

Birdbrook Parish News



*Above: Birdbrook village pond, sadly dried to dust in this summer's drought.
Stranded duck house, no ducks in sight.*

Essex County Council Composting & Water Butt Offers

Beat the hose pipe ban!

Partnering with 'Get Composting', a limited selection of items are available, budgets are limited so don't delay - grab a bargain while you can!

https://getcomposting.com/collections/area-offers-ess/filtered?filter_pf_opt_admin_area_code=DEFAULT_VAR%2CESS&page=1

Haverhill Men's Shed

Haverhill Men's Shed is now sited at the former caretaker's bungalow at the entrance to Samuel Ward Academy in Chalkstone Way. It is open (at least) six days a week, into the evenings, too. About 20% of their members are women, and they hope to encourage more. Steve (chair, Birdbrook Parish Council) went to their talk at the U3A August open meeting, and plans to go along to their Thursday evening ukelele group. I (Val, BPN editor) plan to go to pick brains and advice for our new rainwater collecting project. Anyone interested in finding out more can pop along either to the Men's Shed itself, or to the Birdbrook Friday coffee morning to chat to us about what we found there. It's an incredible resource, right on our doorstep.

Friday Coffee Mornings at Birdbrook Community House

All welcome, come along, 10am -12pm, meet your neighbours and enjoy a cuppa and an informal chat.
John, our friendly, community PCSO plans to visit on 11th September, 16th October and 13th November.

Parish Council Meeting Dates

7pm in the Community House
Tues 15 September 2026
Tues 10 November 2026

September 2026

Hello from your District Councillor

Robin Hood - Proposed 60mW Solar Farm

I attended the Planning Forum at BDC on 11th August to ask questions to Qualitas Energy about their proposals for the Robin Hood Solar Farm, at Robin Hood End, Finchingfield Road. I am particularly concerned about their transport proposals as two other local solar farms are granted for their construction traffic route via Steeple Bumpstead (and Sturmer A1017), these are Water Hall, Wixoe and Land West of Hill Lane, Sturmer. It appears that this will be the third. They intend to commence by using HGV vehicles some 16.5m in length. Whilst their representative said he had driven the proposed 'in-out, circular route', I questioned how these HGV vehicles would navigate the hairpin bend at Little London and suggested that they drive their proposed route using a like-for-like vehicle before confirming their plans. I have also spoken with the ECC Councillor about my concerns that all three solar farms, if built together or consecutively, would have a detrimental impact on the village of Steeple Bumpstead; a conservation area with narrow roads.

Wethersfield Asylum Centre

The Government announced that Wethersfield Asylum Accommodation Centre will remain operational beyond 2027 and permanently expand from 800 to 1,245 people. The WAC is a non-detained Home Office accommodation site operated by Clearsprings Ready Homes on behalf of the Home Office. BDC are urgently seeking more details on these proposals and will now carefully scrutinise the legislation the government intends to use to extend the use of this site for the third time. The latest temporary planning permission the government had given themselves to operate the site, known as the Special Development Order (SDO) was due to expire in April 2027. There are 27 conditions to the SDO which include dedicated health care facilities with a minimum on-site health care team comprising at least a health care assistant, a mental health nurse, a general nurse, an advanced nurse practitioner, a general practitioner; all providing care, advice and immunisation. Also dental care and eye test availability, and a shuttle bus to and from Braintree, Colchester and Chelmsford at least three times a day. See all 27 at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/411/schedule/3>

Fly-Tipping Figures

In the third quarter, 94% of fly tips were cleared within 24 hours (244 out of 260).



