

TOWN TALK

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BRACKLEY TOWN COUNCIL

20 High Street, Brackley, NN13 7DS Tel: 01280 702441 Visit: www.brackleynorthants-tc.gov.uk



APRIL 2024



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THE MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Each Brackley Town Mayor is different and approaches the role in different ways. For me, my year has been about inclusion and building on our community strength. It's one of the reasons I became a Councillor.

I have been so very lucky to have met so many wonderful residents and volunteers this year doing extraordinary and inspiring things in our town. Thank you all.

During my Mayoral duties it has been wonderful to meet so many residents at events that I've run - Pride, Drag and Dine, bingo, pottery, music events with local youth orchestras and local artist Harry Pane, wreath making workshops, our Burns' Night Dinner, and coffee mornings to name just a few.

It's been incredible to participate in our town's events, always receiving a warm welcome while undertaking the duty of Brackley Town Mayor. My husband, Ian has been a supportive consort, getting involved as we have attended Civic events - we have loved every moment.



As my year as Mayor comes to an end, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my two chosen charities, South Northants Youth Engagement (SNYE) who provide Youth Clubs, Play and Activity days, half-term and summer sessions providing safe and engaging places to spend time and, Brackley Foodbank who provide much needed help in the form of food and toiletries for residents in times of financial crisis and long-term economic difficulties. It has been a pleasure to work with all the trustees and volunteers during my year.

A huge thank you to my Mayor's volunteers, and every business and individual who have given precious time to help me raise funds and promote our town.

Councillor Sue Sharps
Brackley Town Mayor



Editorial Notes:

This magazine is produced by Brackley Town Council. Town Talk magazine is for the people of Brackley to help keep residents informed of community news, services and events, and to meet its statutory duty to inform residents of council business.

Where copy is supplied we retain the right to refuse, edit: spelling, grammar, any material that may cause offence or upset and non-essential copy in order to fit the space allowed.

Thank you to all who have contributed to this April 2024 publication. The next issue will be in July 2024. Until then, please visit our website or social media channels for regular updates, news, projects, events and services in Brackley.

This edition is also available on our website as a PDF copy.

Artwork and printed by: Banbury Litho.

YOUR LOCAL TOWN COUNCILLORS CONTACT DETAILS

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Brackley Town Council is made up of 16 councillors who are elected every four years to represent their particular Wards. All Town Councillors are volunteers and receive no payment.

WALKING RUGBY AT BRACKLEY RUGBY CLUB

This is a great opportunity to relive your glory days or for those that want a bit of fun and get a little fitter by trying something new.

Thursday Evenings 6.45pm at Brackley Rugby Club. We are now in our third year, providing an opportunity to get out in the fresh air and throw a rugby ball around in a slightly competitive but non-contact way.

The aim is to bring our community together, bring old members back to the club and welcome new people that may not know about what we do at Brackley Rugby Club. It is open to all, everyone is welcome.

Walking Rugby is intended to be a simple version of Rugby suitable for ex-players, injured players and non-players of all ages, abilities and gender who enjoy an active competitive passing game using a rugby ball. Everyone is invited to come and try it out,

all equipment is supplied, you will just need suitable footwear. Everyone's safety and enjoyment are our key principles for the game, scattered with a few rules of rugby – passing backwards, walking only, scoring by crossing the try line (without the dive!). Teams are normally up to 7 players a side.

Walking Rugby has been adapted from traditional rugby to meet a wide variety of fitness levels, which is part of the reason it is so popular. To play comfortably, you need to be able to walk easily, throw and catch a ball and that's it!

If you would like further information, please contact chris.putt@brackleyrufc.com

2023-2024 COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME ROUND UP

Each year Brackley Town Council sets aside some money for a Community Grants Scheme for groups that operate within our community. Here's what some of the groups did with the money that they were awarded in the previous financial year.



South Northants Youth Engagement (SNYE)

The funding contribution from Brackley Town Council through the past year helped towards the Brackley Play and Activity Day, helping to keep all entry and activities free and accessible to all. The day was a great success and attracted over 2000 residents. The grant helped with the costs for first aid, event insurance, volunteer travel and refreshments, advertising, staff time for project management and hire of the activities.



