

Community MATTERS

THE NEWT IN SOMERSET

Dear Neighbours,

The cows are out, the sun is shining, and with summer fast approaching, Somerset has treated us to a glorious spring. The season also marked the start of a new financial year, a natural moment to reflect on what we've achieved and look ahead to what's next.

Over the past year, we've celebrated some exciting milestones, including the awarding of three Michelin Keys in October. But many of our most meaningful achievements have been quieter, seen in the day-to-day impact of investing in our land, our people, and the community we're proud to be part of.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our fantastic team and the strong partnerships we continue to build with our neighbours. As CEO, I'm proud of all we've accomplished together and even more optimistic about what lies ahead. This year, we've deepened our commitment to community engagement, with increased resources and support, all under the thoughtful leadership of our Community Liaison Officer, Zoe.

We look forward to continuing this shared journey and as ever, I hope to welcome you to the estate soon.

Andrew
CEO of Hospitality



NEWT *in the* COMMUNITY

Supporting Station Pride

Continuing the floral theme, we're delighted to support Ansford Parish Council with a £1,000 donation towards enhancing the floral displays at Castle Cary railway station. As a gateway for many visitors and a daily hub for commuters, the station is a vital part of our local identity. These improvements will not only brighten journeys but also reflect the pride we all take in our community. We're pleased to play a small part in helping Ansford Parish Council and its volunteers make a visible and uplifting difference.



Bruton Boost

The month of May saw the successful launch of *The Bruton Boost*, a new initiative from Good Company Bruton, created to support our community's mental wellbeing.

Kicking off during Mental Health Awareness Week, the programme offered a range of free activities designed to reduce stress, foster connection, and promote better mental fitness. From creative workshops and practical sessions to one-to-one support, the week-long event created space for people to pause, reflect, and connect.

We were proud to support the initiative by offering complimentary day passes to The Newt in Somerset, giving participants an opportunity to recharge in nature. It was a brilliant example of what's possible when local organisations work together and we're excited to see what comes next from the team at Good Company Bruton.

Cary in Bloom Returns

After winning three awards in 2023, Castle Cary is once again in full bloom and we're thrilled to support this brilliant community-led effort. From composting talks by Eat Cary to a fascinating session on Agriwilding from the Higher Farm team, each event has helped raise funds and awareness for the Bloom campaign. We also contributed refreshments and supported a sold-out evening with our very own Arthur Cole, who gave a historical talk on Hadspen, also in aid of the Cary History Society.

There are plenty of opportunities to still get involved:

- **30 June:** Display scarecrows around town
- **1-9 July:** Community art exhibition, Assembly Rooms

Our contribution continues also, with support for *Little Sprouts*, Castle Cary Primary School's new gardening club. We recently welcomed Martha Hemmett, our new Education Coordinator, who'll help shape our learning and schools' programme – more on that in the next issue.



Matched Funding for Castle Cary Coffee Mornings

You'll know just how important the Saturday coffee mornings at the Market House have become – a longstanding tradition that brings the town together while raising valuable funds for local charities and community groups.

In recognition of this, we're delighted to commit to match funding up to £200 per event for the remainder of the year. By supporting these events where they naturally and successfully happen, at the heart of Castle Cary, we hope to amplify the efforts of local volunteers. This is our way of giving back while strengthening ties with the groups already doing so much for the community. We'll be in touch directly with organisers to explain how to access the funding, and we look forward to celebrating your efforts together, one coffee at a time.

Natural Flood Defence Measures

The aim of our flood defence work is simple but effective: *slow, spread, sink* and ultimately *enhance* the surrounding landscape. In practice, that means taking a natural approach to water management. Rather than relying on intrusive engineering, we've focused on creating features like bunds, swales, leaky dams, and clearing key ditches. These measures help control the flow of water across the land, allowing it to filter gradually into the soil rather than overwhelming the system.

Meet Saul – Our Village Steward

You may have spotted Saul Gittens strimming a footpath or picking litter along the A359, but his role goes far beyond maintenance. As our Village Steward, Saul is a familiar and approachable presence who quietly makes a big difference. With a background in cinematography and the arts, he brings creativity, care, and a sharp eye for detail to his work.

Whether it's mending broken stiles, repainting worn signage, planting bulbs for a brighter spring, or taking the initiative to clear up local areas, Saul keeps the local environment welcoming and accessible for all. His practical support for events like the Yarlington Fringe, combined with a genuine pride in the landscape, makes him not just a steward of the land but a true asset to the community.

While more extreme flood defences exist, our intention has always been to integrate solutions that work in harmony with the countryside. This is part of a broader, long-term approach, developed in collaboration with FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group), the Yeovil Rivers Authority, and local flood advocates, that supports the land's natural ability to cope with increased rainfall.

By investing in these softer, landscape-led methods, we hope to reduce the risk of flooding for our neighbours and improve soil health. Our aim is to lead by example not just in how we manage the land, but in how we communicate about it.

Yarlington: A Year of Progress

At this year's Annual Parish Meeting, we reflected on twelve months of shared effort.

It's been a year of real progress in Yarlington, and the introduction of a Community Liaison and Village Steward has helped strengthen communication and deliver tangible local benefits. From improved footpaths and practical repairs to the resurfacing of Pound Lane, we've been working hard to make a positive impact.

We know development brings disruption and projects like Yarlington Lodge and The Wheelwright's renovation haven't been without their challenges. But we've also been able to respond to feedback, offer support, and build stronger connections with our neighbours.

Environmental work continues with natural flood defences now in place thanks to plenty of expert advice. And this collaborative approach extended to securing the future of the village pub.

We're delighted to say that The Stag's Head is now open, with the wonderful David and Louise at the helm and welcoming guests for food and drink once again. Elsewhere, planting has been completed at The Trout Pond, and the new permissive footpath around it is now open to enjoy. In May, we hosted parish representatives for a tour of Avalon, and we're looking ahead to a wider community open day on 5th July, a chance to meet the team, learn more about recent developments, and keep the conversation going.

A Final Word

This issue captures just a slice of what's happening across our estate and the wider community. As ever, if you have questions, ideas, or would like to connect, our Community Liaison Officer is just an email away: zoe.young@thenewtinsomerset.com