The main reason for the delayed clearances resulted from taking increased time to gather evidence for enforcement before the fly tips were cleared, however vehicle maintenance and location access also were factors in some breaches. BDC takes a zero-tolerance

approach to fly-tipping and enforces strict penalties to combat environmental crime. Offenders can face unlimited court fines, custodial sentences of up to five years, and criminal records. As part of a crackdown on waste crime, the Government announced new legislation on 15th July to increase the maximum fine for fly-tipping waste to £5,000 - a 400% uplift from the current £1,000. The top fine for littering on streets will also be increased to £750 - up 50%. BDC awaits further details. To report fly tipping visit: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/streets-transport-parking/report-fly-tipping>

Conservation Areas

The Local Plan Development Scheme 2026-2027 document provides a list of the Conservations Areas within the Braintree District, this includes those within the Bumpstead Ward, for your interest these are:-

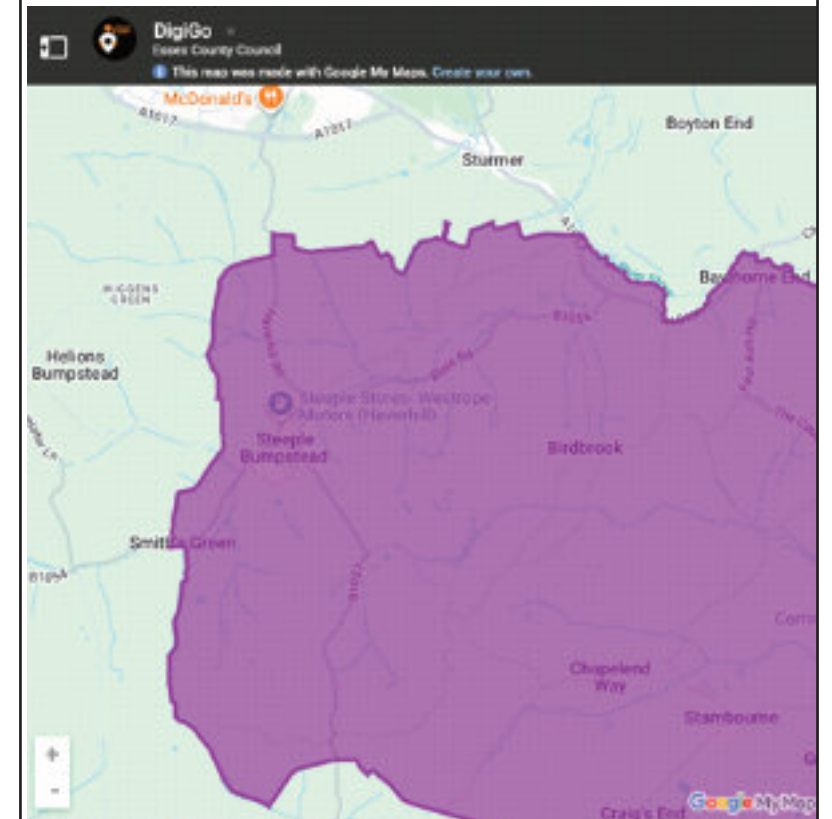
Birdbrook – date designated 13/01/1970 (not amended).
Helions Bumpstead – date designated 23/10/1990 (not amended).
Steeple Bumpstead – date designated 07/08/1969 (amended 17/10/1985)

DigiGo: <https://www.travelessex.co.uk/digigo/4>

In this zone, DigiGo operates 7 days a week from 7am to 10pm (excluding bank holidays). Whether you're commuting, shopping, attending appointments, visiting friends and family, or exploring the local area. Journeys can be booked up to 7 days in advance by calling **03330 137 138** (Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm). Next day journeys must be booked by 5pm on the previous working day. Once things bed in (from September), they plan to introduce the TravelEssex app (see *overleaf*) for the new Travel Zones too.

Where is DigiGo Covered in the Bumpstead Ward?

☒ Birdbrook	NOT
☒ Baythorne End	☒ Sturmer
☒ Steeple Bumpstead	☒ Hellions Bumpstead



Where can I get to?

As well as travelling between destinations within the zone, DigiGo can take you to key TravelEssex Connect Points, making it easier to continue your journey further afield, including:

- Haverhill Bus Station
- High Street, Halstead
- Halstead Hospital
- Halstead Youth Centre
- Halstead Leisure Centre
- Sudbury Bus Station
- Sudbury Train Station
- Sudbury Community Health Centre
- Ormiston Sudbury Academy
- Clare Memorial Bus Stop
- Stour Valley Community School

What is a TravelEssex Connect Point?

