



Winter Bulletin January 2026

Programme

Our programme for 2026 is being circulated as a printed card, for you to keep handy. Our future newsletters will of course remind you of the forthcoming events, and provide details of those that had not been finalised at the time of printing.

Please note that on some of the cards there are two mistakes, as follows:

AGM is on **April 14th** and the meeting in **October is on 13th**. My apologies to those of you affected.

All talks continue to be at 117 High Street, Evesham, starting at 7.30. Our charge has not changed; £4 for members, £5 for guests. At our talks, please try to avoid paying with £20 notes, to reduce the risk of us running out of change.

Annual membership fees

Membership renewal is due on 1 March each year. To help us to reduce our bank charges, which have now been introduced by Lloyds, please set up a Standing Order or pay by BACS. The fee for 2026-27 will remain at £12 for an individual and £18 for a couple.

Your Civic Society on Social media <https://www.facebook.com/EveshamCivic>

We continue to grow our Facebook following (now 191 up from 177 in November). More people are becoming aware of our charity and what we do. Since the last newsletter our Facebook posts have included: sharing Gill's monthly column in the Evesham Observer and items relating to the Riverside Shopping Centre; our programme of talks and Christmas activities (the VECS Christmas tree in All Saints Church, our lunchtime Christmas social at The Red Lion and the Penguin Trail); the tidier frontage of the former Tequila & Lime on High Street; VECS committee members helping with the ETC Bonfire Night and Remembrance Sunday.

The Almonry Museum refurbishment: fundraising

All of the Christmas cards and most of the notecards have been sold; the few remaining packs are now in the Almonry shop. The sales have raised about £150 towards the costs of the refurbishment of the museum. The Friends of the Almonry will be undertaking fundraising activities this year, which VECS will support.

November Members meeting

On 11th November, author Martin Davis provided an interesting roller-coaster of a talk which brought to life the history of Ombersley Court (OC) and the people who'd lived in it over the last 400 years. By chance, Martin (a retired solicitor) and his wife had been asked to house sit OC for a



couple of years. During that time, Martin acted as amateur archivist of the furniture, paintings, family photos and documentation and has since published a book about his findings.

Ombersley Court was originally owned by Evesham Abbey 706-1539. OC became the home of the Sandys family (pronounced "Sands") for 13 generations, from 1614 until 2015. The first generation was Edwin Sandy, Bishop of Worcester and then Archbishop of York. The second generation bought Wickhamford Manor and Sandys ancestors can be found in the tombs inside Wickhamford Church. Fourth generation Col Sir Samuel Sandys fought for King Charles I in the civil war and was an MP. In 1743 the first "Baron Sandys of Ombersley" was created. It was this gentleman that commissioned the building of the Ombersley Court that exists today. The second Lord Sandys was a friend of writer Dr Samuel Johnson. The 3rd Lord Sandys, Marcus Hill, married American Louisa Blake and became a diplomat (Spain 1816-21, then Italy, Portugal and Brazil 1825-26). They had 10 children. Marcus Hill was MP for Evesham 1837-52.

Mary Sandys born in 1764 inherited OC. She had been brought up in the Court of King George III and Queen Charlotte. Mary Sandys made a very good match by marrying the Marquis of Downshire who owned Hillsborough Castle (near Belfast). However, OC was her spiritual home and she entertained the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Sussex there in 1807. In 1815 she built a stable block to house up to 40 horses, and this stable block was using during WW2 to house (and protect) the royal coaches. Mary also arranged in 1827 for Thomas Telford to build a bridge over the River Severn and rebuild Ombersley Church.

The next generation to own OC was Lord Arthur "Atty" Sandys. Lt Gen Sandys Atty was ADC (personal assistant) to the Duke of Wellington during Waterloo. He died in 1860 with no heirs. OC continued to be passed down through the wider family but in time the Wickhamford estate was sold off and OC fell into poor repair. The last generation, Lt Richard Hill of the Scots Greys and Deputy Speaker at the House of Lords (the 7th Lord Sandys) married Patricia Hall but they died in 2013 and 2015 respectively with no children resulting in OC being put up for sale.