South Northants Volunteer Bureau (SNVB)

The grant helped towards payroll costs, utilities and IT office costs, to provide a door to door service to our 500 members who live in Brackley and surrounding villages, to take them to their medical appointments. It also provided volunteering opportunities to our 50 volunteer drivers who are all local residents too.



Brackley European Association

In September 2023 we hosted visitors from our twin town in Germany, Montabaur. We organised a concert with the Brackley Brass Band, took a trip to Stratford Upon Avon. Our weekend then ended with a formal dinner. Our grant helped towards the cost of this visit - the weekend promoted friendship and mutual understanding between countries.



Do It For Defib

The grant scheme funded replacement pads and batteries for numerous sites across Brackley, along with this a new cabinet was placed at St. Peters Church. Hopefully this will give residents across Brackley the best possible chance of surviving an out of hospital cardiac arrest.



Chatty Café Scheme

We created a 'pay it forward board' this is a notice board with Post-it-Notes relating to different refreshments. Any guest that used this would take the note to staff and redeem the drink free of charge, a log of these drinks was kept and the grant received from Brackley Town Council helped to pay for these. The board helps to keep the Chatty Café Scheme accessible to everyone.



Brackley Jubilee Choir

Our grant helped to pay for two professional singers and an organist. The grant also helped to keep ticket prices of our concerts at a suitable price for Brackley residents of all ages and kept them in line with the prices of concerts in neighboring towns.

BRACKLEY TEEN TO REPRESENT GREAT BRITAIN

At just 18 years old Brackley's very own Oliver Ramsay is soaring to new heights as he represents Great Britain in the FAI Junior World Gliding Championships held in Poland. Oliver's passion for gliding was ignited at a young age, taking his first flight when he was just 13 and going on to do his first solo flight on his 14th birthday.

Oliver has taken it upon himself to raise the necessary funds for his trip to Poland. Through various fundraising efforts if you would like to contribute you can do so through the following link <https://bit.ly/3xcDbmd>

Oliver exemplifies the spirit of perseverance and passion, proving that with determination and hard work, even the sky is not the limit. As he takes to the skies in Poland, all of Brackley will be behind him, good luck Oliver!



BRACKLEY RESTAURANT WINS COMMUNITY AWARD

One thing that Brackley has always been known for is our wonderful selection of Indian restaurants. Without exception all are very good and give Brackley residents a selection of the different tastes of Indian cuisine.

A month ago, Banbury FM launched a poll to find the best Indian restaurant in the area. This poll covered the whole of Banbury FM's broadcast area. Brackley should be very proud that the top two restaurants came from our little town, with Chilli & Pepper taking first place and Saffron coming second.

Owners Rahel (aka H), Nurul and Chef Fuad took over Chilli & Pepper in 2014 bringing the inspiration of a legendary Birmingham Balti to Brackley. The team are delighted to have won the award and love being part of Brackley's community.

Rahel said "With many great Indian restaurants in Banbury and the surrounding area, the competition would have been tough, but knowing voting was carried out by locals, makes the award just that much more special. We are truly grateful to everyone who voted."



Congratulations to all the staff at Chilli & Pepper!

BRACKLEY TOWN COUNCIL BIO-DIVERSITY

Over the past few years, Brackley Town Council has been working hard to improve the town's bio-diversity, in an effort to help combat climate change. In 2023 a task and finish group, with Councillors and staff, was formed to further improve Brackley's bio-diversity.

Since then, we have implemented new things and sustained what we already have - residents may have noticed the work we have done already. This includes;

- Planting 100s of young trees and hedge plants - this has included the establishment of community orchards in Tudor Park, Swift Way and Roman Way open spaces. Fruit trees not only offer food for us and wildlife but also offer a habitat year-round for insects and pollinators.
- 200m of additional new hedge was established at St James Lake. The hedge planting and laying was funded by a grant from CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England).
- The council have created wildlife corridors next to the hedges and ditches to allow wildlife to move around this longer grass and wider areas at the edges of open spaces.
- Some play area surfaces were replaced using an eco-surface of recycled rubber and plastic.
- We have cut the amount of sprays and chemicals for weed control to a bare minimum and wherever possible we use organic products.
- We have created piles of wood to create a habitat for bugs and fungi.
- Summer floral displays around town create vital food for pollinators.
- The council has invested in battery powered tools to help cut emissions.