A TravelEssex Connect Point offers the opportunity for onward travel to key destinations further afield. This could be through a variety of modes, whether that is by bus, *(Continued overleaf)*



Foot Care

Home visiting foot healthcare practitioner

- NAIL CUTTING
- CORNS
- CALLUSES
- DIABETIC FOOT

Call for appointments:
07512756848

MEMBER OF



MEMBER OF



(Continued from previous page)

train, walking or cycling. Connect Points will typically have real-time public transport information displays and be located near food and drink retailers, as well as toilet facilities.

With best wishes to all,

Cllr. Diana Garrod

Braintree District Councillor for the Bumpstead Ward

TravelEssex App

TravelEssex is a journey planning app to search for sustainable travel options throughout Essex. You can plan walking, cycling and public transport, train, bus and DigiGo journeys. You can book journeys, track vehicles, and pay for DigiGo, all within the app!

DigiGo is a shared public transport service that can be booked on-demand or up to 7 days in advance. There is no fixed route or timetable, which puts you in control of your journey. Download from the Apple App Store or Google Play.

How does it work? View at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMXTiTdx9BY>

U3A Haverhill

The u3a is a unique organisation offering people the opportunity to continue to pursue and share hobbies and activities with others, but also the option to discover and learn something totally new. It is open to those who are retired, semi-retired or no longer in full time employment. It is also a way of meeting and making new friends in a relaxing and friendly manner. As well as lots of interest groups, there is a full programme of monthly meetings held at the Haverhill Arts Centre on the last Tuesday of the month between 10.00-12.00, giving members the opportunity to hear interesting speakers and enjoy socialising afterwards.

Next meeting 10am 29th September 2026 at Haverhill Arts Centre

No transport to get there? Try out the TravelEssex Ap, and **DigiGo**, see left and page 3.

St Augustine, Birdbrook

We continue with services at St Augustine's Birdbrook even though our incumbent Revd Lowe has now retired. We are fortunate to sometimes have Sue Cruse, David Buckley or visiting clergy, if not we operate a "do it yourself" service with the Churchwarden leading. The most important thing is to keep the church going with regular services.

The second Sunday is Morning Prayer the fourth Sunday is a Benefice Service encompassing all six churches.

We are always delighted to welcome new worshippers or indeed welcome back old ones !! Noisy small children included ! We always serve tea/coffee after services so everyone can have a friendly chat & a catch up.



Judi Price
Churchwarden 01440 730506

From your County Councillor

It has been a busy few months since I was elected as your County Councillor for The Hedinghams, and I wanted to update residents on some of the work I have been doing.



Robin Hood End Solar Farm remains a key concern across the division, particularly with the increased level of construction traffic and the loss of agricultural land. Whilst planning matters sit with Braintree District Council, my position as your Essex County Councillor is clear: I do not believe productive agricultural land is the right place for a development of this scale, with nearly 300 acres of farmland proposed to be converted to solar. I will continue working with local residents to ensure their concerns are heard.

Highways and potholes have also been a major priority. I have raised numerous issues reported by residents and will continue pushing for repairs and better road conditions.

We are now seeing an increase in road repairs compared with the same period last year, largely due to having our own road repair crews for Braintree. We have increased from 9 to 12 crews, helping us respond more effectively to local highways issues.

I have also been working on highlighting SEND provision, traffic, road safety, drainage and local infrastructure, alongside wider County issues including local government reorganisation, council spending, waste and recycling.

Thank you to everyone who has contacted me and raised concerns. I will continue to make sure issues are followed up and that our communities have a strong voice.

If you would like to stay updated I'm on Facebook - Cllr Nathan Robins If you have an issue you would like me to raise, please contact me at Cllr.Nathan.robins@essex.gov.uk.



