go carting, crate stacking, raft building, shooting both air rifles and bows, grass sledging and playing wide games. The smallest camp was the overnight stop on a two day Expedition Challenge hike where four 13 year old members navigated, mainly on footpaths from Eye to Stradbroke via, Brome, Oakley, Hoxne and Denham - completing a survey comparing and assessing the churchyards for wildlife benefit. We have twice had camps for small groups in a remote wood. Firstly, for our annual Middle of Nowhere camp where we go back to basics with cooking on a fire, butchering wild game for dinner and sleeping in bivouacs. Secondly, as an overnight stop off on their first experience of hiking carrying all their kit and cooking expedition food on lightweight stoves. The Explorer Summer Camp was to Corfe Castle where much hiking, swimming, sea kayaking and exploring was done. The highlight seems to have been a "mud run"!

Pioneer Troop Scouts had a very busy and successful joint activity camp with Warriors Beavers at Hallowtree Scout site in Ipswich, apparently many of the Young People slept in the car all the way home which is usually a good indicator of a successful camp! Our contingent had a great time at the annual Bank Holiday Norfolk County organised Water Activities Weekend at Decoy Broad. Unfortunately, the weather was unkind and although we set up on Friday evening and finished on Monday afternoon in warm sunshine the two

days between had a lot of rain, the occasional thunder clap and a few flashes of lightning!

The outstanding highlight of our year has been the Explorer Expedition to Iceland last Easter. This was our third visit over ten years and this year we combined with Long Stratton Explorers so there was a much bigger group. Activities included hiking across glaciers, pony trekking, having a dip in hot springs and a snowball fight! Our members and Leaders gained an enormous amount from the trip and joining with another Scout Group added an extra, and very positive, dimension to the experience.

We have recently completed our annual membership return to the Scout Association. This has revealed that the Fressingfield based sections have grown by 10 youth members in the year. This is spread across all sections and is around an overall 11% increase which is very pleasing but results in an increasing strain on our Leader Team.

Scouting is fun, rewarding and challenging not only for the young people from our communities but also for the dozens of adult volunteer Leaders and helpers that support the Scout Group.

Subject to the necessary Safeguarding checks and some training and support, we are also seeking to expand the number of adults that volunteer with us either in roles in the Sections with our Young People or in support roles in the background. Opportunities in a number of roles exist for anyone aged between 18 and, well, anything really!

Get in touch through our website, www.fressingfieldscouts.com Facebook, twitter or Instagram pages or speak to any Leader. You can also email Andrew the Group Scout Leader at: gsl@fressingfieldscouts.com

As always we are very grateful for the support, both financial and in other ways from local Parish Councils.

1st Fressingfield Scout Group is affiliated to the Southern Norfolk District Scout Council, Norfolk Scout Association. It is operated by volunteers and is funded solely by our members, fundraising and the generosity of sponsors and public subscriptions. We are a registered charity (No. 1181154) our governance arrangements and accounts can be viewed at the Charity Commission website.

Michael Knights - Assistant Group Scout Leader, 1st Fressingfield Scout Group

LAXFIELD COMMUNITY MARKET

Another fantastic year! Thank you to all the visitors, stall holders and local businesses that make the market possible. We have a brilliant group of volunteers to help behind the scenes and set up the market – thank you

all! We are always looking for people to help, either just on market day or in a more involved role; we are also looking for young people to help on market day, either for payment or as part of your Duke of Edinburgh Award. If you are interested, please see contact details below.

LCM is run as a non-profit making company, with any profit we make from stallholder fees going to local charities and good causes at the end of the financial year. We also keep an eye on the benefit the market brings to the community, so all fundraising activities that happen at the market improve our community. It is right therefore to highlight just how much the market brings to the community from all sources: stall fees, raffles, LCM Charity Stall, bacon stall, community bake stall, etc.

With all this fantastic support we raised £9350.87 for local charities and good causes, so from the Laxfield Community Market CIC a huge THANK YOU.

RUN BY THE COMMUNITY FOR THE COMMUNITY

Laxfield Community Market CIC – Registration no: 15183279

Email – enquiries@laxfieldmarket.co.uk

Adrian Heard, Chair - Laxfield Community Market



ALLOTMENT SOCIETY OF LAXFIELD

* The summer of 2024 was cool with abundant rain, suiting some crops, not all. Blight affected tomatoes and potatoes. It was an average growing season for most allotment holders.

* The meadows flourished, frequent rain resulting in lush grasses. The perennial wild flowers have diminished over time, in part due to the extreme drought in 2022. However, plenty of bees, butterflies, and moths were observed and an increase in birds and mammals.

