



# **SAVE OUR STOCKBRIDGE**

## **SOS**

## **NEWSLETTER**

January 2025

Happy New Year to you all.

Fortunately nothing too alarming which might affect Stockbridge has raised its head over the last few months so, while we keep alert, there has not been anything vital to tell you about. But a quick catch up now is probably a good idea.

### **Rain and floods**

You will all be aware of the huge amount of rain that has fallen over the autumn and so far this winter. While the Test and its carriers have been high and many of the surrounding ditches have collected water, thus far we have heard of no flooding. We have said it before, but we remain immensely grateful to those who had the foresight in 2014 to undertake two mitigating measures which seem to have prevented flooding. We are aware that the Environment Agency has redefined flood risks for our area but thus far they have not put up the new information on their website.

### **Sewage**

We are grateful to the National Trust Ranger, Catherine Hadler, for sharing their findings on the water quality of the Marsh Court River which flows beside the Common Marsh. For the 2 months up to Christmas and despite the heavy rain that we experienced in the autumn, there was nothing to suggest that there had been any sewage spills by Southern Water. However very recently, in early January, the NT monitored the river water again and this time found that

ammonia and phosphate levels were high, which is indicative of sewage spills. Catherine notified Southern Water of the findings and they said they would come out to the Marsh. The National Trust will continue to monitor the water and in the meantime the warning about children and dogs being kept away from the river holds good.

## **Wildlife**

On a happier note, we have seen some fascinating wildlife in the last few months in Stockbridge. First of all, a peregrine falcon came to visit Stockbridge, found a pigeon as its prey and then ate it on the drive of a house on the High Street. Then an influx (or company) of hawfinches came into a meadow near the Marsh, and they have been followed by a snipe. Swans have also been wallowing in the standing water on various water meadows. We never fail to be amazed at the variety of wildlife with which Stockbridge is blessed. And the Hampshire Swifts men have been to the village recently to inspect some of our swiftboxes. They report that at least 7 boxes have had a pair of swifts nesting in them in 2024. This is great news and means that more and more use is being made of the swiftboxes that were put up a few years ago. In addition, there is evidence that at least 10 pairs have been nesting in natural sites. So more and more swifts should be seen from next May.

A little further afield we noted a flock (or deceit!) of lapwings on the far side of Stonehenge. As these have been seriously under threat, because they are ground nesting, it is good to know that they are back in numbers and not too far away. As we have noted before the lapwing was a common sight in Stockbridge some years ago and hence some of the kneelers in St Peter's Church depicted lapwings when they were first embroidered. For those interested have a look at the framed list on the south of the Church beside the front pew. And if you see any unusual wildlife please let us know.

## **Planning Policy**

We made a submission some time ago to TVBC Planning Department about the new Local Plan 2040. We were particularly concerned that the Settlement Boundary for Stockbridge included part of Longstock, including Danebury School, the houses up Salisbury Hill and some of the houses along Longstock Road. Those areas lie wholly within the Parish of Longstock. It is of importance not just for accuracy but because the more amenities the planners ascribe to Stockbridge, for example the Secondary School, the more difficult it is to argue that large developments are not suitable for our small town. Whether

the planners have now changed this as a result of our submission we do not know. They have not responded. So we have recently written asking what is happening about the new Local Plan and we await their answer.

Once again thank you all for your support and if you know of any newcomers who might be interested in SOS please let them have our email address:

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Jean Boney

Chair of SOS