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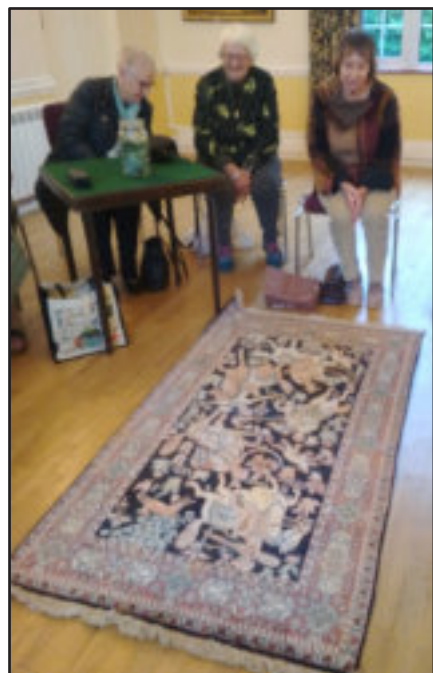
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Birdbrook Ladies Group

June

Unfortunately, our planned trip to Clare Country Park was postponed due to the very wet weather, We made the decision to bring forward our April 2027 session, sharing our travel souvenirs. I was pleasantly surprised at the number of artefacts brought along. The range of items and stories behind them were very interesting. Laura brought a selection of her sea glass which she has been collecting since she was a child. There were souvenirs and accompanying photos from all around the world, including a carpet from India and pottery from Europe. The evening also included a Beetle Drive, which amazingly some people had never played before,

July

Our speaker for this month was Miles from Morgan's Butchers at Baythorne End. He came to speak to us last year and was so good we invited him back again, A number of members brought their partners along to hear Miles. He brought along half a lamb, as there wasn't room for a cow 🐮, and showed us the different cuts of meat. There are different names depending where you live. He also talked about all the cuts of beef there are, some of which many of us hadn't heard of before, especially for types of steak. Miles also explained the difference between honing and sharpening knives. He is a great speaker and is always willing to give advice on how to cook a particular cut of meat and make alternative suggestions. As the evening was very warm we had elderflower cordial and mojito cocktails 🍹 instead of our usual coffee.

August

This was a very warm evening for the BBQ held in my garden. Fortunately, we had the use of 2 gazebos to

shield us from the sun. As usual the meat was funded by Ladies Group and the members brought along the side dishes and desserts. Andy was the "chef" for the night and Pimm's was provided. There were 21 of us including a number of partners and it was a very sociable occasion. A generous raffle was held which has given a significant boost to our club funds. A wonderful evening, topped off by seeing a shooting star 🌠 as we sat quietly after everyone had gone. What more could we ask for??

Sue King, Chairperson



Group meetings take place at 7.30 p.m on the 2nd Thursday of each month at Birdbrook Community House.

Visitors are most welcome.

Programme

- Sept 11th - 'Out of Africa' - Speaker: Clare Richardson
- October 8th - Claire Palmer - Visit to "Living Well Clare"
- November 12th - Christmas Crafting: Laura Walker
- December 3rd - Christmas Meal
- Jan 14th 2027 - Social Evening/planning
- February 11th - Children's Author Nan Eshelby
- March 11th - Crafting for Easter
- April 8th - Sharing Artefacts/Travel Souvenirs
- May 13th - AGM

Birdbrook Bowls Club



When is a green not a green?

We all know that this year has been a particularly challenging one for everyone. Crops everywhere have struggled to flourish, and grass is no exception!

Our greenkeeper, Keith, together with his willing team of helpers, has worked extremely hard to provide the best possible playing surface for the club. However, at the time of writing, conditions have reached the point where it has been more practical for us to give up home advantage for some matches. Where our opponents have been able somehow to maintain their greens better than us, we have asked to move some of our matches to their venues instead.

Surprisingly, this has sometimes worked very well for us. We recently moved a match to Haverhill's



green and came away with an excellent **10-0 victory!**

Despite the difficulties, our club remains committed to maintaining the high standards achieved over the past couple of seasons. Having won promotion to higher divisions in two different leagues, we are now working hard to hold our own and avoid slipping back down again.

