



The Society's Constitution – Tony Joyce, Chairman

As Vice Chairman Stephen Brown explains in his article *'The Way Forward'* on pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter, your Committee has for some time been examining the way it functions in promoting the aims of the Society and serving the interests of members.

We have concluded that the way forward can best be achieved through a revised committee structure involving a series of definitive sub-committees, each with a clear working relationship to other groups and to the Executive Committee. This necessitates some changes in the roles of Committee personnel.

Implementing all this would of itself have required some amendment to our Constitution, but at the same time we have been reviewing the suggestion that the Society should seek formal charitable status, as many Civic Societies have done and as the Civic Trust recommends. This, too, would require a revised Constitution, acceptable to the Charity Commission.

The Civic Trust publishes a model Constitution which for our purposes has the merits that it is already approved, if adopted in its entirety, by the Charity Commission and that it is substantially similar to our existing Constitution, whilst encompassing the proposed new structure and working of the Committee.

Accordingly, at our **Special General Meeting** (of which formal notice is given on page 2) on:- **Wednesday 11th October, 7.30 pm,**
St Aldates Parish Centre,
your Committee will make the following proposals :-

1. That a revised Constitution, closely following the lines of the model suggested by the Civic Trust, be adopted by Oxford Civic Society.
2. If this new Constitution be adopted, then the Society should seek formal charitable status.

Copies of both the current and proposed new Constitutions are available via our website www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk (follow the link to *Objectives*). Printed copies can be obtained from the Newsletter Editor, 112 Bridge Street, Osney Island, OX2 0DH (01865 250870).

Notes detailing the actual changes of wording in the new Constitution, and on the significance of charitable status, are enclosed with this newsletter and will be made available again at the Special General Meeting.

Gordon Balme, Treasurer, writes:

"Charitable status will enable the Society to reclaim the tax from the Inland Revenue that members have paid on the money they use to pay their subscriptions. When we have been granted charitable status, members will be invited to sign a Gift Aid Declaration. They will only need to sign a Declaration once if their circumstances remain unchanged.

The amount we will be able to reclaim is 28p for every £1 of subscription. The total gain cannot be calculated with any accuracy until the response of the membership to the Gift Aid invitation is known. Given a high response rate, the increase in the Society's funds will be significant.

I hope the membership will embrace these proposals warmly."



On behalf of the Society's members, the Executive Committee extends warmest congratulations and good wishes to Kate Miller and Tony Joyce on the happy occasion of their recent wedding on Saturday, 15 April 2006 at the Friends Meeting House, St Giles.



Certificate of Honour Award



We are delighted to report the award by ex-Lord Mayor Bob Price, on behalf of Oxford City Council, of a Certificate of Honour to Society Chairman Tony Joyce in recognition of many years of dedicated commitment to Oxford Civic Society and to Headington Residents' Associations. The ceremony took place on Monday 8 May, 2006 in Oxford's Town Hall when Tony was amongst several distinguished citizens to be recognised for their outstanding service to the community.

NOTICE SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, 11 October, 2006

St Aldates Parish Centre

40 Pembroke Street

7.30 for 8 pm

To consider adoption of a new Constitution and application for Charitable Status.

(Followed by a Members' Meeting)

The Way Forward

Exactly one year ago, in the July 2005 Newsletter issue no. 101, I outlined the formation of a Review Group to assess and recommend ways in which our membership (and the broader community of Oxford citizens) might be even better served. The Group subsequently submitted an interim report to the Executive Committee in January 2006.

Our preliminary proposals were as follows:- firstly, that the Society should become more publicly concerned with broader policy issues – without prejudicing our other established activities (notably, programme of visits, meetings and walks, and our liaison with community groups); secondly, that we should seek ways to promote the society's stance on certain key issues and become more proactive in areas of general concern such as signage, travel behaviour, the public realm and a range of other environmental challenges.

