

Bucks Councillors Report for Dec 2021

Lights, Camera, Action! Buckinghamshire's new Film Office takes centre stage

Residents could soon be seeing much more of Buckinghamshire on both the big and small screen, as the council is setting up a dedicated film office to help production companies take advantage of the county's rolling countryside, diverse architecture, picture-perfect villages and edgy, urban landscapes.

The brand new Buckinghamshire Film Office is being developed in collaboration with key partners and the film industry, including Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF), Buckinghamshire's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Pinewood Studios and Creative England. The Film Office will support production companies and filming crews with information on Buckinghamshire locations, obtaining permits for filming and production advice and guidance. It aims to maximise the economic and social benefits to the county through increased inward spend, employment opportunities and as a boost to tourism, while also ensuring local residents and businesses continue to benefit from filming in Buckinghamshire and that any disruption from filming is minimised.

Recruitment is now underway for a dedicated Film Officer to develop the Film Office including streamlining support to production companies and crews, developing the website to make it easier to find and film at locations and venues and promoting the world-class filming opportunities Buckinghamshire has to offer within both the UK and internationally.

Clive Harriss, Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for us to get Buckinghamshire firmly on the map as one of the best places in the country to film - from one-off television dramas to international blockbusters. We are working together with our local partners to create a dynamic, one-stop unit to offer a quality and professional end-to-end service to production companies from around the world, boosting our economy and providing valuable skills development for the county's workforce."

The project has the support of Pinewood Studios, where international blockbusters have been filmed, including the James Bond films.

Supervising Location Manager, Emma Pill, whose credits include 1917, Spectre, Blade Runner 2049 and Cinderella added: "Buckinghamshire includes many great locations to film and a dedicated team with local knowledge will make it even better. This is exciting news for the county and the film industry as a whole. I look forward to working with the Buckinghamshire Film Office in the very near future."

Buckinghamshire locations have featured in a range of films and TV series from the entire Harry Potter film series and Star Wars: Phantom Menace, to Mission: Impossible, Bridgerton and Cinderella.

Applications are currently open for the Film Officer role and close on 25 October: [Buckinghamshire Film Officer | Buckinghamshire Council Jobs](#)

The new Buckinghamshire Film Office website will be up and running shortly.

Trial traffic enforcement cameras to be piloted in Buckinghamshire

Three locations in Buckinghamshire have been chosen for a camera trial to assess the level of traffic violations. From Wednesday 3 November, temporary cameras will be placed in three known areas where multiple complaints from residents and road users have been received over a period of time.

The three locations are:

- Marlow Bridge
- Castle Street, High Wycombe
- Corporation Street, High Wycombe

Marlow Bridge is a historic, listed structure with a three tonne (max gross weight) restriction. Despite clear signage and width restriction measures in place, drivers continue to attempt to cross the bridge, damaging its integral structure. Many vehicles get stuck, so causing the need for repetitive and costly repairs.

The two locations in High Wycombe are bus gateways. Problems have existed for a number of years with people driving through the roads which are only meant to be accessed by buses. This causes a threat to safety for pedestrians.

Legislation is currently being passed through Government to allow all local authorities in England and Wales to apply for powers to take over the responsibility of enforcing moving traffic offences. These include no stopping in yellow box junctions, no right/left turn for vehicular traffic, no U-turns for vehicular traffic, as well as weight restrictions and many more. Currently such violations are dealt with by the police apart from in London and Cardiff. In the near future, possibly as early as March 2022, all councils will be able to apply to adopt these powers to take on the responsibility of upholding restrictions and issuing fixed penalty notices to those caught contravening the restriction.

Steve Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport said: "We are looking to install these temporary cameras to give us a better idea of the number of vehicles currently breaking the rules and causing a danger to others and damage to our roads and highways infrastructure.

"We want to make our roads and towns as safe as possible for everyone who uses them. This exercise will help us to better understand the way motorists are using these areas so that we can address particular issues and introduce measures to help improve safety and accessibility for all."