Fortunately, we have welcomed several new players to the club this year. Some are completely new to the game of bowls, but that doesn't matter at all. We are known for our friendly hospitality towards the clubs we play against, and the same warm welcome is extended to all our new members. Everyone is encouraged to take part in league matches, as well as joining in with our friendly in-house competitions.

Not everyone who joins the club wants to become a full playing member, and several people are perfectly happy to join as **Social Members**. This simply means that they choose not to play in league matches but can still enjoy all the other benefits of being part of the club.

Our Social Members are welcome to join us for our Wednesday evening roll-ups, followed by a drink and a chat in the bar. They can also take part in our in-house competitions and join us for events throughout the year, including quizzes and fundraising evenings.

By mid-September the playing season will have finished, our thoughts will then turn to providing a better playing surface for next year. We will be having more social evenings, we will be playing more of our extra short short-mat carpet bowls and, maybe, trying out a few new fundraising ideas throughout the Winter months. Of course, we will also continue to look for new members to join our happy band.

Martin Gilbert

*Top: Birdbrook Bowling 'Green', summer 2026
Left: Haverhill's greener Bowling Green*

Clare Castle Country Park

Seasonal cycles & summer smiles with music, larks & art!

Greetings! from Clare Castle Country Park!

While we tend to think of times like this prolonged dry spell of weather as a novelty, there is some comfort in it being another cycle which the park has lived through before in its long history. It just means that currently, like many parks & open spaces we may not be looking our greenest, however we still have lots to offer every age group!

Meanwhile, the park has been filled with families enjoying picnics & the ice cream van has been very busy – and it's been smiles all around! It was a sunny



Our second outdoor theatre performance is rolling up on the 8th September 2026 at 6.30pm when The Handlebards perform an eco-friendly, bicycle-powered version of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, carrying all their props, sets, and costumes on their bikes as they tour various venues. Check out www.handlebards.com for more information. It's quite special to see Shakespeare being performed outdoors in a historic setting – don't forget to bring something to sit on!

Another tradition carried on from castle days is people showcasing their wares, bringing art & crafts & pots to share & the next couple of months is full of those delights. Thanks to our ex-railway heritage we have The Old Goods Shed & this wonderful, restored building makes a great venue. Its light and space attract a wealth of local, gifted creatives to use it and we are especially lucky to have lots to look at in the coming weeks.

This year we appointed our first Artist-in-Residence of the modern era! There was great deal of interest in the



The sheep (above) joining into see the 'Twelfth Night' outdoor theatre (right)

hot afternoon for the first Brass on the Grass event & we crossed fingers for the return of Long Melford Silver Band who always delight visitors.

We know that ancestors throughout the parks past enjoyed outdoor theatre, music & minstrels & this year it was a glorious evening for 'Twelfth Night' by The Pantaloons and the sheep on the Motte had great fun joining in! Leading to lots of giggles and ad-libbing by the actors.



three weeks in August with Libby running Evolution: A live Artist Studio + Shifting Exhibition with Libby Brooks (RCA). This was a 'live' studio environment where Libby was working on several large canvases alongside an exhibition of framed finished pieces changing weekly. Check out www.libbybrooks.com for more information about upcoming workshops in The Old Goods Shed. If you are looking to try something new as the seasons change, why not try the Botanical Plaster Casting Workshop on Thursday 17th September.



August Bank Holiday saw the annual exhibition of 'Art in the Shed' - original paintings & cards by 6 friends who all live in East Anglia. This was the 6th year of them all exhibiting together in The Old Goods Shed with beautiful original artwork for all budgets.

Also coming up in September - 2026 marks the 3rd Year for Clay in Clare, who are back bigger than ever featuring the talents of 19 brilliant potters, showcasing the beauty & versatility of clay! The exhibition is taking place in The Old Goods Shed from the 10 -13th September 10am-4pm. There was a huge interest last year in the event which brought in many extra visitors who made a weekend of it.

