

FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK

Minutes of the eighth Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 3 November 2021 at Cheney School Library

Present:

Committee: Rob Waterston (Chair); Lesley Court (Secretary); Andrew Lack (Treasurer), Liz Rooke (Membership Secretary); Chris Cousins (OPT rep); Peter Rooke; Amanda Wood
Oxford City Council: Chris Bell, Green Space Dev't Manager; Jamie Gordon, Events Officer
TOAD: Dave Smith
Oxford Preservation Trust: Stephen Dawson
Oxford Round Table: Neil Holdstock, Chris Langston & Joseph Garbott
Friends and Guests: Roger Jenking, Margaret Jackson, Tom Knollys, Clare Newgass, Rosie Pocock, David Waller, Pat Whitehouse

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from: Emma Trundley, Community Engagement Team, Brookes; East Oxford Neighbourhood Police Team; Cllr Tom Hayes; Rosemary Clayton; David & Christine Colbeck; Joanna Gilmour; Richard & Gerdi Hayward; Mike & Sandra Kent

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 October 2019 were approved as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

Roger Jenking was concerned about the line erosion across the ridge and furrow towards the bottom of the park. This tied in with a current proposal to install grasscrete 10m into the park from the Morrell Avenue gate, which the Heritage Planning team liked but which awaited OPT approval. David Waller suggested laying wood chippings along two "desire lines". It was agreed that a permanent solution to this problem was needed.

4. Chair's Report

The Chair's full report is attached to the Minute Book.

The Chair asked all present to be aware that if they were to develop Covid19 they should contact FoSP so that all meeting participants could be alerted and take the necessary steps.

The committee would welcome feedback re venue for the 2022 AGM, wondering if alternating between the top and bottom of the park might be a good idea.

Items covered in the report included: the possibility of installing grasscrete, as mentioned above; the installation of the tennis table; participation in OxClean in June; the very moving Standing with Giants installation in the summer; the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), meaning that ASB was now on a more formal and legal footing.

The veteran oak tree on the brow of the slope was now dying and a palisade had been erected around it.

During the year the Committee had met with the City Council re the installation of signage, but there still needed to be an agreement between all parties about its design and content.

The Foodies Festival had returned in 2021 and been enjoyed by many, though Tom Knollys said holding a very loud 3-day event over a bank holiday weekend was not acceptable. Jamie Gordon, OCC Events Officer, said that all applications for events in the park went to the Environmental Health Team, who looked at issues of noise etc.

The toilet block was still in situ and was a graffiti wall approved by the City Council. TOAD allowed use of their toilets when their gates were open. It was not likely the toilet block would be demolished in the foreseeable future, bearing in mind the estimated cost of £21,000.

There was now a second memorial bench on the brow of the hill.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

Andrew Lack reported that FoSP had contributed £500 to the cost of the table tennis table, with the balance being given by "Ping", as well as the City Council.

There had been minimal costs during the year: the website cost £60 over two years. There was currently £1,211 in the account.

6. **Election of Officers**

With the unanimous agreement of the meeting all four officers were re-elected as follows:

Chair: Rob Waterston
Secretary: Lesley Court

Treasurer: Andrew Lack
Membership Secretary: Liz Rooke

7. **Election of Committee**

The remaining committee members would therefore be: Chris Cousins (OPT rep), Peter Rooke and Mandy Wood. These were also agreed unanimously.

8. **Any other business**

There was no further business. The Park Management Plan would be on the agenda for the 2022 meeting.

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

This would be notified to all in early 2022.

Following the meeting there were presentations from:

(a) **Stephen Dawson, Operations & Development Manager,
Oxford Preservation Trust**

OPT was established in 1927, with two charitable aims:

- (i) to preserve and enhance Oxford and its special green setting
- (ii) to share knowledge of the history of Oxford and its green setting

OPT currently owns 650 acres of land in and around Oxford and 350 acres under covenants, including South Park – which they gave to the City Council for the people of Oxford to enjoy. Such areas include among many others: Boars Hill, Iffley Glebe, and North Hinksey Meadow, each with its own distinctive features. OPT's green spaces had been very well used during the previous year in lockdown, although this increased use had brought many challenges. OPT were thinking about improving signage, wayfinding, etc and their Trustees had formed a new strategy with green spaces at its heart, as well as the built environment.

In 2020 the annual Open Doors weekend became "Oxford Open Doors Goes Outside" and the engagement in it had been immense. These events are still on OPT's website, and new walks are being produced in conjunction with Mind, NHS, Sustainable Health Care, etc. With core funding from the City Council OPT had been working with the local community to produce a Heritage Green Space Walk in Rose Hill, and such walks would be rolled out to other areas of Oxford.

Questions from the floor included whether the annual MOU meeting always took place, which it does.

The proposal for grasscrete and use of geotextiles was discussed and would be forwarded to OPT, who would need to consider it in relation to their aims and objectives as well as the covenant.

The meeting was updated on the issue of the railings and whether they should be changed or be replaced with hedging, which would be kinder to the environment. OPT would need to see a proper proposal which took into account the heritage value of the railings (a report on the railings had previously been commissioned by OPT and shared with the City Council and FoSP). Stephen suggested this issue could be discussed further when the management plan was reviewed in a year's time.

(b) Chris Langston, outgoing Chair of Oxford Round Table

Chris outlined arrangements for the Fireworks Display taking place on 6 November. This year Grundon were supplying 34 wheelie bins, which it was hoped would lead to less litter than in the past. Cubs were helping with the clear up on the Sunday morning and help from FoSP would be greatly appreciated.

It was acknowledged that it took a long time for the park to recover following the 2019 Display, but because of the lengthy spell of wet weather it had not been possible to start repair work and then Covid had prevented further attempts for some time. This year the weather forecast was good, and repair work would be started on the morning following the display. Machinery was limited to certain areas and tracks caused would be repaired.

(c) Dave Smith, Chief Executive of The Oxford Artisan Distillery (TOAD)

Dave described TOAD's unique way of producing their gins – all spirits coming from grain with a carbon negative farming footprint and mostly local to Oxfordshire. There was no tillage and no chemicals were used – it was an organic system and a unique way of producing spirits.

One contentious issue was that TOAD needed to double its capacity without having any impact on traffic movement and building infrastructure that would not impact the park. They wanted to extend the still house for storage of equipment for increased production. Then they needed to bring in some storage for hot water and for grain on the site, as well as for the stillage. It was necessary to site six silos on the site, with an area by the car park the only possible place, and TOAD would be working with landscape architects and engineers. Nothing had yet been agreed. £28m would be needed, but TOAD had lost 90% of their revenue because of Covid. The planning application would be submitted by the end of January, with funds possibly being secured by the end of March and other funds in place by 23 April. Rest rooms would be created and silos would be landscaped (and possibly sunk into the ground).

Most visitors arrived either by bus or on foot. There would be time limits on evening events and sound levels would be monitored. The "beer bash" which had caused problems with noise would happen indoors in future.

Once OPT and OCC had approved the application feedback would be sought from interested parties, including FoSP.

The Chair thanked all speakers for their input. The meeting ended at 8.35pm. A decision as to the venue for the 2022 AGM would be taken during the following year, and the Park Management Plan would be discussed at that meeting.