The trial will be for a period of one month.

Covid update from Martin Tett Buckinghamshire Council Leader

Whilst most of us have seen life return to something approaching 'normal' over the past few months it is important to remember that Covid has not gone away and remains a threat to many in our county. You may have seen in the news that Covid infection rates are rising again nationally. This is also true in Buckinghamshire. Here we now have an infection rate of 699 per 100,000 population. This compares to just 440 a few weeks ago. It is important to stress that infection rates are not the same as serious illness. Infection rates reflect the number of people being tested and also will include many people who do not display any symptoms at all. More than half of Covid infections in Bucks are either school age children or live with school age children. With our national vaccine programme, it is also more likely that anyone catching Covid will not suffer severe effects. Nevertheless, the trend is concerning and we are seeing more cases amongst older aged people who may be more vulnerable to serious illness. This is especially true if they have not been fully vaccinated.

The current Covid-19 figures for Buckinghamshire can be found here:

<https://covid-dashboard.buckinghamshire.gov.uk>

A concern is that rising Covid cases, when combined with a greater likelihood of catching the winter flu, the need for the NHS to catch up with the large backlog of operations and treatments delayed due to Covid, and higher numbers of people attending Accident and Emergency departments is already putting pressure on our NHS hospitals in Buckinghamshire. None of us want to go back into more restrictions unnecessarily. I am therefore urging all of us to take the basic sensible precautions that will reduce the likelihood of this being necessary.

I would strongly encourage you to:

- Be vaccinated if you're eligible. This is so important.
- Have the booster vaccination as soon as you're eligible. You will be invited by the NHS to book an appointment.
- Have your winter flu jab if you're eligible.
- Wear a face mask on public transport and when asked to by shops and in crowded enclosed spaces.
- Self-isolate and book a PCR test if you have symptoms.
- Keep rooms ventilated if you're meeting with others inside.

The council has been working hard with other organisations to help keep Buckinghamshire safe. This has included working with the NHS to set up more local vaccine clinics, sending mobile testing vans into our communities and supporting the vaccine roll out for 12-15 year olds in secondary schools. We have come a long way since the difficult lockdown days earlier this year. Let's keep working together to keep each other safe.

Support for the vulnerable

Our Helping Hand team are available to help individuals or families in need, those on low incomes and those who are experiencing a financial emergency or crisis.

Whether you get in contact by phone or the online form, we will ask you a few questions about your situation so that we can offer the best support or advice.

Help with food and food costs – If you are struggling to afford food, our Helping Hand team can make referrals on your behalf to a local food bank.

You can also use the [Buckinghamshire Online Directory](#) to find organisations in your area who can help you with food. Many of these organisations are providing food and meals during the school holidays.

Help with household bills – If you are unable to pay your energy costs and are struggling to keep your home warm, please contact us.

We can discuss the options available to you and help you apply for grants from third party organisations. We may also be able to help with any other essential bills.

Help with essential items for your home – Please contact us if you need help with essential furniture. We can explore the best support for you.

Some external charities can help with essential furniture if you are on a low income:

- [Aylesbury Vineyard Church](#): The Vineyard work on a referral basis for furniture collections.
- [High Wycombe Central Aid](#): Help local people who are in need and/or on a low income with basic essential furniture and electricals.
- [Thomas Hickman Charity](#): Can help people on low incomes with aids for living such as washing machines, carpets, cookers and fridges.

Get in touch – let us know if:

- you are struggling to afford food
- you cannot keep on top of your bills
- you are in debt
- you are struggling to pay for essential goods in your home

To request support from the Helping Hand team either use our [online form](#) or phone 01296 531151.

Our phone lines are open Monday to Thursday 9am to 5:30pm and Friday 9am to 5pm.

In an emergency, our out-of-hours team can be contacted on 0800 999 7677.

Food collections

In the Chiltern and Wycombe areas we are still collecting food waste as general rubbish. This is because of a national shortage of HGV drivers and a small number of Covid-related cases meaning crews have had to self-isolate in line with government guidelines.