September marks the last opportunity to take a tour with one of the Clare Tour Guides – we often forget to explore the treasures on our doorsteps because they are just down the road! The 2026 tours run



on Saturdays until the end of the month at 1.30pm meeting outside the visitor's centre in the park. They cost £5 and take in 1,000 years of history in around an hour and a half! www.claretourguides.co.uk or email info@claretourguides.co.uk

If you are looking to get out and about for some fresh air & enjoy the countryside, then Clare Walkers have the following scheduled:

Saturday 12 September – Wickhambrook Loop – 5 miles

Sunday 11 October ** – Leg of Wool Town Walk – Sudbury / Belchamp / Clare – 7 miles or 12 miles

Saturday 7 November -Clare Loop / Claret Hall (adaptation of Leaflets 1 & 5) – 5 miles

Sunday 27 December – Family Walk round Clare – 2 miles

The rendezvous is usually The Old Good Shed in Clare Castle Country Park at 10:15 for a 10:30 departure. The schedule varies for a distant circular walk or a one-way linear walk, when we hire the CLASP minibus (the only time bookings are requested, denoted by ** in the list).

(continued overleaf)

Clare Castle Country Park (cont)

Specific details for each walk are publicised nearer the time. For more information contact www.clarewalkers.co.uk or email info@clarewalks.co.uk.

And don't forget they have a weekly walk on a Tuesday meeting at the park at 10.15am for a 10.30am start.

We will also see the return of the classic cars and dapper gents as The Distinguished Gentleman's Drive returns to the park on Sunday 27th September 2026.

While we are in no hurry to rush to Autumn, one date you may want to note in your diary is Friday 16th October 16th when The Old Goods Shed will welcome Irish Singer/Songwriter – Richie Ross. He will be performing Irish Folk & Stories as part of his UK Tour 2026 – One Voice, One Guitar. One Unforgettable Evening. Check out www.richieross.com

The absence of nobility and the railway staff from times gone by, means the care of the park now relies on the kindness, time and dedication of volunteers. We are forever grateful to everyone who helps – we have said thank you & goodbye, as well as welcoming new faces to the Trustees, who manage the many challenges the park faces. All part of the ever-changing cycles and seasons.

While previous centuries didn't have to concern themselves with the parking of carts or trains! the money generated from our car parking today is the main source of the park's income. Every time you visit and pay to park your car helps keep the park maintained and for everyone to enjoy.

You can contact us at info@clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk or visit www.clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk for all the latest news and events.

We hope to see you in the park soon
Mandy, Administrator, Clare Castle Country Park



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Next edition:
News and adverts by 15 November
for the December BPN

Editor Val: birdbrook2021@gmail.com

OUR VILLAGE OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Please look after the vegetation on your land

Well-maintained trees, hedges and shrubs help keep our village safe, accessible and beautiful for everyone.

You care for your land, we all benefit!

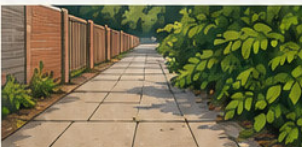
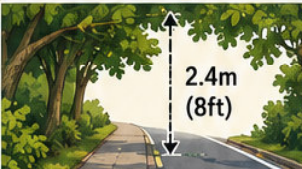
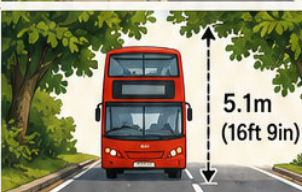
VEGETATION ON (OR FROM) PRIVATE LAND

We don't look after trees, hedges and shrubs on private land, including land that is next to roads and pavements.

Most trees and hedges by roads are on land owned by private landowners, district councils, city council, parish councils, housing associations and homeowners. It is the landowner's responsibility to look after these areas.

