

## FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK

### Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 21 October 2015 at St Clement's Family Centre, Cross Street, Oxford

<b>Present:</b>	Susanna Bowles (Chair)	Ian Thompson, Parks Development,
	Lesley Court (Secretary)	Oxford City Council
	Andrew Lack	Alison Drummond, Events Team, City Council
	Elizabeth Mills	Jane Baldwin, Oxford Preservation Trust
	Mark Redhead (Treasurer)	Cllr Bev Clack, City Council
	Liz Rooke (Membership)	Cllr Jamila Azad, County Council
	Peter Rooke	Chris Langston & Nick Jones, Round Table
	Rob Waterston	Tom Nicolson, Tagore Ramoutar & Dan - Wadsworth – The Oxford Artisan Distillery (TOAD)
	Carol Chapman	Julie Lambert
	David Colbeck	Peter McIntyre
	Julie Evans	Lucy Martin
	Martin Harman	Penelope Newsome
	Tom Knollys	Mandy Wood

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed thanks to St Clement's Church for the use of the Family Centre for this meeting.

#### 1. **Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Margaret Chambers, Patrick Coulter, Richard & Gerdi Hayward, Alan & Maureen Hobbs, Laura Hollitzer, Sarah Lasenby, Sylvia Lymbery, Elaine Nicol, Paul Wolfe and Carolyn Wright.

#### 2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 October 2014 were approved as a correct record.

#### 3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising which were not on the current agenda.

#### 4. **Membership**

It had been agreed that the membership subscription would be held at £1 for the coming year, and those present were encouraged to join/renew in support of the work of FOSP and to enable them to vote at meetings.

#### 5. **Chair's Report**

Rob Waterston and Joe Harrison, the winner of last year's photograph competition, had been welcomed to the committee in October 2014. The committee had met every two-three months and some of their achievements were:

- A litterpick after the fireworks last year, for which Oxford Round Table kindly donated £250 to FOSP.
- Further liaison with the City Council and Oxford Preservation Trust regarding the future of the depot site following Elizabeth Mills' contact with a number of organisations. (The subject of the depot site was a separate agenda item later in the meeting.)
- The FOSP website had been updated.
- Helen Moorhouse had taken on the role of Publicity Officer and would welcome ideas from FOSP members on how to promote the group.
- Provision of advice and support to a bereaved family who had succeeded in putting a commemorative bench in the park. Anyone interested in commemorative benches can be provided with the necessary information and contacts at the City Council.  
(<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/MemorialBenchApplicationForm.pdf>)

- Administrative progress on setting up a Park Management Plan in consultation with the City Council. Once a strategy is in place to improve the environment of the Park this will give FOSP the opportunity to draw on funding from other sources, and this matter is the committee's top priority for the coming year.
- A Twitter account had been launched but had not received many hits and the committee now had no-one to deal with this. The hash tag is #oxfordsouthpark.

#### 6. **Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer's Report is attached to the Minute Book. FOSP had received £250 from Oxford Round Table and £43 in subscriptions during the year. The only expenditure during the year had been the cost of hosting the website (£30) and printing/stationery (£12.50). There had again been no cost involved in running the AGM or committee meetings. There was a balance of £250.98 as at the financial year end.

#### 7. **Election of Officers**

The Chair, Susanna Bowles, was standing down from this position but was willing to remain on the committee. Rob Waterston had been nominated to take over as Chair and was unanimously elected to the role. The other officers were unanimously re-elected as follows:

Secretary: Lesley Court      Treasurer: Mark Redhead      Membership Secretary: Liz Rooke

#### 8. **Election of Committee**

Four existing committee members were re-elected as follows: Andrew Lack, Elizabeth Mills, Helen Moorhouse and Peter Rooke; these would be joined by Susanna Bowles.

There was a particular need for someone to work on the website, Facebook, Twitter, etc. and it was hoped that someone might come forward to fill this role.

#### 9. **Any other business**

(a) Litterpick: The two representatives of Oxford Round Table thanked all those who had taken part in the litterpick the previous year. All were agreed that it had been fun and had not taken very long, and members were encouraged to join in again this year – on Sunday 8 November, probably starting at 9am. An email would be sent out to all members in the near future.