This is just an interim measure and means that residents in Chiltern and Wycombe should dispose of their food waste together with their general rubbish (in the black bin). Brown food caddies will still be emptied if presented on general rubbish week only, but this waste will not be recycled during this time. General rubbish will still be collected every two weeks. Collections in the rest of the county are unaffected.

We will let you know when the situation changes.

Mental health support

The free Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire 24/7 mental health helpline for adults and young people has supported more than 2,000 people since the start of the pandemic.

Contact the helpline anytime if you are worried about your mental health or that of a loved one via [111 online](#) or by phone.

Lastly, please keep an eye on elderly or frail friends or neighbours as we go into the winter months. Vulnerable people may be afraid or too proud to ask for help but it takes so little to enquire if they are all right or need any assistance.

In Buckinghamshire, self-isolating does not mean you are alone

The latest ONS (Office for National Statistics) research suggests people of working age are least likely to self-isolate for the full 10 days. As cases of Covid-19 are rising, if you are required to self-isolate and you are unable to get help from friends and family, there is a range of support available for you.

Practical, social and emotional support is available to those self-isolating. This includes arranging for shopping to be delivered online, contacting the National Responders Service <https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/> for practical tasks and wellbeing and using the Medical Delivery Service to have your prescriptions delivered. Please check locally for participating pharmacies or ask your GP surgery.

Buckinghamshire also has many local volunteer organisations and charities that can help. You can search for more information in your local area through Bucks Online Directory: <https://directory.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/>

There is also additional support from Buckinghamshire Council's Helping Hand service who can provide you with a range of support including emergency access to food and other essential supplies, signposting for financial difficulties such as paying for fuel and other bills and access to mental wellbeing services.

Find out more by visiting: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/community-hub/help-if-youre-self-isolating/>. Or take a look at how our Helping Hands team can support you during your self-isolation period: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/housing-and-benefits/support-with-food-bills-and-finances/>

Self-isolation is when you have tested positive for COVID-19 and do not leave your home.

Keep up to date with the latest government guidelines on self-isolating by visiting the NHS website - the rules can change quite quickly so it's always worth checking regularly. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

If you're required to self-isolate in line with the latest guidance, please play your part. Follow the advice from NHS Test and Trace to keep your family, friends, neighbours and others safe. It's a legal requirement to self-isolate if you are told to by NHS Test and Trace and not following the rules could result in a fine.

Community boards explore the realities of living with dementia

What is it really like to live with dementia? Three of Buckinghamshire's community boards have been finding out as they took part in a series of special events last week.

Dementia affects more than 850,000 people in the UK. One in 14 people over 65 have dementia and 1 in 6 people over 80 have the condition. There are also over 42,000 people under the age of 65 who are living with dementia. There is currently no cure but with the right level of support and treatment many people continue to live active and fulfilled lives for many years.

One of the best ways to help someone with dementia is to gain a greater understanding of how the condition affects them and that is where the Interactive Dementia Awareness Experience to be provided by funding from the Ivinghoe and Wing Community Board comes in. This project is to be rolled out in in the Ivinghoe ward in the near future, whatch this space !.

The activity offers an interactive, virtual experience of what it is like to live with dementia and gives people the opportunity to gain a first-hand insight into how the condition affects individuals. The mobile unit is unique in the way it works and is scientifically and medically proven to give a person with a healthy brain, the chance to experience what having dementia really feels like.

Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities said: "Dementia is a condition that sadly affects a large number of people, even the relatively young. These events hosted by three of our community boards reflect their commitment to supporting those living with dementia in their local communities.

"Our community boards work closely with local people and groups to find out what issues are important to them and then work together to make improvements."

Buckinghamshire has 16 local community boards, set up to work in partnership with local people and organisations. The boards aim to work with communities to listen and take action on matters of importance to local people. For more information visit our website: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-boards

Nominations are open for this year's Proud of Bucks Awards!