The Executive Committee wholeheartedly endorsed these proposals. Our next step, therefore, was to reconsider the structure and organisation of the society committees. Careful analysis and debate took place in the course of a second series of meetings.

Our consequent recommendations, again fully endorsed by the committee, might be briefly summarised thus: the Executive Committee will be retained in its present form but will devolve responsibility for the day-to-day activities of the Society to a number of sub-

subsidiary Work Groups. Some large, others small, these Groups might be totally new, an amalgam of present activity teams, or a continuation of existing highly effective sub-committees. For example, Planning and Transport will remain in its present form – monitoring local planning applications, commenting on planning policy at City, County and Regional level as well as transport related matters. It will continue to play an active role in consultation on strategic issues such as the proposed Westgate and West End developments.

Probably the most significant new Group will be Environment (see pages 3-4), which will be concerned with almost every issue that affects the City except planning. In designing this remit, we have taken careful note of feedback from our membership (see following article). The Group will, further, oversee our liaison with OX1, Forest of Oxford and other organisations.

A new Communications Group will play a high profile role, bringing together Media & Publicity, the Website, our Cards, the Newsletter, special publications and our Archive.

Other groups such as our acclaimed Programme team and Membership & Community Groups Liaison will continue unchanged as will important links to the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board (see their separate report, page 6), the Civic Trust and other Civic Society associates. Overall responsibility for policy and strategy (what some have called 'blue sky thinking') will rest with the Executive Committee.

As the Chair of the Way Forward Review Group I extend my personal thanks to those who gave their time and worked so purposefully together to reach and to present these conclusions. Any further suggestions and offers of help are more than ever welcome and will be gratefully received by the Executive Committee.

Stephen Brown, Vice Chairman

The Members' Survey

The booklet '*Signage in Oxford*', circulated to members in January of this year, enclosed a questionnaire seeking members' views on the Society's priorities. This prompted a healthy response of 165 returns from members; analysis by postcode showed this to be a representative geographical sample.

Almost all the examples of topical issues printed in the questionnaire came out fairly equally, but Transport and Cleaner Streets were ahead with almost 60% wanting one or the other of these to be our top priority; each covers a wide range of issues, as many members' emphasised. Transport was dominated by concerns about pavement cycling (generally agreed to be a menace) and the perception that Oxford treats its cyclists badly. The buses also generated much comment and considerable dissatisfaction.

Comments on the street scene called for more effective cleaning and the reduction of litter. Poor walking conditions, signage and street clutter were all frequently mentioned, as was the lack of public space in which to sit quietly and enjoy Oxford.

Planning remains important, for example plans for the Bodleian book store in Osney, and the conversion of large houses into flats, raised concern amongst a good number.

Further comments ranged from very local issues to ones of national importance. But throughout, there was a clear message that our city could be cleaner and less dominated by cars and buses, and that it could be an even better place in which to live and work.

Rosamund Weatherall, Executive Committee

Announcing an Environment Work Group

The Society's newly emerging Environment Group held its inaugural meeting on Tuesday 4 July when a group of 8 interested participants (with apologies from a further 6 who had prior commitments) met to explore a range of topics, all of them high on the list of members' identified priorities.

Discussion covered, amongst other items: the need for cleaner streets, with the expressed hope that the group could act as a catalyst as well as a pressure group; sustainability, with thoughts on raising further awareness; public spaces (with special emphasis on Bonn Square) and street traders; public realm and street furniture; recycling and continued disquiet about wheelie bin proposals; the canal basin; Westgate Centre plans and OX1, the city centre management group.

The next full Environment Group meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 3 October, although it is anticipated that ad hoc activity will be ongoing amongst members between Group meetings.

If you would like to become involved in the formative stages of this new Group and its work, please contact the interim Secretary, Gillian Argyle via gillian.argyle@gmail.com or via the Newsletter Editor (see page 8).

