

Councillor Liz Leffman
Leader of the Council
Oxfordshire County Council

Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council
executivesupport@southandvale.gov.uk
Tel: 01235 422422
Textphone: 18001 01235 422422

Via email:
liz.leffman@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Abbey House,
Abbey Close,
Abingdon,
OXON,
OX14 3JE

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Dear Cllr Leffman,

As you already know from recent correspondence, I want to continue to draw your attention to the divisive issue of flags attached to street lighting, specifically the Saint George's Cross and the Union Flag, and Oxfordshire County Council's response to date. I firmly believe, as do many of my residents, that these flags are being disingenuously dressed up as innocently enthusiastic patriotism; however, they are being used as a tool for intimidation in our communities.

Flags started to appear on street lighting in mid to late July 2025, the action has been coordinated in many areas by the group known as Operation Raise the Colours.

While England has a strong history of raising the Union Flag or the Saint George's Cross this has coincided in the main with national events such as the coronation of the King or Queen or Remembrance Sunday.

According to the Hope not Hate [website](#), the organisation Operation Raise the Colours have provided a significant number of flags that have been raised on street lighting.

There are many ways that people of the nation can demonstrate their national identity, and the use of the flag seems to be weaponising the flag as known racist and extremist groups are promoting its use, which raises the question regarding the motivations behind the use of the flag in public places.

I have received many messages from constituents across the Vale that are upset and troubled by the flags and see it as a means of intimidation, reducing cohesion and fostering division in our diverse communities.

I have taken the decision to write to you because this problem does not seem to be abating. For example, I believe plans for this activity are continuing and have been organised for my own community here in Faringdon this week.

Vale of White Horse District Council passed the [Sanctuary and Fair Treatment motion](#) on the 10 December 2025 to;

1. Recognise the risks to our communities if the disinformation, suspicion, and intolerance it generates go unchallenged, and commit to addressing them wherever they occur.
2. Work with partners to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in our communities and that racism is confronted wherever it occurs, in schools, workplaces, and on our streets.
3. Request that Cabinet support the co-production of a Community Cohesion Action Plan with key stakeholders and in consultation with councillors, including actions to support community-led dialogue and ensure appropriate resourcing is considered during budget setting.

Oxfordshire County Council's website in its recent Sanctuary status states that work is underway to "ensure Oxfordshire grows as a place of welcome and inclusion for people seeking sanctuary."

I note that Oxfordshire County Council has recently published its equality, diversity and inclusion policy "Including Everyone 2025-2029" where you state: "We want Oxfordshire to be a place where everyone can thrive, no matter their background." One of the three pillars within the Including Everybody framework is Inclusive Communities.

I would add that although there is no illegal action with the attachment of flags onto street lighting, there is community tension that is at odds with your recent equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Oxfordshire County Council's statement on 29 August 2025 regarding flags on highways states that: "We would also advise people not to risk injuring themselves or cause damage."

This does not tackle the underlying challenges of supporting an inclusive society.

Our residents are upset and troubled by the flags on street lighting and therefore I would like to ask what Oxfordshire County Council is doing to remove the flags. Please also advise on the action you will take to help reduce the current tensions in communities across the Vale of White Horse district.

I look forward to your response as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Bethia Thomas
Lader of the Council