* The meadows not only offer a haven for wildlife. The undisturbed grassland absorbs water, helping to prevent flooding and captures and stores more than ten tonnes of carbon per annum.

* The Society's largest maintenance expense is topping the meadows each autumn, ideally the grass toppings should be removed but this is not affordable at present.

* The hedges, covering the entire perimeter of allotment land, are flourishing and provide a continuous wildlife corridor, offering shelter and home for birds, insects and small mammals.

Volunteers cleared the grasses and debris around the new hedging, encouraging healthy growth.

* More donated fruit trees were planted beside the northerly footpath towards the Cratfield Road.

* Suffolk Barn Owl Trust has placed an owl box on a field maple on the east side of the allotment, already there are indications that is being investigated. Our thanks to the Parish Council for funding this project.

* The old chicken shed to the north of the allotment land has been vandalised and damaged beyond repair. The broken roof is being taken away at considerable expense.

* The Society is pleased that the footpaths are well used and the five benches enjoyed by all ages. There are continuing problems with dog walkers and their dogs roaming the meadows, which are not public land. Despite notices and frequent requests to keep to the footpaths there appears to be considerable disregard for the damage and danger to ground nesting birds and mammals as well as trampling of grasses and flowers. We ask that people have respect and care for this environment.

* All existing allotment plots are rented. New plots could be made available in the autumn.

Wendy Thomas, Secretary, Allotment Society of Laxfield

HIGHWAYS WORKING GROUP

We are a small, very active group of three and have been in existence for over five years. Highways matters are important to everyone in the parish and the group wanted to ensure you know that, although it may not appear that matters are resolved quickly, the group actively follow up issues raised constantly with the relevant authority! A spreadsheet of actions is maintained so that nothing is lost and this is submitted to the parish council each month for information. New members are always welcome – we meet very informally for an hour every four – six weeks. Contact Peter, the clerk for more information on parishclerk@laxfield-pc.gov.uk.

Issues still being progressed:

- A number of sign, pavement and footpath issues
- Mill Road improvements
- 30 mph gateway signs at a number of entrances to the village to improve traffic calming
- Footpath from Blacksmith's Way to Mill Road – Anders Linder, our district councillor, continues to liaise with MSDC and Denbury Homes
- Objections to the footpath out of Blacksmith's Way on the bend on Framlingham Road. This continues to be progressed

Thankyou from the Highways Group

GREEN SPACES WORKING GROUP

The Parish Infrastructure investment plan (PIIP) identifies many improvement and development areas, many of them in Laxfield's green spaces. The group is comprised of parish councillors and residents, meeting on a regular basis throughout the year. Some projects are longer term and do not yield instant results, others can be implemented quite quickly.

A footpath report is produced monthly for the Parish Council, this has led to improved communications with MSDC public rights of way team. Issues with our public rights of way have been identified and improvements were carried out in the last twelve months for the popular route from



Gorams Mill Lane to the Felgate close development and the 'soggy' bottom end of the path through the adjacent allotments is no longer 'soggy'.

The trees planted at the Bickers Hill allotments have been monitored and plans were put in place to increase the number of fruit trees, in conjunction with Mid Suffolk's Biodiversity project manager. These were planted over the winter months and have been tended to during the dry spell of late March and early April. MSDC have also been very generous in providing free native hedging to complete the front of the old cemetery and additional trees for the new cemetery. These are thriving, although a few did not survive, but these will be replaced in due course.

The group works very closely with the Wildlife group to help foster a greater knowledge and understanding of the flora and fauna in the parish and identify how we can improve our environment and habitats.

A community litter pick was held in March, unfortunately the planned event on October 2024 had to be cancelled due to the severe weather. Lots of bags of rubbish were collected and our village looked tidier. Recognition must go to Edwin Warne for his sterling efforts to keep our village litter free throughout the year!

The group is always looking for new members so if you are interested, do get in contact with Peter, the clerk. There are a number of exciting ideas which are ongoing and will be progressed in the coming year including a contemplation area for the new cemetery, making the path through the new cemetery to the garden of remembrance wheelchair friendly.

A Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been developed and adopted by the Parish Council as part of the PIIP. This will see a long term planned approach to improving the green spaces in a co-ordinated manner, linking them together to provide a green corridor around the village for the benefit of wildlife and people. The plan aims to improve the number and diversity of plant and animal species and to provide villagers with an insight into what is on our doorsteps and to help us understand what small steps we can make in order to improve our own small areas for the benefit of all.

Thank you from the Green Spaces Group

LAXFIELD WILDLIFE GROUP

The Wildlife group was formed in late 2023 to bring together people in the village interested in wildlife. The aims of the group are to:

- Carry out a baseline survey of the wildlife and habitats already present in the parish;
- Raise awareness of the wildlife present in the parish with local residents;
- Take action to improve wildlife habitats in the parish.