Report from the Planning Sub-Committee

In *March*, proprietors of a **Day Nursery next to Cherwell School**, south of Marston Ferry Road, applied to enlarge it into a large 2-storey building but the application was *withdrawn*, perhaps in respect for the nearby Green Belt. A proposal was made to demolish buildings on part of the **Radcliffe Infirmary site** to make way for extensive 3- and 4-floor buildings, with basement car-parking, to house five GP surgeries and primary health care facilities. The development would have generated huge traffic, which was among the reasons for its *rejection* in June. At **27 St Margarets Road** a proposal for a solar hot water system on the roof was made, and *permitted* two months later. Large extensions to **3 Boswell Road** and **2 Bailey Road** were proposed for a second time, but *refused* again in May. Extensive plans to improve **Bonn Square** were proposed in March and *passed* in July.

In *April* and *May* **The Old School, First Turn, Wolvercote** came under threat of redevelopment, not by demolition (which was proposed in July 2005 and refused), but by conversion

into six flats; the application was *withdrawn* in June. Beside the **University Club in Mansfield Road** eight 8-metre tall posts were proposed, to be telescopic so that their bright flood lights could be lowered when not in use; these were *permitted*. Demolition of **351 Woodstock Road** had been permitted in July 2005, to be replaced by a block of 8 flats and a 4-bed house on **Wyndham Way**, but this was delayed by debate over a large horse-chestnut tree, removal of which was *finally agreed* in May 2006. Two applications to be *refused* were at **95 Green Road, Risinghurst**, for conversion to 5 flats, but with poor access to one of them, and at **111 Godstow Road**, for an over-large rear dormer. It is good news that the charming garden of **The Lodge at 304 Woodstock Road** is at last being treated as one whole, surrounded by a secure new fence, and that the house is being restored internally.

In *June*, **57 Long Lane, Oxford Road, Littlemore** was targeted again. In 2004 an extension was proposed to be converted into a separate 4-bed house; this was soon withdrawn but amended plans were submitted and refused; in June 2006 a similar proposal was made for a smaller house, and this was *permitted* immediately. At **20 Lathbury Road**, permission was sought for a new front garden wall with secure railings along front and side, and a remotely controlled electric sliding gate; this was *refused* immediately as inappropriate in a green suburban Conservation Area. Two applications made and so far *undecided* were at **2 Hernes Crescent**, for demolition and replacement by seven flats, and on land south of **Lamarsh Place, off Botley Road**, for an estate of eight houses and nine flats.

Two recent applications were for use of parts of **Broad Street** as pavement cafés: at **Nos 11-12** and at **No. 19**; both were *permitted* soon afterwards, despite some fears that these will contribute unpleasantly to street clutter.

Sadly, we continue to find some applications that are incomplete: six out of 36, this time.

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Looking ahead:

There will be further work to do on the **Westgate** application. We expect major applications from **Exeter College** for a large development in the gardens of their houses in **Ifley Road**; from the **Mental Health Trust** for development of the **Warneford Fields** and the **Park Hospital**; and from **Oxford University** on their evolving plans for the **Radcliffe Infirmary site**. There is no further news on the **Bodleian Library's** proposed vast bookstore at **Osney Mead**. We are also involved in consultations on **car-free development policy**, preferred options for the **West End Area Action Plan**, and the **City's Core Strategy**. Also, of course, concerns about the future of the **Green Belt** are never far away.

*Gillian Argyle, Mark Barrington-Ward,
Kate Miller, Chris Rayson, David Townsend*

From the Archives

An extract from '*Oxford's Waterways*' a collaborative publication by Oxford Preservation Trust and the Civic Society (1975) features the Jericho boat repair yard on page 21, thus:



"A not unfamiliar example of the insensitive treatment of the banks of the waterways by commercial undertakings. A little careful screening would make an immense improvement."

The screening is certainly there now, but local residents do not consider it "careful".

Christine Butler, Society Archivist

NB Copies of '*Oxford's Waterways*' are available from Oxford's libraries. *(Editor)*

Transport Notes

I hope our older members were not too confused by the introduction of free bus travel in April. Conflicting messages from the bus

companies and the City Council about the need or otherwise to obtain new 'photo card' type passes in Oxford resulted in long queues at St Aldates Chambers. In fact, the old yellow passes are still valid but should be replaced by the new ones as soon as possible.