They have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent or reduce as far as possible, the risk of injury or damage that could be caused to anyone else – Highways Act 1980

WHAT YOU NEED TO KEEP IN CHECK

1		OVERGROWN VEGETATION REDUCING THE AVAILABLE PAVEMENT WIDTH FOR PEDESTRIANS Vegetation should be kept back to the property boundary.	
2		OVERHANGING VEGETATION REDUCING THE HEIGHT FOR PEDESTRIANS OR CYCLISTS ON THE PAVEMENT OR CYCLEWAY Low hanging vegetation should be cut back so there is a clearance of 2.4m (8ft) over a pavement or cycleway.	
3		OVERHANGING VEGETATION THAT REDUCES THE HEIGHT OR CLEARANCE OF THE ROAD FOR TALL VEHICLES SUCH AS DOUBLE DECK SCHOOL BUSES Low hanging vegetation should be cut back so there is a clearance of 5.1m (16ft 9in) over a road.	
4		OVERHANGING VEGETATION REDUCING THE WIDTH OR BLOCKING THE VIEW OF THE ROAD Vegetation should be kept back to the property boundary.	
5		A DAMAGED OR DISEASED TREE THAT IS IN DANGER OF FALLING ONTO THE ROAD OR PAVEMENT These should be treated or removed, where possible.	
6		OVERGROWN VEGETATION OBSCURING ROAD SIGNS OR STREET LIGHTS Vegetation should be cut back for visibility.	



A CAREFUL NEIGHBOUR
MAKES A STRONGER COMMUNITY

A little attention today prevents problems tomorrow.
Thank you for doing your part to keep our village safe for all!



Thank you!

Working together for a safer, greener village.



YOUR LAND. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. OUR VILLAGE. OUR PRIDE.

Last Month's Solar Eclipse

On the 12th August a large section of Europe and N America were treated to a solar eclipse.



A montage of the different phases of the 12th Aug 2026 Solar eclipse, the Partial phases.

This occurs when the Moon moves directly between the Sun and Earth. The light from the Sun is blocked, and casts a shadow on our planet. When the Moon totally blocks/covers the sun it makes the day look dark like night for a few minutes: a total solar eclipse.

Total solar eclipses are a result of a cosmic coincidence. The Sun is about 400 times bigger than the Moon, but it is about 400 times farther away. This makes the Sun and the Moon appear almost exactly the same size in our sky. Where on Earth the total solar eclipse will take place is called the 'Path of Totality'.

Here in Birdbrook on the 12th August this year 90% of the Sun was hidden by the Moon. It's during events like this we realise how bright/powerful our star is, as even with 90% of the Sun covered it is still very bright and should not be looked at directly without special filters e.g. solar glasses.

Northern Spain was in the path of totality on the 12th August this year. I went on an adventure to Spain to witness the magic of a Total solar eclipse. It was an absolutely incredible experience and one I will never forget.



Image of Totality, taken in northern Spain, in the path of totality on the 12th August this year. I went on an adventure to witness the magic of a Total solar eclipse, an incredible experience, one I will never forget.

Solar eclipses are rare events and Total solar eclipses are even rarer.

Just to show how rare, below are listed the previous four Total solar eclipses that the UK experienced:

How many years ago?	Date:	% Partial in Birdbrook	Where was Totality in the UK?
27 yrs	11 th Aug 1999	94%	Cornwall
72 yrs	30 th June 1954	73%	Northern Shetland
99 yrs	29 th June 1927	95%	N Wales and Northern England
302 yrs	22 nd May 1724	98%	Southern UK

Future solar eclipse dates that the UK will experience:

In how many years?	Date:	% Partial in Birdbrook	Where will it be in the UK?
1 yr	2 nd Aug 2027	40%	Partial for whole of UK
~1.5 yrs	26 th Jan 2028	~45%	Partial for whole of UK
55 yrs	3 rd Sept 2081	91%	Near total/Deep Partial for whole of UK
64 yrs	23 rd Sept 2090	99%	Southern UK

Waste Collection / Recycling since 1st June

Changes to recycling and waste collection service come from a directive made by Central Government. Braintree District Council has no choice but to comply with the Simpler Recycling Policy. However, the Waste Team at BDC are analysing feedback they receive and making small adjustments. Residents can send details of any issues to: customerservices@braintree.gov.uk for the attention of the Waste Services Dept.

Keep looking up.

Martina McGovern