

# Community MATTERS

THE NEWT IN SOMERSET

## Dear Neighbours,

The summer holidays may be drawing to a close, but here at The Newt the learning never stops. It is woven into much of what we do – from welcoming school groups and facilitating work experience, to sharing knowledge through talks, events, and everyday encounters with our team.

This edition of *Community Matters* highlights some of the educational initiatives currently underway and celebrates the opportunities we've helped create for learners of all ages. In true Newt style, we're also continuing to expand and evolve our offering. Earlier this year, we welcomed Martha to the team as our dedicated Education Coordinator, who has brought fresh energy and focus to the programme. From primary school visits to estate-wide family activities at our Gather & Grow Festival, she ensures our youngest guests – affectionately known as 'Newtlings' – are well looked after.

We remain committed to inspiring curiosity, supporting future careers, and making learning accessible, both for our local community and for anyone curious about how this place works.

Warm wishes,

**Andrew**  
CEO of Hospitality



## NEWT *at* SCHOOL

### Newtlings

In July, we welcomed our final school group of the academic year to the Roman Villa – part of our free curriculum-linked offer to local schools. This brings the total number of children hosted to 1,845 – an achievement we're incredibly proud of.

It is a joy to welcome students and teachers to this unique opportunity and always great to receive such excellent feedback:

"Thank you all so much for yet another fantastic day of exploring and learning for our Y6 pupils. We all had a wonderful time... Your whole team put such a lot of effort and expertise into making the visit educational and enjoyable for pupils and teachers alike, and it is always a real pleasure to bring our children."

Martha has also led tailored visits for children with additional needs, as well as smaller, private group experiences. These have included everything from digging in the gardens to learning about pollinators with our bee team – all made possible thanks to the enthusiasm and support of departments across the estate. Whether it's gardeners, bakers or farmers, our teams consistently go

above and beyond to share their knowledge and make each visit engaging, educational and memorable.

### Growing Futures

One such department is the Productive Growing team, who continue to play a key role in our education programme, offering engaging, hands-on experiences for visiting schools. They also provide a welcoming environment for students with additional needs, including regular weekly sessions which offer meaningful opportunities to build confidence and learn new skills in a calm, outdoor setting.

Earlier this year, team members Jack and Nicky joined Martha at the Food to Fork event at the Bath & West Showground, where children discovered the essentials of plant growth and planted their own pea seeds to take home. With record attendance, it was a lively and rewarding day.

This ongoing work is a fantastic example of how our horticultural expertise is being shared to inspire and educate the next generation.

### Future Careers

We were pleased to host 25 work experience students from local secondary schools again this year, offering placements across hospitality, horticulture, guest services, and heritage.

Our recruitment team, led by Emily, continues to play a key role in careers engagement – from running workshops to attending college fairs and mock interviews. A recent highlight was a 'Design Your Own Restaurant' session at Yeovil College's Year 8 My Futures event.

Closer to home, we were delighted to support Ansford Academy with a donation of chef whites for their hospitality course. Emily also had the honour of judging their end-of-year 'Bake Off'!

"Many of the young people we connect with through these initiatives go on to join us as apprentices or begin their first jobs at The Newt. We're proud to support the next generation in taking confident steps into the world of work – and to show them just how many opportunities exist right on their doorstep." Emily Murray, Recruitment and HR Officer



### Avalon Farm Open Morning

Earlier this month, we were delighted to welcome 40 residents from Yarlington and North Cadbury for a special behind-the-scenes tour of Avalon Farm. From the productive growing spaces to the butchery, bakery and warehouse, guests explored the diverse operations that support the wider estate. The event offered an opportunity to share our progress and build greater understanding of the site's role. We were heartened by the warm response and genuine interest shown by those who attended – thank you to all who joined us.

### The George, Castle Cary

The estate is continuing to work with our architects and heritage consultants to develop long-term refurbishment proposals for The George. We look forward to sharing these exciting proposals in due course. In the meantime, we remain committed to maintaining a sense of continuity in the town by keeping a pub function in place during the renovation. Planning permission has now been granted for the temporary use of the old Angel Inn, just across the road, as a public bar. This forerunning project is already underway, with scaffolding currently being installed to facilitate essential structural repairs to the building's roof and walls.



THE KAROO SUCCULENT GARDEN AT  
RHS CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW THIS YEAR

The refurbishment of The Angel Inn is expected to complete by summer 2026, after which renovation work on The George will begin.

### Succulent Ecosphere Proposal

In June, we invited councillors and neighbours to view early proposals for a new visitor space: the Succulent Ecosphere. Designed to celebrate the extraordinary biodiversity of South Africa's Karoo region, the garden would house our collection of succulents in a bespoke biome, inspired by the success of our 2025 RHS Chelsea Flower Show exhibit. Alongside this immersive planting, plans include playful, sensory features for children, a small café, and new learning opportunities for visiting families and schools. We're grateful for

the thoughtful engagement and positive feedback received during the consultation with 35 attendees, which will help shape this exciting project.

### New Farm Build

We've begun construction of our new farm to replace Manor Farm in Yarlington. This purpose-built facility will centralise farming operations, support our education and farm-to-fork initiatives, and reflect our ongoing investment in sustainable agriculture.

To reduce disruption, we're starting with the creation of an internal track. A full update will follow in the autumn edition of *Community Matters*, which will be farming focussed.

## GREEN NEWT

### A note from our Entomologist, Dr Tom

Say a warm welcome to our newest resident!

This charismatic bundle of spines has just joined us, thanks to the wonderful team at Prickles in a Pickle Hedgehog Rescue in



A YOUNG, BLIND FEMALE FULL OF CHARACTER  
WHO COULDN'T WAIT TO EXPLORE HER NEW HOME

Devon. We're thrilled to announce our new collaboration with them and to support their vital work in hedgehog care and conservation.

Hedgehogs are now listed as Vulnerable to Extinction on the IUCN Red List for British Mammals. Judy and Alan, along with an incredible team of volunteers at Prickles in a Pickle, take in hundreds of injured or sick hedgehogs each year, nursing them back to health so they can return to the wild.

When that's not possible, we've created a safe, natural sanctuary within our red squirrel enclosure, where hedgehogs too fragile for the wild can live out their days in peace – free from predators, people, and other dangers.

### A Final Word

from Zoe, Community Liaison  
Officer

This edition is a summer snapshot of the work taking place across the estate – from schools and careers to farming and conservation. As always, we'd love to hear your ideas, feedback, or about local opportunities.

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