Nominations are now open for Buckinghamshire Council's Proud of Bucks Community Awards 2021 - generously sponsored by [The Clare Foundation](#).

The awards aim to recognise and applaud outstanding community contribution carried out by local individuals, groups and organisations. They celebrate Buckinghamshire's communities that have made a positive impact in their local areas.

This year, each of Buckinghamshire's 16 Community Boards will be celebrating local people in three award categories. Members of the public are invited to send in their nominations for those who they feel deserve recognition and praise. The three award categories are:

- **Buckinghamshire Community Award Best Adult Contribution** - For an individual (aged over 21) who has contributed to their local community during 2021 by improving lives for others or improving their local environment.
- **Buckinghamshire Community Award Best Young Person Contribution** – For young people (aged under 21) who have had a positive impact on the local community or peers through community engagement or activism.
- **Buckinghamshire Community Award Best Community Group Contribution** - Recognises and celebrates a group in the community board area who has made a clear and positive impact on the community during 2021.

Nominate someone today using the [Proud of Bucks Awards online nomination form](#). You can also [download a Proud of Bucks Awards nomination form](#) and return by email to awards@buckinghamshire.gov.uk, or pick up and drop off your nomination form at one of Buckinghamshire's libraries. [Find your local library](#).

The closing date for nominations is Friday 31 December. Nominations will be reviewed by a panel of judges and the winners will be announced early next year.

Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities, said: "The Proud of Bucks Awards are a fantastic way to celebrate all those who have gone above and beyond in their local community. By working closely this year with our Community Boards, we can use a more locally driven approach to recognise and praise adults, young people and groups within Buckinghamshire's amazing communities.

"Whether you have directly benefited from an initiative in your local area or you know someone who has wowed you with their efforts, enthusiasm and innovation, we want to hear from you!"

Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, added: "Last year the awards focused on the community contribution in response to the pandemic. This year we're broadening the nominations to shine a light on anyone who has contributed to or has had a positive impact in their local area, and we know there's plenty of deserving winners in Buckinghamshire."

The Clare Foundation is delighted to be sponsoring the Proud of Bucks Awards for the second year running. Mike Clare, Founder and Chairman said: "We are really pleased to be able to congratulate those who have gone above and beyond helping those in need in their local community. We look forward to hearing all the amazing stories from the individuals and groups who have made an impact."

More information on the awards including how to nominate someone from your local area can be found on [Buckinghamshire Council's Proud of Bucks Awards webpage](#).

Two successful business bids for Bucks

Two projects within Buckinghamshire have been successful in achieving funding through the Government's Community Renewal Fund, part of a £200 million boost to help level up communities across the UK. The fund aims to support people and communities to pilot programmes and new approaches and will invest in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people into employment.

The two successful Buckinghamshire-based projects are:

Buckinghamshire Business First - £728,250 for the Build Back Better Tourism and Hospitality sector in Buckinghamshire (3BTHB). This is for a range of support work-packages to the Visitor Economy businesses. These work packages aim to support organisational resilience and decarbonisation in the Tourism and Hospitality sector.

Philippa Batting, Managing Director, Buckinghamshire Business First said: “Our Visitor Economy was hit hard during the pandemic and this funding is a fantastic opportunity to help Buckinghamshire’s Tourism and Hospitality sector recover and build resilience for the long term. The project will support businesses and their employees to lower their carbon footprint, encourage green and accessible tourism and invest in the range of digital skills needed to improve their short, medium and longer-term productivity and sustainability.”

£39, 994 for the Neurodiverse Self Advocacy Partnership – to tool up a mentoring into employment programme - this offers a highly specialised tailored programme designed and led by autistic people for autistic people to enhance and develop their employability. The programme proposes to satisfy autistic needs for growth and recognition, reduce social exclusion and remove the disadvantage of disability through a modern digital experience.