There are currently 19 people on the group's circulation list, although only about 9 come along to meetings. The group met four times in 2024 to plan activities which have included setting up an Instagram account, regular articles in the village newsletter, raking mown grass in the churchyard, replanting a length of hedge along Church Walk and arranging for some additional barn owl boxes to be installed round the village in conjunction with the Suffolk Barn Owl Project (BOSS). Some members of the group are now licensed to monitor the barn owl boxes during the breeding season. A small group has also been involved in producing a Biodiversity Action Plan for the village – watch out for more details of this soon.

We would encourage anyone in the village to send in records or photos of what they see and a recording scheme will be set up shortly – watch out for details in the village newsletter.

If you like to get in touch with the group or join our mailing list, please email me at laxfieldwildlifegroup@gmail.com.



Mike Turton

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

I was elected on 10 October 2025, following the deeply saddening passing of Cllr Peter Gould in July. It naturally took a short while to get fully up to speed, but I am pleased to say that we are now firmly underway. So rather than giving you a full annual report, I just like to go over the things that I've been able to do in the seven months that I've been your county councillor for.

Locality Funding

I have used my locality funding to support a wide range of projects across our local villages.

Total Funding Allocated: £7,824.10

Projects Supported Include:

- Community defibrillator
- Memorial bench
- Fencing for the Scouts Hut
- VE Day flags
- Venue hire for *Fressingfield Sounds*
- Royal British Legion church bench
- Speed Indicator Devices
- Pre-school gazebo
- New school playground
- Village hall exterior renovations

Villages Benefitting:

- Denham
- Fressingfield
- Hoxne
- Laxfield
- Mendham
- Metfield

My Work at Endeavour House

At County level, I have:

- Voted to protect Suffolk's libraries from any proposals for partial closure.
- Spoken in the chamber on issues including violence against women, and in support of Suffolk's businesses.

- Advocated for a One Suffolk unitary model – one that is representative, efficient, and provides value for money to council taxpayers.

As a council, we are also addressing ongoing challenges in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). While we're not where we need to be yet, progress is being made, starting with a commitment to increased investment in provision over the coming years.

Highways and Infrastructure

Highways remain a persistent concern across our area – from overdue resurfacing works to the replacement of fallen or rusting signposts. I am fully committed to making real progress here. A vital part of that is bringing together the right people to move matters forward.

To that end, I am pleased to report that we now have a new Community Liaison Engineer, Andy Moore. Alongside him, I have access to a currently untapped Local Highways Budget, and we will be working closely to ensure those funds are used wisely and to local benefit.

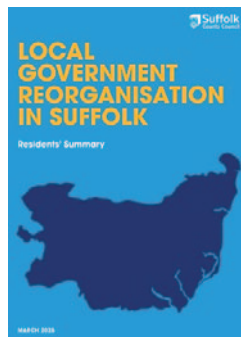
To The Next 12 Months

Finally, please don't hesitate to get in touch. While I do not hold executive powers, I am here to listen, to raise your concerns, and to be a voice for our communities – a role I will continue to carry out with diligence and commitment.

My locality budget has also been newly replenished. If the parish or any local community groups have funding proposals, I would be delighted to hear them.

Do get in touch with me at henry.lloyd@suffolk.gov.uk
 More information from Suffolk County Council is available on the parish website, www.laxfield-pc.gov.uk.
 This includes the Resident's Summary for Local Government Reform, which was published in March 2025.

Henry Lloyd, your County Councillor



DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

There is one similarity between this year's Annual Report and the one of last year. The AGM of the Mid Suffolk District Council is yet to take place, on the 15th of May.



This last year can be roughly divided into two parts, one being the carrying on as usual with matters and ideas arising from Parish Councils, from individual members of the public, assisting with Locality Awards and debates/decisions made at the MSDC meetings. The second part concerns the highly rare event of assessing and responding to the proposals for the reorganization of Local and Regional Government.

One part of this deals with the introduction of Mayors in our Region. The aim is to formalise so called 'Mayoral Combined County Authorities' (MCCAs). On this matter the degree of public influence has been and remains very limited. The government has decided that all of England is to adopt this system, a way of managing that has already been introduced in parts of the country. Notable examples are Birmingham and Greater Manchester. The proposal, in this case what is extremely likely to happen, is the creation of a combined Suffolk/Norfolk MCCA. The population would around 1.5 million. The Mayor is intended to preside over an assembly of 5 voting members. There would also be non-voting members. A likely outcome would be two members from Suffolk and two from Norfolk. For a decision to be valid, the Mayor must be part of the majority. Thus a Mayor would be able to block any decision that he/she doesn't approve of. A Mayor will be elected according to the first past the post system.