What are our future plans?

Brackley Town Council works with the Brackley and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust looking at ways to further enhance our bio-diversity.

- We have looked into only cutting some hedges every other year allowing them to grow taller and be laid in the future.
- We are looking to over seed some grass areas with clover which will offer pollinators and habitat, this also creates nitrogen to feed the soil and other plants.
- We will be taking part in 'No Mow May' this will include include St James Lake, Mill Lane Open Space, Rose Open Space, Halse Road Open Space and part of Swift Way Open Space. The Council had reviewed how we can take pat whilst keeping areas available for residents to enjoy.
- Further wild flower meadows are planned.

What can you do to help?

- Take part in 'No Mow May'
- Create a wild flower area in your garden BTC are now offering 'Wildflower Bombs' which can be collected from the office.
- Avoid using chemicals in your garden.
- Create a compost heap.



BRACKLEY COMMUNITY SHOWCASE

Join us for a day of discovery at the Brackley Community Showcase. Embrace the spirit of our town as we bring together an array of vibrant community groups and clubs, showcasing the incredible talent, passion, and diversity that make our town extraordinary.



What to Expect:

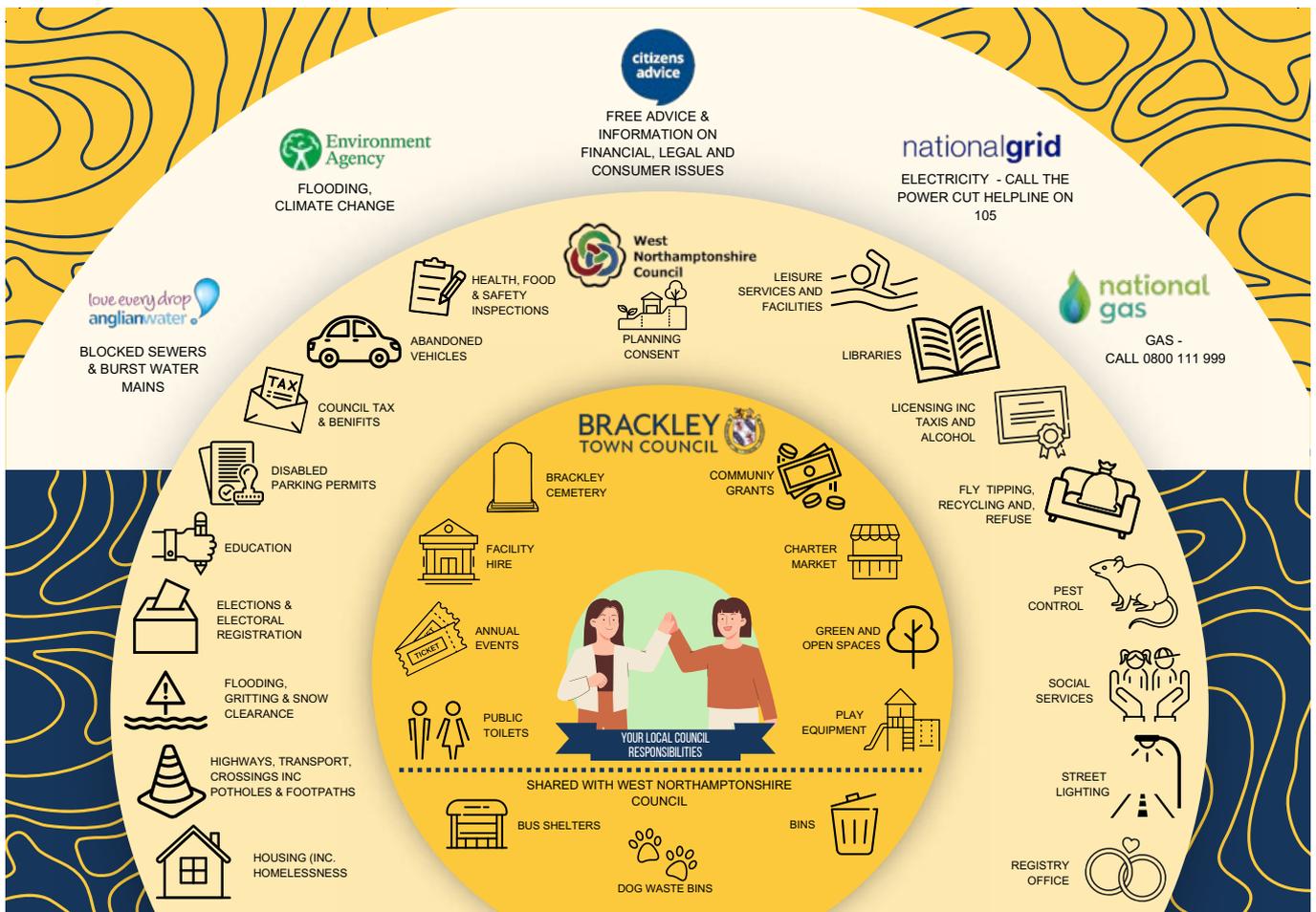
- Explore a wide range of community groups and clubs that cater to all interests, from sports and arts to cultural and hobby-based organizations, there's something for everyone.
- Engage with fellow residents, community leaders, and the passionate individuals behind each group. Make new connections and strengthen the sense of community.
- Learn about volunteer opportunities, local initiatives, and ways to contribute to the development of Brackley. Your support can make a significant impact!