Marie Van Herterycyk from NSAP said: “We are proud to bring the Tool Up mentoring into employment programme to Buckinghamshire. The programme is developed with the help from leading academics. We start by helping to articulate strengths, set goals and provide 20 weeks of support to achieve them whether it is getting a desired job, an apprenticeship or simply to get ready to start job search. Previous runs of the programme resulted in 32% of participants gaining employment. The Tool Up programme also resulted in higher mentee confidence and a statistically significant improvement in Personal Wellbeing Index quality of life measures of satisfaction with achievement in life, future security, being part of the community, life as a whole and positive autism identity. Mentoring is a goal-oriented relationship where the mentee is in the driving seat based on intrinsic motivation. This is the factor of our success.”

Buckinghamshire Council’s Adoption Readiness Checker reaches 4,000 users

Buckinghamshire Council’s Adoption Readiness Checker has reached 4,000 users. The tool is aimed at people considering adoption who are unsure of where to start. The Adoption Readiness Checker can help anyone to determine if they are in a position to adopt and gives practical advice with a personalised plan to prepare people to take the next step in their journey.

Since the site launch in October 2019, over 250 plans have been created with over 4,000 people using the site. Between April 2020 and April 2021, the Council approved 30 people or couples as adopters – many of whom used the Adoption Readiness Tool.

Karen, a prospective adopter (name changed for confidentiality reasons), said:

“I’d been putting off looking into adoption because I was afraid of finding out I’m not what they’re looking for but I’m so glad this tool exists as it put my mind at rest. I learned loads and the advice is way more practical than anything else I’ve come across. Couldn’t recommend it enough to anyone thinking of adopting.”

The tool is continuing to evolve based on feedback from users, with new sections coming soon. An online tool helping to connect Special Guardians and young people to support, is due to launch early next year.

Buckinghamshire has approximately 25 children at any one time waiting to be adopted. The Adoption Readiness tool aims to dispel myths about adoption and who can adopt, to enable more people to apply.

“We welcome all enquiries, so if you think you could provide a safe and loving home for a child who needs adopting, then please get in touch with our friendly team. You may be able to make a positive difference to a child’s life.”

Anyone considering adopting with Buckinghamshire Council can use the [Adoption Readiness Checker](#) to see if they are in a position to adopt, and learn more about the process. All enquiries are welcome so if you think you could provide a safe and loving home for a child who needs adopting then please get in touch with the Council’s friendly team.

Visit the [adoption webpage](#) or get in touch with the team by calling **01494 586 349** or emailing adoption@buckinghamshire.gov.uk to find out more about adopting with Buckinghamshire Council.

Buckinghamshire Council hits 50% mark in its county-wide gully cleaning programme

Buckinghamshire Council's extensive programme of cleaning highways gullies across the county has now hit the 50% mark.

The drainage improvement works are designed to help prevent flooding on our roads and to keep drains and gullies across Buckinghamshire running freely. The council set aside an extra £4 million to fund the works, as part of a wider improvement programme for residents.

The council is aiming to clean every single one of Buckinghamshire's almost 85,000 gullies at least once. Critical gullies, that need cleaning more often to prevent flooding on the roads, will be cleaned more regularly. Maximising the amount of water that can drain off road surfaces will also help to maintain the condition of the roads themselves.

As part of the improvement scheme, the council will also be carrying out repairs to drainage systems where there is a known local issue, or where a problem comes to light during the cleaning programme. The teams will also be carrying out comprehensive ditch clearance as part of these works and writing to landowners to remind them of their responsibilities to keep their ditches clear to prevent surface water from their land

Flooding from blocked highway drains can blight people's lives – especially during extreme weather – which is why the gully clearing programme is so essential. It's designed to protect people and buildings from the impact of flooding on our roads and footways.

An additional investment this year to clear every drain and gully whilst repairing those which require fixing. The aim is to clean as many as possible before the winter rain sets in. More information on Buckinghamshire Council's road maintenance and repairs can be found at: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-transport/road-maintenance-and-repairs