There is a clear possibility that there could be of Mayor of one political leaning and the other 4 members with voting rights would be of different political persuasions. A Mayor would be able to raise money from an additional Mayoral precept and/or a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy. District Councils have been given the opportunity to take part in a 'Consultation', and responses to this had to be handed in to the government no later the 13th of April. During the debate in Council on the 10th of April, it was pointed out that the 7 questions requiring responses were like a questionnaire rather than a proper consultation, a view that I do share. The

very fundamental question addressing whether we actually want a Mayoral system, a new layer of loco/regional government, was not asked.

Elections for the Mayor are expected to be held in May 2026.

The second part of the new set up of local government deals with the abolition of District Councils and of County Councils. This principle will come into force, decided by the government. The new Councils will be called 'Unitaries' and will handle the vast majority of the matters presently dealt with by the County and District Councils. The Government has said it prefers Unitaries to have a population of around 500 000. If that number were to be adhered to in a rural area like Suffolk, we would need to have one single Unitary for the entirety of the County. The total population of Suffolk is around 760 000. 500 000 may be a functioning prospect for urban areas. However, Suffolk is vast and not densely populated. The overwhelming majority of District Councillors in Mid Suffolk disagree with the vision of only one Unitary. The same applies to all other District Councils in Suffolk, also including Ipswich Town Council. The County Council wants to create a one Suffolk wide Unitary.

The District Councils are aiming for a 2 or 3 Unitary arrangement. One option is a West Suffolk and an East Suffolk Unitary. A lot of work is being put in by number of dedicated Councillors and Officers. Views and ideas from Parish Councils are welcome. The final proposals need to be handed in to the government no later than the 26th of September. The government is the ultimate arbiter. Elections for the Unitaries are envisaged in May 2027. Those elected would form a 'shadow Unitary'. One year later it is expected that they would 'go live'. During the 'shadow' year the County and District Councils would continue to function and prepare for their own demise.

Other notable events include the adoption of the '*Biodiversity and Trees supplementary planning*' document. A commendable amount of hard work had been put in by Officers and Councillors. I voted in favour of this, as overall it is very good. The doubt that I do have is whether it is feasible to make a developer responsible for monitoring and reporting for 30 years. The eagerly awaited '*Intensive Livestock and Poultry Farming Supplementary Planning*' document was discussed and approved. This will be very helpful when it comes to assessing future applications.

The Government has released new figures for the number of new houses to be built. This is in the National Planning Policy Framework. For mid Suffolk there is

an increase of 37%, from 535 to 784 new homes. Previous accomplishments above targets are not allowed to be taken into account. Parishes will have to do '*Neighbourhood Development Plans*', outlining suitable plots for these abodes to be built. If that isn't done locally, it will be dictated to us.

A new scheme for recycling has been approved. Food waste is to be collected every week. Plastics won't be recycled until possibly April 2027.

A Housing Revenue Account business plan was discussed, as was a great need to improve the condition of stock. This will be very costly.

Workshops re the LGR (Local Government Reform), Unitaries and Devolution, re Mayors have been held in Stowmarket. These were very informative and well attended. The Suffolk County Council decided to go along with the idea of 'fast tracking' the applications to form Unitaries, meaning that it was necessary to ask the government to cancel the Local Elections on the 1st of May. I did not succeed in trying to find out about any substantial advantages of this. It was only said that '*it is good to be first in the queue*'. The scenario of going ahead like this did create a lot of dissent, resulting in four of the Conservative Councillors leaving the Conservative Group, forming a new group of Independents. This means that no one joined any other party and that no one stood down as District Councillor. I am now one of the Independents. My main reason is that I strongly disagreed with the idea of cancelling scheduled Elections. Democracy is not to be tampered with. There are lots more things that could be said, but any document must be mildly readable.

Finally, an update on the longstanding issue with the missing bit of footpath at Blacksmiths Way. Up until the end of last year there was one Officer who seemed to engage with this, but it's now impossible to connect with him. Since then, I have been in touch with 2 other officers and I'm holding a meeting on the 22nd of May to hopefully make progress. A long while ago I talked to Robert Eburne, representing the developer. He agreed to pay for this project, although he didn't have to, but I am now unsure if this will happen. I will continue to keep you updated.

Yours Sincerely, Anders Linder, your District Councillor.

Visit our website www.laxfield-pc.gov.uk
E-mail: parishclerk@laxfield-pc.gov.uk



You are all welcome to attend future Parish Council meetings.

Future dates and agendas are available on our website and on the Parish Council notice board, outside the church.