This Community Showcase is a celebration of the vibrancy of Brackley. Let's come together, discover the incredible offerings within our town.

The Showcase will be held at Egerton hall on Saturday 15 June 10am – 2pm

If you would like your community group to attend please contact comms@brackleynorthants-tc.gov.uk

Save the date, spread the word.



MEET YOUR NEW BRACKLEY COUNCILLOR



Name: Stewart Manley

Ward: Brackley South Ward

Committees: Full Council, Direct Responsibilities & General Purposes, Planning & General Works.

My degrees are in physiology but, like many at that time, I switched careers into IT during its early growth spurt in the late 1980s. Along with my wife and three young daughters, we moved to Brackley for work reasons in 1996. We've been happily here ever since, initially moving into a new build property on what people may remember as the "Brambly Hedges" estate at the top of Humphries Drive. There we remained until October last when we downsized, moving less than a mile around the corner.

We were initially attracted to the Town for that difficult-to-define characteristic of its "feel" - it instinctively felt like it would be a nice place to live and bring up a family. We weren't wrong. Clearly, we were also happy

with the facilities, both educational and recreational, and the location and transport links were ideal for a freelance career which always required a commute. While the shape and size of the Town has altered, and we may bemoan the Town Centre changes, I don't believe that "feel" has changed much at all - it's still just a nice place to be. We also now have grandchildren here, which gave us an additional incentive to stay.

Having retired from full time work in late 2020, and wanting to "give something back" to the Community, I quickly signed up to be a volunteer driver with BAVCS. This has been a really rewarding activity, helping transport those who need it to medical appointments both locally and to centres in Oxford and Northampton. It's an extraordinary service and one of which I'm proud to play a small part.

I'm not sure you could call it a "hobby" but a number of years ago we started looking into de-carbonising our lives, starting in 2018 with acquiring our first Electric Vehicle. We're now on our fourth. When we downsized, we decided to choose a property that would allow us to take that further, fitting solar panels, battery storage, and an Air Source Heat Pump; the latter is being fitted as I type. While I appreciate that not everyone is able to do these things, I do believe that if one can then one should, and I'm proud to play a very tiny part in trying to improve our environment. And as a new Councillor, hopefully I can also play a small part in improving the Town we live in.

WALKING NETBALL

Did you know Brackley has its own walking netball team?

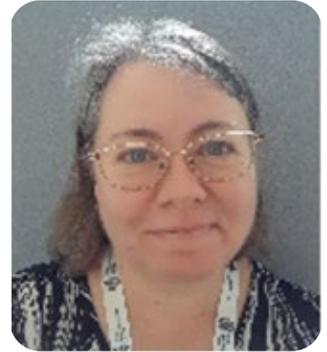
We meet at Brackley Leisure centre on Friday mornings at 10.30am, if you'd like to give it a go your first session is free. Sessions are then £4.20 per week or free for leisure centre members. After the session, we meet for a chat and drink in the café.