December Members Social

Almost 30 members packed into the newly refurbished section of The Red Lion on Tuesday 9th December for our social get together. Claire Edwards, the Evesham Place Board Projects Officer gave a short, informal talk about her role on the Evesham Place Board (EPB). The EPB is business-led and is currently chaired by Phil Maclean who's the Retail Director at The Valley. Claire is a WDC employee who works with the EPB to develop and deliver its portfolio of projects which are aimed at supporting the economic growth of the town centre. Claire stated that VECS's Gill Pawson is one of the most active members of the EPB. Despite the looming Local Government Review (LGR), WDC is committed to keeping the 3 Place Boards (Evesham, Pershore, Droitwich) going for the next two years.

The current EPB portfolio includes the following:

- The Evesham Town Centre Business Guide. This was the brainchild of WDC Cllr Craig Reeves. Copies of the glossy brochure were handed round for us to look at and they will be hand delivered to each business later this month. The Guide sets out the policies, opportunities and local initiatives designed to support Evesham's growth.
- Continuation of the business-front improvements scheme, including the Sue Ryder shop on the High Street, and potentially Shoe Emporium (3 Bridge Street).
- A new Occupancy Strategy Group (OSG) whose members are Phil Maclean and all the property agents in town. Their mantra is "one space at a time". This approach has already resulted in 12 expressions of interest for 40 High Street (former Margetson's Jewellers).

- A new Evesham Town Map and wayfinding improvements, starting with fingerposts (which Gill and Paula have helped with).
- Small grants scheme for Vale of Evesham businesses to expand experiential tourism.

Current UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) money runs out in March 2026.

EPB's future priorities include:

- Supporting and improving the Tuesday & Saturday market eg by including some seasonal markets such as food, health.
- Investing in the Rowing Club's Boathouse eg a Padel facility and making more of the café venue.
- Riverside Shopping Centre – currently in final stages of negotiation. This would bring that, plus the Public Hall and Town Hall, back into public ownership.
- Roundhouse – NatWest and WDC are working closely to ensure there's a responsible new owner once NatWest vacates later this year.
- Riverside walk (from town to The Valley) – a grant has been obtained by Offenham's Bridge Inn for a new ferry crossing.
- "Street" artwork for under Abbey Bridge has become a WDC community development project.
- There are new Evesham Place Board and Visit Evesham websites; please visit <https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/business/evesham-place-board> and <https://www.visitevesham.co.uk>

Evesham Place Board

See report above from the Place Project Officer.

Planning and Enforcement – VECS comments submitted by Gill on behalf of its members

In November, the following comment was submitted to Wychavon Planning Department in respect of a proposal by our member Sinclair Transport to instal solar panels on the roof of their unit on Vale Park:

"The Society is very pleased to see that one of its commercial members is utilising its commercial roof area for the installation of solar panels. Any steps that reduce the pressure for solar farms on agricultural land are welcomed and this business is setting an excellent example to others in the locality. "

In December, comments were made on the application for up to 75 houses on land at Badsey Fields Lane, as follows:

"As the Local Planning Authority will be aware, there are a number of planning permissions for housing developments that are as yet built, in Badsey. This application has given no consideration to the cumulative impact of this development on the village and its services, on top of the impacts due to the other recent developments.

In particular there is great concern about the impact of the traffic on the wider highway network. The roads in the village are already very busy, with more than their fair share of heavy lorries, due to the need to access industrial sites further into the Vale.

There is concern that the school will not be able to accommodate the additional primary age pupils, leading to the need to transport some into Evesham, adding yet more traffic at the very busiest times of the day.

Will the medical service and sewerage systems cope with all of this new development?

Most importantly, will the established community of Badsey have time to assimilate all of the new residents, which within a few years will number into the hundreds? Villages are popular places for people to live, due to their community spirit and local groups and services. The influx of

new residents imposes a risk that there will be two separate communities developing; the existing residents and the new residents.

The land subject to this application is not allocated for development in the SWDPR. Therefore, no independent assessment of its likely impact has been carried out, thus the comments made in the first response are especially valid in this case.

The applicant must demonstrate that all of the impacts on the WHOLE village and wider area have been assessed, in the same way that the LPA would do when considering its allocation in a Local Plan. All of these issues need to be considered in detail by the applicant before this application is determined."

