

# Osney Island Residents' Association AGM

25 April 2022

## Minutes

Attendees: 30

Apologies: Alison Burdett, Eli Harriss, Susan Hutchnson, Robert Lawrence, Jennifer Meakin, Nick Meakin, Fiona McFarlane, Elizabeth Newbery

### 1 Treasurer's report

Treasurer Jula Turner reported that after a year without collecting subscriptions in 2020 (owing to Covid), OIRA had a good income in 2021 of £543.21 from subscriptions and £50 from gazebo hire. The biggest expenditure was new planters for Bridge Street as the old ones had rotted. This cost meant there was a deficit for the year, but we are still well in the black.

### 2 Chair's report

Alan Goodwin pointed out that events and meetings have been curtailed by Covid, and we missed the last two AGMs for this reason. But community spirit and communication via the email group have been impressive through difficult times.

#### *Events*

A lot of work (especially by Bianca Elgar) went into Tealights on the Towpath which had to be cancelled. Events that did go ahead in 2021 were:

- Open Gardens, organised by Susan Hutchinson (who took over from Anna Truelove) and much enjoyed by islanders
- door-to-door carol singing organised by Matthew Dyson to great effect
- Osney Advent calendar, two years running, organised by Debbie Hall, initially as a way of boosting spirits during the pandemic, with fantastic participation

Planned events for 2022 are:

- Open Gardens, 11 June (Susan Hutchinson), with Tea on the Towpath if someone will organise this
- Osney Wildlife Celebration, 3 September (Eleanor Dickey)

#### *Chatty Wednesdays*

Eli Harriss has restarted Chatty Wednesdays every third Wednesday in the month from 6.30-8pm (or so) outside in the Holly Bush garden.

#### *Mail group*

Set up by Robert Lawrence and now moderated by Alison Burdett, with great efficiency.

Messages moderated and sent (i.e. not counting follow-ups and individual replies):

- April 2019 to April 2020, c1400

- April 2020 to April 2021, c1700
- April 2021 to April 2022, c1500.

The five most popular topics in recent years are:

1. Free or For Sale (1135 posts)
2. Miscellaneous (1083)
3. Wanted (601)
4. Council (384)
5. Crimes and misdemeanours (91)

Alison also has to enrol new members and deal with other issues. She is an unpaid volunteer and has to read every message, so it is polite to keep them short.

#### *Newsletter, website, noticeboard*

Elizabeth Newbery retired as newsletter editor in April 2020, after more than 20 years. Jane Buekett, who already managed the website, took over. Thanks to her, and to Anna Truelove for newsletter distribution.

During the pandemic some events (Open Gardens, Artweeks) moved onto the website, keeping people in touch virtually.

Julia Marsh does a great job of maintaining our noticeboard in Bridge Street

#### *Bridge Street planters*

Two of the six planters on Bridge Street had to be replaced. Thanks to the residents who maintain them: Lesley Casey, Archibald Hendry, and Gislene Wolfart (running north to south).

#### *Councillor liaison*

Thanks to City and County Councillor Susanna Pressel for her support and dialogue with residents via the email group.

#### *The environment and local developments*

A major concern of residents. Weed clearing is now manual not chemical thanks to lobbying of the City Council. Osney Supercharge and related projects (including a growing number of electric vehicles) point to a lower-carbon future in our immediate area.

A number of major developments in the surrounding area will affect us:

- Redevelopment of Osney Power Station by the Said Business School
- Oxford Railway Station
- Oxpens
- Osney Mead
- New Thames bridge between those two
- Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme
- Possible redevelopment of the Democrats Club

The centre of Oxford is moving westwards and our influence on this as a community is limited. We will do what we can to ensure the interests of local residents and the natural environment are respected.

Installation of a new gas main on Botley Road and temporary repairs to the leaking water main under Osney Bridge have been incredibly slow.

The redevelopment of the Westgate Centre has led to serious traffic congestion on the Botley Road.

### *Committee*

Resignations over the last two years: Anna Truelove, Elizabeth Newbery, Robert Lawrence – all long-term members who have made contributions as noted above.

Sorrow at the recent death of Simon Stubbings of East Street – not a committee member but set up the Boat Club and did a lot for our community. We hope to organise an appeal for an appropriate memorial for this very nice man. Our condolences to his family.

Current committee members re-elected en masse: Alan Goodwin (chair), Nick Meakin (secretary), Jula Turner (treasurer), Alison Burdett (mail group manager), Eli Harriss (Chatty Wednesdays coordinator), Maureen Ergeneli (committee hostess), Julia Marsh (noticeboard), Jane Buekett (website and newsletter), Karen Schoenemann, Alistair Butchers.

Request for new committee members.

### **3 Talk from Jay Rees, Police Community Support Officer, Thames Valley Police**

Jay has been here 3 years and is the local officer for Botley Road (up to McDonald's). Currently also covers Abingdon Road.

Osney is a low-crime area, 25 reported incidents since Jan 2020, mostly non-violent.

It is helpful to the police to report crime so they know where to allocate resources. 999 for incidents happening now. 101 or online if it is historic.

### **4 Talk from Tristan Carlyle, Oxford City Council Ecology and Biodiversity Officer**

Tristan is a botanist by training and has been in post 6 months. The bulk of his job is planning related. He advises the case officer on how plans impact species and habitats, and on the relevant legislation, e.g. on protected species. Checks that developer has surveyed species at the site and has means of mitigating or compensating for any habitat affected.

'Biodiversity net gain' is part of the Environment Act and will become binding later this year. At the planning stage of a development it is scored for habitat condition, distinctiveness, strategic significance, and the potential loss and gain calculated. Oxford currently requires 5% net gain from any development. When the Act comes into force it should be 10% in England. If the gain is not possible at the site it can be elsewhere in the county, but this is not encouraged. This only affects habitat – individual species are protected as before.

There is a difficulty multiplier based on how long it takes to deliver the benefit (e.g. woodland will take longer to mature than grassland), and 30 years management is the minimum period that must be secured in the plans. This is legally binding.

## **5 Talk from Barbara Hammond, Project LEO, about Osney Supercharge**

We are in a climate emergency. We have to end use of fossil fuels to address this. We therefore need to change our energy systems fast, to run on renewable electricity. This is difficult: we need the infrastructure, renewable generation (wind, solar) is intermittent so we need storage, and this means more infrastructure. Demand is going to double or triple as we move to electric heating, cooking, cars. Osney Supercharge is about how we do this, and how we as individuals can contribute.

Osney was chosen because of (a) the hydro at the lock, (b) it is an island in terms of the electricity grid, with its own substation in Bridge St, (c) we have a supportive city council.

The project will improve understanding of what people can do at a household level (insulation, changing habits, household-level generation). We can't be self-sufficient – we'll always need the big stuff like offshore wind generation. But we can work together as collections of households to make better choices about generation and use of energy.

Osney Supercharge is about asking what people want and giving them agency in achieving it, rather than a top-down big business approach to energy supply.