For International Women's Day our group travelled to Daventry to meet up with Towcester and Daventry groups.

Interested and want to know more, contact Kath Bell via email kathleenmcguirebell@gmail.com



BRACKLEY TOWN CENTRE MANAGER COMMUNITY UPDATE



Help shape ideas for Brackley High Street improvements

Since starting in the role of Town Centre Manager in summer 2023, I have been working closely with local businesses, organisations and Brackley Town Council to identify key issues that we will aim to address where possible.

High Street Survey – UK High streets have been facing a variety of challenges and people are also now using High Streets differently and at different times. Brackley is no exception and to help us to better understand local changes we now need your help to shape ideas for improvements.

We have set out a series of questions in a survey to understand your use of Brackley High Street, and how you want to use it into the future and would like to receive your suggestions for helping the town to thrive.



The survey can be completed online via the QR code or weblink below. Paper copies are also available at Brackley Town Council offices, along with a post box for responses. If you would like the survey in a different format, please contact samantha.hosking@westnorthants.gov.uk 07780 260427.

The survey will be running during the next couple of months, dates can be found on the link.

<https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/cet/brackley-high-street>

UPDATE ON BRACKLEY'S BANKS

Closure of Lloyds Bank branch. The closure of Brackley's last remaining bank branch is causing concern for many of our residents and visitors - this might make accessing in person banking advice and assistance very difficult or inconvenient. Brackley Town Council understands these concerns and that not everyone can access banking online or wishes to do so, or that they may have complex transactions or needs where an in-person appointment is necessary.

Brackley Town Council have agreed to apply for a permanent Brackley Banking Hub and the application is under way. The application process will take some time and there is no guarantee that Brackley will be successful. Permanent Banking Hubs are run by the Post Office to let you use services from all the major High Street banks, including cash transactions.

Meanwhile, we have been speaking with community banking advisors from several banks to arrange community banking sessions at the Brackley Town Hall office. It will be possible to carry out any non-

cash transactions at these in-person appointments that you would normally do in branch, while Post Offices offer cash banking services. For information on banking services provided by the Post Office please visit: <https://www.postoffice.co.uk/everydaybanking>

Lloyds will be at Brackley Town Hall, Market Place, Brackley to help you on Wednesdays between 9.00am and 4.00pm from April 3rd. www.lloydsbank.com/communitybanker

HSBC UK have been trialling some dates through March and are to confirm whether this will continue. www.hsbc.co.uk/ways-to-bank/community-events

Barclays also hold community banking sessions, currently operating out of Sainsbury's car park 10am-2pm every other Friday, for more information, please visit: <https://events.uk.barclays/barclaysvan/>

Samantha Hosking
Town Centre Manager (Brackley & Towcester)
Economic Growth and Inward Investment,
West Northamptonshire Council

BRACKLEY & DISTRICT 41 CLUB



Were you ever a member of Round Table?

Either in Brackley or elsewhere in the UK; maybe even overseas?

If you are interested in keeping that 'spirit of Tabling' alive and enjoying continued fellowship, then Brackley 41 Club could be the social network for you!

Members of Round Table (and ex-members) are welcome to join Brackley 41 Club once they are over the age of 40 – hence the name. Although our club is made up of past members of Round Table, we also welcome those who were not.

We are just a group of everyday men from different backgrounds who make the effort to get out to do stuff together and enjoy each other's company. Our current membership ranges from 40-something to 70-something, and we get together at least one evening a month for a range of different activities. These are organised by the members themselves, and usually involve some food and drink.

Brackley 41 Club is part of an international network spanning across 30 countries, with around 13,000 members in about 700 clubs in the UK and Ireland. Our members enjoy socialising in and around Brackley as well as attending regional, national, and international events; often involving our partners and families.

Our primary purpose is to have some fun together based on our shared experiences. We are also committed to supporting our local Round Table club, while continuing the friendships we made there.

You can find out more and get in touch via www.41club.org/micro/brackley-district or through Facebook (www.facebook.com/Brackley41Club/).

Enjoy yourself – it's later than you think!

Hello from the Wombles!



