



Wolvercote Commoners'

NEWSLETTER August 2018

To cut or not to cut - that is the question

As we're all aware it's been a rather 'interesting' year weather-wise. What with the wet spring, the beast from the East and the scorching July, Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common have taken quite a battering. One result has been the limited topping of the thistles, subsequently there have been a number of questions asking why. There are several reasons for this and not just the weather. As we have reported here before, there has been an increase in the number of dogs walking on the Commons, with a proportionate increase of dog faeces which is not being removed. This has caused an increased risk of cattle being infected with neosporosis which is transmitted through dog faeces. There has also been a rise in injuries to livestock from broken glass on the Commons. These two factors have led to some graziers being unwilling to return their cattle this year, resulting in severe under-grazing and the overgrowth of grass. Heavy summer grazing by cattle is **ESSENTIAL** for the conservation of the Commons, so the Commoners' Committee has been working together with some graziers to try to increase the number of animals and get

closer to the optimum number. Given the early season overgrowth of grass, it was not possible to top the thistles at the usual time and, together with the very dry weather, topping them a little later in July when most grass had been grazed down to a better height would have removed most fodder for the cattle. There would then be little chance of fresh growth coming through after mowing. So the decision was taken not to top the thistles, but to leave them and the remaining grass to ensure enough grazing for the cattle until we have enough rain to encourage new grass growth. There is a risk that allowing the thistles to set seed will increase thistles next year, but the Committee's aim is to increase the number of cattle early in the season when young, softer thistles are eaten along with the grass, helping to limit their growth, and hopefully future weather conditions will allow us to top the thistles as usual next year. The City Council did top a portion of Port Meadow, but some thistles have been left on their side of Shiplake Ditch

Are you concerned about fracking in our area?

Recent government proposals to fast-track fracking are getting closer to reality. The government wants to make it possible to drill test wells for non-hydraulic fracking without needing to apply for planning permission, using planning tools intended to approve low-impact developments like conservatories – **not fracking**. They are proposing that fracking decisions can be forced through from national government – disregarding community opposition and overstepping local councils' autonomy. The proposals are being consulted on right now. Alert your council leaders to stop fast-track fracking, to make sure your local council knows the impact of these proposals and urge them to raise concerns with your MP.

So, if concerned, write to your council leaders now.

Commoners' Open Talks for 2018/2019

The last twelve months saw an amazingly diverse range of subjects including: Bird Life, other than just Geese, on Port Meadow by Steve Goddard; Building a Cob House by Michael Buck; The Importance of Cyber Security by Aiden Nicols; Conservation in Wytham Woods by Nigel Fisher; The Life of a Quiz Show Obsessive by Amy Godel; The Wild Life of Oxfordshire's Flood Plain by Judy Webb. A very full year of talks for which we should give special thanks to Eleanor Woods for organising. And next year looks even more exciting as we have a very special speaker lined up in the early part of 2019. It will definitely be a case of watch this space as, once the speaker is announced, attendance will be by ticket only! (*free of course*)

Don't forget Village Work Mornings second Saturday of every month

Meet outside the Village Hall at 10am (bring gloves, wellies and any gardening tools you have). Children welcome

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Chair: Mary Brown (01865 236897) Secretary: Eleanor Woods (07815 557630)