

Minutes of the IFRA meeting held on Monday 10 January 2022 by Zoom

Present: Ben Pinches (Chair), Simon Fisher, Samantha Robertson, Barbara Ashcroft, Denise Cullington, Thelma Martin, Christine Hogg, Luke Bolton, Janet Hall, Emily Kerr, Jon Rees, Sue Hale,

Cllr Damian Haywood, Cllr Lucy Pegg, Susan Bedford, Ruth Ashcroft (FoAE), Peter Sidgewick, Andrew McPhail, Marie Murray, Margaret Keeping, Janey Carline, Sarah Wild, Jane Fisher

Apologies –Cllr Chris Jarvis, Cllr Dick Wolf

1 Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November were approved as a correct record.

2 Matters arising

The tree outside Ladbroke – it was agreed that the replacement tree, a purple tulip, was inadequate and did not add to the environment.

Crowdfunding for a bigger tree, such as the trees planted outside Wadham was discussed as well as issuing a press release. Cllr Lucy Pegg reported that ODS was aware that the community was displeased with the replacement and agreed to take these concerns up with them and report back. It was also important to liaise with the Donnington group who were concerned about the destruction of the tree and its replacement but were not planning further action. Once we had heard back from, what further actions that might be taken would be discussed. Lucy was thanked for coming to the meeting and taking up this issue. (NB subsequently ODS have said that cannot accept donations for a specific tree, only their general programme).

Playground flooding: it was agreed to ask Cllr Jarvis to follow this up and report back.

School traffic

Funding to expand the “School Streets” programme will be available in the next financial year, when the county council will have new powers to put in cameras and APRs. Emily is planning to have volunteers in the road wearing Hi-Viz and politely ask people to not go down Bedford Street. This would be done when the new LTNs are introduced in the spring.

Common land status of the Rec

Damian reported that he had asked the County to investigate who owned and had responsibility for Meadow Lane. David Williams had done extensive research on this and this information would be forwarded to Damian.

Speed along Meadow Lane

There was increasing concern about the traffic, both vehicles whose Sat Nav indicated a short cut, mopeds and delivery drivers. Before plans for installing a speed bump between Eyot Place and the Play Park could be considered, the status of Meadow Lane needed to be clarified.

Councillors' grants

Two applications (for benches and sports equipment) had been made on behalf of IFRA to this fund but no decisions yet made.

3 Waterways subgroup

Ben and Samantha reported that there had been a working party to help clear the site and new benches had been installed. Thanks were due to the Falcon for receiving and storing the benches. The group has tried to consult as widely as possible with council officers, and the Waterways Officer will be meeting with Eleanor Blyth to discuss how they can help with the installation of the benches. Damian recommended that people should not swim in the Thames at the moment because of the sewage spillage in the Windrush was significantly harming the water quality in Oxford. Thames Water had been referred to DEFRA.

4 Friends of Meadow Lane Rec (IFRA Parks)

The draft report of the survey was welcomed and Ruth thanked for her work on this. There had been 157 responses. The openness and the multiple and informal uses of the Rec are widely valued, and any changes should not interfere with this. Given this, there is support for more benches, better planting, a few additional sports facilities, as well as better maintenance of the area. (The draft report is available on www.ifra.uk, and full results available on request).

Though the support for new trees was not unanimous, there was considered to be enough support as long as they did not curtail sporting activities. The group was discussing with the council the species and placement of the trees.

There was support for more Sports facilities. Peter Sidgewick reported that he had received £500 towards a table tennis table from the Oxford University Community Support Fund and hoped for some contribution from the Councillors grant. Andrew MacPhail reported that basketball was very important for engaging young people and that it was increasingly popular. A basketball hoop was not enough and shared pitches did not work well. He suggested a full or half size pitch was required and the one in Alexandra Court in Summertown was very well used. He agreed to work with Peter to look at the feasibility of the proposals.

It was noted that there had been a pilot scheme a few years ago whereby local people were able to use the tennis Courts in the school at weekend. Emily agreed to have a look at the feasibility of this and the reasons why it had not continued.

5 Planning

Thelma reported she and Christine had viewed the plans for housing in the Horse Field in Iffley. It was likely to go ahead, with some tweaks. There was continuing concerns about retrospective applications for changes to HMOs. There was an application from the Heather House Guest House on Iffley Road that backed on to Stratford Street. They wanted to build 5 extra rooms, giving a total of 15 rooms with only 3 parking spaces. With no parking on Iffley Road with the Cycle Quickway, parking in sides streets would be even more restricted. Thelma agreed to put in a response on behalf of IFRA.

Sarah Wild asked if IFRA would comment as it used to on local plans, the current one in her view prioritising jobs, not housing, and leading to a loss of green space. Thelma replied that IFRA would continue to respond to live consultations.

6 IFRA Air Quality sub group

Janet reported that the group had been monitoring the particulates and identified some hot spots. Friends of the Earth were installing monitors around Oxford and there was likely to be one in Iffley Fields.

Luke reported that he was installing an outdoor monitor in Chester Street, opposite the Chester.

7 Financial report

Ben presented the financial report for the year to December 2021, which had been previously circulated.

8 Plans for the AGM 14 March

It was agreed that the AGM would be on zoom, The first half would be a business meeting with reports from the sub groups. The second half would look at practical ways that we can all help the environment. Speakers were suggested that would be followed up. A newsletter/ annual report would be produced before the meeting.

The pros and cons of zoom versus in person meetings were discussed. It was agreed to trying alternating Zoom and in person meetings. Where the meeting was held in person, it would be a hybrid, giving the option for attendance by Zoom.

9 Social events

It was noted that it would be good to have a group facilitating social events. There events such as the jumble trail, the safe space party but there was scope for other activities, such as a Bridge club. A mapping exercise about what was already going on might be a useful start.

10 Internet providers

Luke raised the problem of poor internet connections, particularly in Argyle and Chester Streets. There was no adequate alternative to Virgin. With more people working from home this was becoming more increasingly difficult. Apparently, the BT box on Iffley Road needs upgrading and when raised in 2014, Jon was told that it would not be upgraded for commercial reasons. Luke suggested that if enough people would be willing to sign up to a new provider, this decision might be reversed. Luke agreed to look into this further.

11 Open meeting River Bathing in Oxford – past, present, future. 10 March, 8 PM Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square

Thelma reminded everyone that the Oxford Civic Society was holding a free lecture on River Bathing in Oxford. George Townsend, Richard Mills and Eleanor Blyth would be speaking.

Dates of meetings 2022, Mondays, 8pm - Please note the later time

14 March (AGM) Zoom, 9 May (in person), 11 July (Zoom), 12 September (in person), 14 November (Zoom)