We haven't been standing still, the wombles have made progress since you read our last article. Social media pages are lively and our website www.brackleylitterwombles.co.uk has information, links and contacts to follow up or why not call in at the library to see our display board where we have lists of upcoming sessions of litter picking in the area? You can even suggest a target area which needs clearing near you. If you can't help at our big blitz sessions, there's always litter spoiling the streets where you walk.

Our link with the West Northamptonshire Council means that they collect and dispose of the purple bin bags we fill - you've probably seen piles of these bags waiting to be taken away. In March, we broke a personal record. We thought our 168 bags filled in February was a monthly record, until 22 March when more than 270 bin bags and 640 bottles of pop had been recorded at library HQ.

We are in touch with local councils in Buckinghamshire as the Great River Ouse is the county boundary, so the old road alongside the A422 (now a pedestrian path with 'cats eyes') is another eyesore of litter we are aware of. There has been so much support from local businesses both practically and financially, for which we are very grateful. Some residents and staff from Brackley Nursing and Care Home even organised a Sunday litter pick around the Medical Centre with us.

This month we have celebrated our first anniversary. We hope you have begun to notice a difference in our tidier town in 12 months and that you saw the effects of the Great Brackley Clean Up, 29 March to 14 April.

Happy Wombling, from Uncle Bulgaria!

SNVB LAUNCHES CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME

One soggy Thursday, fifteen employees from the Data Privacy Group took on the considerable task of transforming an empty bungalow at a local primary school into a quiet, relaxing and safe space for students with special educational needs. The vision for 'The Hive' building is for it to be a place of comfort, solace and safety when the hustle and bustle of day-to-day school life might become overwhelming.



The Data Privacy Group approached SNVB asking us to source a volunteering project in which they could all be involved as a team, meanwhile a member of the school's PTA approached us asking for some volunteers to help with the Hive Project; a wonderful partnership was formed.

The demand for corporate volunteering is growing. Businesses want to do their bit, to roll their sleeves up and get involved in projects that will have a genuine social impact. Employees want to belong to ethically-minded companies with a desire to connect with the communities in which they operate.

'The whole DPG team worked their socks off yesterday. We made a tangible difference to the lives of so many young people. It was evident from the messages of thanks we received from the staff and support workers at the school that our efforts were greatly appreciated. I am looking forward to our next day in the community.'

Peter Borner, COO, The Data Privacy Group

'The launch of this programme is such an exciting time for us and we're so grateful to the Data Privacy Group for their time, passion for volunteering, and willingness to get involved in a community project. We have so many local initiatives waiting for groups of volunteers and are so pleased we can act as the glue between volunteers and passionate community groups. What a fantastic day for all involved.'

Davinia Swanston, Operations, SNVB

'The team was wonderful and performed a miracle for the school and our dedicated SEN facility. I really don't know how to thank everyone enough!'

Clare Booth, Deputy Headteacher, SENCo and Inclusion Lead



SNVB exists to champion community volunteering and to that end, we can source a range of projects with which local businesses can get involved. Partnerships mean the world to us. We love our network of local charities and community projects and now we have even more potential to help.

Please follow us on our socials for more local volunteering news and if you would like to find out more about Corporate Volunteering, please email volunteering@snvb.org.uk.

COMMUNITY GROUPS



We are a special education provision academy organisation through extracurricular cultural activities and STEAM education with an alternative classroom learning setting. It's a clear mandate that our education provision organisation is a vehicle to provide class sessions for pupils with learning difficulties, developmental conditions, Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and social communication complexities including ASD.

Children with neurodiversity backgrounds currently attend term time and learn in our calm nurturing setting who may be flexi-schooling, with a reduced school timetable and or home educated including after school clubs. Children with an EHCP and pupils on a pathway to diagnosis including SEND for those without an EHCP assessment and EOTAS programmes agreed by the parent, SENCo and headteacher.

We nurture cognitive development and learning, intensive interests, multi-sensory, dyspraxia, dyslexia, ADHD and PDA. This consists of extracurricular provisions, one-to-one support, guided, non-guided, structured and unstructured play activities with syllabus, outdoor learning and active discovery play and learn which promotes problem-solving, strategy, and memory skills.

Wellbeing strategy

We strongly promote wellbeing and mindfulness of children's journey through periods of positive and negative personal, social emotional mental health. We understand how positive wellbeing can affect our pupil's personal development and resilience. We understand how the wellbeing of others around us can be influenced by us and influence us.