(b) “Run England”: Peter McIntyre was concerned that there had been no consultation with FOSP regarding the installation of about 15 mile marker posts intended to inform runners of the distance they had covered from the allotted start post. Ian Thompson said that these had been actioned by the Sports Development Team and he would establish why FOSP had not been consulted. He mentioned that there had been a massive reshuffle of positions within the Council and there was now a Communities Team, headed by Chris Bell – who was also responsible for the Park Rangers. At all AGMs of Friends groups there would in future be a representative of that team present.

In any event some of the posts were in entirely the wrong place, and in particular Oxford Preservation Trust was concerned about their impact on the view. Members expressed dissatisfaction about this lack of information from the City Council (not only in this but in other matters) and questioned why FOSP existed if it was not to be consulted. Ian Thompson would investigate and report back.

(c) Entrance at the bottom of the park: Penelope Newsome mentioned this muddy area and was assured that it would be considered in the preparation of the Park Management Plan.

(d) Litter: Several people had spoken to staff at the language schools (notably EF) before the summer and been assured that their staff would instruct their students – although evidence later found in the Park showed that their students were still offending. In the meantime the Council now have enforcement over such organisations and can issue large fines to the organisations rather than the students. One or two members had been involved in collecting litter, which on one occasion had included 14 vodka bottles in one particular area. Such evidence enabled PCSOs to

deal with antisocial behaviour.

Alison Drummond asked that the City Council be informed as quickly as possible in such instances and would supply contact details to FOSP for the information of members.

Ian Thompson assured the meeting that the “big belly” bins were emptied as soon as they were full (and the Council always knew when this was because of electronic messaging). Other bins were emptied regularly – three times per week in the summer. There were mixed feelings regarding installing further bins and this whole matter would be discussed in the preparation of the Park Management Plan.

(e) Foodies Festival: Peter McIntyre said that because the outer fences of the park had been used to section off the Festival many people had been unable to walk around the perimeter of the park for five days. Alison Drummond asked that in future she be given such feedback immediately after such an event so that she could liaise with organisers regarding retention of their bond. She was asked to include retention of public access around the fenced-off area as part of the contract with other organisers.

Alison also mentioned the need to avoid damage to the ridge and furrow areas in the park. On occasion the layout of an event is changed at the last minute because of wet ground, etc.

(f) Headington Hill Park: David Colbeck reported that Friends of Headington Hill Park had launched in April and now had about 50 members. They too would be discussing a Park Management Plan. There are about 400 trees in the park, which was originally the arboretum for Headington Hill House, and their plan would be to make the park more of an arboretum again. Plans were afoot to name all the trees and a survey was currently taking place. Information about this would be available on their website.

(g) Self-closers on park gates: This would be considered in the preparation of the Park Management Plan but it was hoped that some of the funds received by the Council for events held in the park could be used for such projects.

(h) Proposal for dog agility course at the top of the park: Julie Evans, who had requested this, was asked to provide a list of people interested in the proposal. It was also suggested that if she or any of the others felt strongly about this, they could join the committee as a co-opted member to progress ideas and consultation on this matter.

(i) Notice boards: It was hoped that notice boards could be provided giving information to park users about acceptable behaviour. One lady known to scatter bread by the entrance gate had said she would continue to do this until a notice was installed saying that this was not allowed.

(j) Cllr Azad said she was impressed with the keenness of residents to look after the park and asked about the situation regarding mud. It was explained that springs come out halfway down the park so there can be quite a lot of water in the middle area, and as water will always run downhill there will always be mud.

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## PRESENTATIONS

**Alison Drummond, Oxford City Council's Events Officer**, said that her role covered over 100 parks in Oxford, with lots of events, and that her team received over 2,000 enquiries each year. Regular events in South Park included the annual Fireworks Display, two circuses and two funfairs, and this year there had been the Foodies Festival and a Rugby Tournament Tour. Applications for next year were currently being shortlisted and would include four large events: two old ones and two new events. FOSP members would be invited to a presentation about the new events in the coming weeks.

Again there was discussion about whether some funds arising from these events could be channelled into the park.

**Sgt Neil Applegarth, East Oxford Neighbourhood Team, Oxford City Police**, is responsible for an area stretching from South Park in the north to Donnington Bridge - including Cowley Road. About 90% of his time is spent supervising the area and a team of four constables and four PCSOs – the latter being the visible sign of the team's work, including most of the patrolling. This year there had not been as many issues reported to him regarding South Park: it is used by a number of vulnerable people but in general complaints about antisocial behaviour had reduced. The main event concerned the Dispersal Order for St Clement's, surrounding streets and Angel & Greyhound Meadow, and although this had resulted in the relevant groups of people moving to South Park there had been very few complaints. (In fact one lady said they were a nice group of people – the only problem being that they tended to urinate wherever they wished.) Recently there had been complaints from Alice House, by the car park in St Clement's, so it was likely that the problem was migrating back to the meadow.