Comments were also made on the proposal to convert 6 Bridge Street, Evesham from a shop to a house, as follows:

"Policy SWDPR12 of the soon to be adopted Development Plan, refers to Evesham's Town Centre with Primary Shopping Area. The area to which this policy refers is shown on the Plan Map, an extract from which is attached. It clearly shows the 'defined shopping frontage' to which Part E of Policy SWDPR12 applies. Part E refers to change of use applications, which this application is, and it states that

Within the defined Primary Shopping Frontages, the change of use from Class E (Commercial, Business and Services) or the extension of non-Class E uses into the adjoining Class E premises at ground floor level, will NOT be supported (my emphasis).

6 Bridge Street is in the heart of not only the town centre shopping area, but the Conservation Area. It is acknowledged that the building needs to be used and maintained, to contribute positively to the attractiveness of the centre and Conservation Area. It is also acknowledged that shopping habits are changing, leading to a reduction in need of occupied shopping floorspace. However, to maintain a vibrant town centre, the reduction of retail floorspace should be allowed to take place on the margins of the centre, leading to a concentration of shopping in the centre. The Society supports and encourages residential use in the town, but this use in the town centre's core area must only be at first floor level and above.

If the unit frontage were to be repaired and the inside made attractive, it would stand a much better chance of finding an appropriate, non-residential use."

Evesham Observer. 6 December 2025

We all want to create a feeling of pride in town

AT the beginning of this year, Evesham Town Council (ETC) published a review of its town plan.

The original document was published in 2015 and following a consultation, the public was asked what changes and actions they wanted included for the next few years.

I was asked to work on this up-to-date version which focuses on issues in the town that the council can influence or has responsibility for.

Vale of Evesham Civic Society members have been helping to deliver the actions identified in the Town Plan Review regarding the environment, visitor economy and the town centre.

We regularly walk around town removing the numerous out-of-date event posters and the cable ties/tape that hold them in place on poles, empty shop windows and BT boxes.

To reduce this ongoing problem, we contact the organisations responsible to remind them of their duty to remove them.



Civic Matters

Gill Pawson, chair of Vale of Evesham Civic Society, writes for The Observer

after the event. It's worth remembering that fly-posting is a criminal offence.

We have surveyed all of the bus shelters in town and identified an urgent need for cleaning and repair. The council now has the budget and measures in place to regularly maintain the shelters.

We also carried out a survey to identify 60 benches in the town centre, many of which have been repaired or replaced, with financial help from the Evesham Place Board.

A survey of the paved areas in the town centre has resulted in Worcestershire County Council Highways Authority removing all of the tarmac 'cow pads' in Bridge Street and replacing them with appropriate pavers.

More work is scheduled at the top of Bridge Street and Market Square once the scaffolding is eventually removed from

the Round House (former NatWest building). We have also fostered good relations with Wychavon District Council (WDC)

which has repositioned the litter bin at the top of Bridge Street next to TG Jones and installed a larger one in Market Square.

It is hoped that as a result of this hands-on approach, residents and visitors are noticing an improvement in our public realm.

Our members are trying to help create a feeling of belonging and pride in our town.

There has been a lot of progress made on issues affecting our town centre building this year. Contractors for the Almshouse have been appointed, an announcement is expected on Riverside in the new year and restoration work to the Round House will be completed soon.

Visit the website at valeofeveshamcivicsociety.org.uk or email vecs1972@gmail.com to get involved.

Wychavon District Council: A Useful reminder

We DO...

- ✓ Empty your bins
- ✓ Run planning and building control
- ✓ Provide housing advice
- ✓ Support local businesses
- ✓ Maintain parks and public toilets
- ✓ Run elections and register voters
- ✓ Collect Council Tax



Worcestershire County Council

They handle big county-wide services.

- ✓ Fix roads and streetlights
- ✓ Run schools and libraries
- ✓ Provide adult and children's social care
- ✓ Manage recycling centres
- ✓ Issue blue badges
- ✓ Grit roads in winter

Contact Worcestershire County Council

Town Councils

(Pershore, Droitwich Spa, Evesham)

They focus on your town's local sparkle.

- ✓ Organise town events and markets
- ✓ Maintain town noticeboards
- ✓ Provide floral displays and Christmas lights
- ✓ Run some community buildings

Contact your town council directly via their website or town hall.