Our Vision

Our vision at Brackley STEAM Park Academy Ltd, is a shared vision to ensure our education setting is a happy place, a healthy place, a safe place, and a place where our pupils are enthusiastic about learning, eager to explore, nurtured and inspired. Pupils are given opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem.

Where Every Child Thrives, Nurtured, Succeed Together

We may work with local authorities either directly or facilitating that provision by a third party with a legal identity to procure and provide an education setting with alternative sessions for ages 4-11.

Get in Touch 01280 811 356 – enquiries@steamparkacademy.org.uk

BRACKLEY COMMUNITY LARDER

Brackley Community Larder is run by dedicated volunteers and provides high-quality, subsidised food. Our Larder supports all local communities and is available to anyone facing hardship. A consistent supply chain is guaranteed as we work closely with local businesses and other Charities like FareShare and SOFEA. Our volunteers also collect surplus food from local suppliers and supermarkets.

The Larder charges a small annual membership fee of £10, then it's pay as you go. Shoppers can then purchase items: either 10 items for £5 or 22 items for £10. In addition, as a member, you can then add fruit, vegetables and bread, FREE of charge.

The Larder will be open on Fridays between 12.00 and 1pm at Egerton Hall, Juno Crescent NN13 6GN. Why not come along and see what we have available.

Please look out for further information on our Facebook page, or if you know anyone who may benefit from joining, please let them know and we will make them feel welcome.

If you would like to help out in our Larder by volunteering, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact us at foodlardercommunity@gmail.com

VENUE HIRE RATES 2024/25

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
08:00 to 17:00	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	High
17:00 to 00:00	High						

Hourly Venue Rates (with effect from 1 April 2024)

Location Room		Commercial/ Non-Resident		Brackley Resident		Not-for-Profit	
		Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Egerton Hall	Large Hall	£16	£27	£12	£20	£10	£15
	Small Hall	£13	£21	£10	£15	£5	£10
	Car Park Pitch	£6	£11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Town Hall	Civic Hall	£16	£27	£12	£20	£10	£15
Old Fire Station	Community Room	£12	£20	£10	£15	£5	£10

NB: Security Staff and refundable damage deposits are compulsory for some events with POA.

NB: Bank Holiday bookings will be charged at the high rate.

Rate Guide

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
09:00 to 00:00	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	High

Venue Rates (with effect from 1 April 2024)

Event	Town Hall		Egerton Hall		Comments
Ceremony	Resident £200.00 Non-Resident £250.00	Resident £350.00 Non-Resident £400.00	X	X	This would be up to 5 hours. Additional hours will be charged at normal hourly rate.
Breakfast/ Reception	Resident £22.00ph Non-Resident £25.00	Resident £35.00ph Non-Resident £38.00	Resident £22.00ph Non-Resident £25.00	Resident £35.00ph Non-Resident £38.00	Charged for hours required.
**Security	POA	POA	POA	POA	Minimum 6 hours, additional hours will be charged after the event.
Deposit	Damage deposit will be required at all Ceremonies / Receptions – See below				Refundable after the event.

NB: Bank Holiday bookings will be charged at the high rate.

**Security will be required at wedding receptions where alcohol is served

Damage Deposits (with effect from 1 April 2024)

Event	Town Hall	Egerton Hall	Comments
Ceremony Only	£100.00	X	N/A
Ceremony and Reception	£500.00	X	alcohol served
Resident Reception	£500.00	£500.00	alcohol served
Resident Reception	£250.00	£250.00	no alcohol served

** Non-Resident damage deposits will be £500.00 **

BRACKLEY SOAPBOX 2003 – 2024

It's wonderful when you can sit and chat with an old friend and reminisce about life, talk about the wonderful silly things you used to do as youngsters, laugh and wish you could go back in time.

This is exactly what happened when Peter Stocker and Kevin Dixon were discussing the Billy Carts that they used to build back in the 1950s and 1960s. These were built on a plank of wood with a wooden box on the back to sit in, pram or pushchair wheels, steering with rope to the front wheels and no brakes. The soles of your shoes took a battering to try and stop!