The East Oxford Neighbourhood Team were of the opinion that there had been less litter and other detritus this year. If anyone should find drug-related items they were asked to contact the Council, who would deal with the matter speedily (01865 249811 or online at [https://ecitizen.oxford.gov.uk/citizenportal/form.aspx?form=Report\\_Needles\\_and\\_Sharps](https://ecitizen.oxford.gov.uk/citizenportal/form.aspx?form=Report_Needles_and_Sharps)). The PCSOs patrol the park regularly.

For the first time the Police and agencies concerned have engaged with foreign student bodies in advance of the influx of their students to share information and educate the language schools re their responsibility to their students re noise, litter, etc., and also making sure those youngsters are protected. One result of this liaison has been that when children have been caught drinking their drink has been taken from them and language schools have been called out to collect their charges. In general this liaison has worked well.

Neighbourhood Action is a group of agencies (councils, neighbourhood watch, schools, etc.) and people which meets to form its view on what the current issues are for the Police to deal with. It tries to solve those problems. Its three priorities are: human exploitation, antisocial behaviour and cycling on the pavement.

Thames Valley Police had not yet published their budget but were known to be facing cuts of around 30%. The Government had said they would continue to support neighbourhood policing, in the hope of solving problems earlier in the offending chain, and currently there was no plan to reduce the neighbourhood teams in Oxford City.

Members were reminded that if they think they need to talk to the Police they should phone 101, go via the website or email someone locally. In any confusion about which is the relevant authority email one (e.g. the Police) and the information given will be shared with the correct agency. The telephone number for the East Oxford Neighbourhood Action Group is 01865 202762, email [OxfordEastNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:OxfordEastNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk). For council-related matters, noise, litter, parks, needles, flytipping, etc. the address is [SaferOxford@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:SaferOxford@oxford.gov.uk).

### **The Oxford Artisan Distillery (TOAD)**

Tom Nicolson explained their proposal to set up a sustainable true craft artisan distillery, dealing with the whole process and using grain from the Middle Ages which they have exclusive rights to use. In England and Wales there are four such organisations – some with apples and one with grain. TOAD would be unique in dealing with the whole process. They are looking for a suitable building in which to make stills, and would like to lease the depot at the top of South Park. Using ancient grains in a threshing barn would be in keeping with the origins of the barn, and they would be working in conjunction with the mental health charity Restore. They would also work with Oxford Botanic Garden to make Oxford gin, using a borehole at Harcourt Arboretum.

Tagore Ramoutar outlined consultation with Oxford Preservation Trust, the City Council and members of FOSP committee in which they had proposed refurbishing the existing buildings for use as a distillery plus visitor centre, as well as providing a cafe/restaurant and community toilets (these latter to be open during working hours only) and a notice board for the use of the community. They already had sufficient funding for this project. They proposed that 10p per bottle of everything sold would go towards mental health, and the project would provide job opportunities to help people back to normal life.

Concerns expressed were:

(a) the proximity of both the Warneford Hospital and schools/Oxford Brookes to a retail outlet for alcohol, but assurance was given that the retail aspect was merely part of a distillery tour, not an off-licence;

(b) the need for parking, although the hope was that most people would access the site on foot or by public transport. There was a small amount of hard standing in the area;

(c) Jane Baldwin of OPT said that the venture must continue to support the public interest, i.e. with the cafe and toilets, etc. Tours would also be a good idea.

(d) Security: as part of the planning process the applicants would need to consult with the Police;

(e) Waste: The majority of waste from the project could be used, and there would be no smell or noise from the distillery. It was not known how much waste there would be from the cafe.

TOAD would be very strong allies of FOSP and could help with some of its issues, such as Twitter, Facebook, noticeboard, etc.

Susanna Bowles reassured the meeting that FOSP did not speak on people's behalf where there were polarised views. They would present the opinions given to them during the application process. Details of the project and how to comment on it would be given on notices around the park, and TOAD were happy to take input from the community about how the building should look.

Oxford Brookes has the national archives for brewing beer, so OPT thought it interesting that such a tradition might continue in the park - with its link to the past, as the Morrell family were brewers.