Just before Peter commenced his year as Mayor of Brackley 2003, a thought popped into his head as it sometimes does at these times. "Let's Do It"

The aim was to have fun and raise some funds for the Mayor's Charities via a collection bucket or two.

A band of close friends from the Brackley community were brought together to run the event and there the Brackley Soapbox was born. The event was a huge success and grew to be one of Brackley's major events.

You may be wondering what has happened to the Brackley soapbox?

The last time the event ran was in 2019 and was possibly one of our best events. 2020 unfortunately brought us Covid so the event had to be cancelled, as did 2021. It was proposed to bring the event back for June 2022 and all was set for this event when we had to cancel due to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend celebrations.

Again, we set out to run in June 2023. We started to make the arrangements and contacted our insurance company, only to be told that due to an accident at another event during 2022 no one would cover our event.



We have just formed a new committee to run the Brackley Soapbox Derby again. The new committee are very experienced with events and we aim to bring this back to our lovely High street. Peter was voted as Honorary Life President. We are talking with insurance providers and hope to have some news for you soon.

President: Peter Stocker

Chairman: Bernie Tiller

Treasurer: Alan Eaton

Secretary: Fiona Baker

Committee & event timing: Jason Kew

Committee: Mick Linford

Committee: Chris Putt

We would like to keep this as a free town event and maintain entry fees as low as we possibly can. We do rely on sponsorship to run the event and would welcome contact from anyone or any companies who feel they may be able to help. Also, volunteers are always needed and would be very welcome on the day.

Until our website is back up and running, we can be contacted via our Facebook group, www.facebook.com/groups/71743999581 or email bernard.tiller@gmail.com

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LOCAL AUTHOR SHARES HER BOOKS



Rhian Tracey is a local author who has begun writing a Bletchley Park mystery series of books aimed at young people. The first one in the series is called "I Spy". We were really lucky at The Radstone Primary School that she came into our school on 29th February, which was the day her second Bletchley Park novel, "Hide and Seek" was published. This was particularly exciting for us in Year 6, as we have been studying about World War II in History and we've also been to Bletchley Park. Rhian Tracey had visited Bletchley Park hundreds of times to find information for her books, but also to find out about her Great Aunt Audrey, who worked at Bletchley Park during the war.

We interviewed Rhian Tracey when she visited us, and thought that the readers of Town Talk would be interested in finding out more about her and her books.

Year 6 question

We really enjoyed reading your book "I Spy" – how did you think of the plot?

Rhian Tracey

I was inspired by my Great Aunt Audrey. She worked at Bletchley Park during the war, but because it was so secret, none of her family knew about it until years later. I wanted to write a story for children and began by thinking of my main character, a girl who likes nature, and then creating the other characters around her. I liked researching things like double agents and spies, and then finding a way to make these into a story.

Year 6 question

You called your main character Robyn. Did you name her after the bird and because you like nature?

Rhian Tracey

Yes, I love nature. When I am interviewed, I often like to be outside, and I love walking with my dog. When I'm outside I feel like I am in the moment – there's something very special about it. I also named her Robyn because my Dad was called Rob.

Year 6 question

How long have you been writing for?

Rhian Tracey

I have always loved writing so probably since I was about five years old! I started writing more quality books when I was at university, and I was twenty-four when my first books were published.

Year 6 question

So how long did it take you to write "I Spy"?

Rhian Tracey

I started writing it in the September before lockdown. During lockdown my children needed the laptop in the morning to do their school work, so I wrote in the afternoons. But even after I had finished writing there were lots of steps it needed to go through before it could be published, so it ended up taking about two years.

Year 6 question

How does it feel knowing there are people inspired by your books?

Rhian Tracey

It's amazing! With every book it's really special to have people who love reading my books.

Year 6 question

Do you like the front cover illustrations of your books?

Rhian Tracey

Yes, I love them. They were illustrated by David Dean who is a great illustrator. I love the imagery and the setting.

Year 6 question

Have you received any awards for your books?

Rhian Tracey

"I Spy" has been nominated for an award and it's a best-selling book. I think I might find out if I have won the award in May.

Year 6

Thank you so much for coming in to our school, for sharing your books with us and giving us some top tips on writing.

Rhian Tracey

You are very welcome. I have loved coming in to your school.



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