Press reports of a decline in bus usage in Oxford were somewhat exaggerated. As far as the Oxford Bus Company is concerned, passenger numbers are very buoyant, particularly on the **Abingdon** express services where extra vehicles have been introduced to cope. This is good news because the concurrent slight decline in usage of the **Redbridge Park & Ride** site means fewer car journeys between the Abingdon area and Oxford. The proposal to have 'remote' P&R sites at **Abingdon & Witney** will help this trend. The proposal for one at **Bicester** would seem to be a good opportunity to experiment with a rail-based service, given the traffic conditions on the **A34 between Bicester and Oxford** and the increasing likelihood of the **Oxford to Bedford** rail service being reinstated. This will involve the upgrading of the line, thus increasing capacity for a frequent shuttle.

Other good news on the bus front is that the Order has been published by the County Council to enable them to enforce the rules regarding bus lanes and bus gates with the use of CCTV evidence, now that the Government has provided the necessary powers. Also, better services to the **JR site** are promised when the Radcliffe Infirmary moves there next year.

More worrying, however, are suggestions for the '**West End**', which make no mention of a new coach station and refer to the redesign of **Frideswide Square** to enable 'continuous slow traffic flow'. It will no doubt be easy to provide 'continuous flow' by removing all opportunities for pedestrians to cross the road and to impede buses but the enforcement of 'slow' is more problematic! It is difficult enough to enforce any speed limit and it will be interesting to see firm details of what is proposed.

Cycling is being promoted by a big invest-

ment in getting children to cycle to school rather than being ferried by car. The new Secretary of State for Transport, Douglas Alexander, announced this at Oxford Community School at the end of June. Meanwhile, at the other end of the age range, we can expect Oxford's Lord Mayors to enjoy the use of the 'Mayoral Bicycle', generously donated by Cyclo, instead of the 'Mayoral Car'.

David Townsend, Transport Secretary

Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board

The Board was founded in 1999 to commemorate notable persons and sites of historic interest and to provide a channel for members of the public to suggest such persons and sites throughout the county. A voluntary body of fifteen members chaired by the Lord Lieutenant and representing a broad spectrum of interests, the Board has no money of its own and must seek sponsorship for each plaque. From the outset, Oxford Civic Society has assisted with administrative costs and the Board is especially grateful for the recent generous contribution towards a new brochure.

A total of 26 plaques has been unveiled since the first one to **Sarah Cooper** in the High in 2001. This year, we have erected plaques to three remarkable men:-

Noel Chavasse, VC and Bar, at Magdalen College School;

Gathorne Robert Girdlestone, founder of the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, at the former Red House, Old Road, Headington;

John Betjeman at Garrards Farmhouse, Uffington.

A fourth at **34 Aldrich Road** marks as a site of historic interest the place where one of the Cutteslowe Walls once stood

For further information and biographies of persons or places commemorated see the website at www.halarose.co.uk/blue and the OCS website.

Eda Forbes, Secretary, may be contacted at 17 Rogers Street, Summertown, OX2 7JS (01865 552763)

Oxford Town Hall

You may be aware of the works now in hand to refurbish the ground floor area. The new **Gallery Café**, just beyond the very smart new toilets, is well worth a visit. Open Monday – Friday 8.30 am – 5.30 pm and on Saturdays from 9 am – 5.30 pm, it sells a range of fair-trade products and locally sourced items. It is hoped to have the civic plate on display before too long in the next phase of the refurbishment of the ground floor corridor space.

Jane Lubbock, Business Manager (Facilities Management) expects to have copies of the Executive Summary of the Report on the recent Feasibility Study in circulation soon.

The full Report will be posted to the City Council website in due course (accessible via www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk) and is available on prior request (telephone Jane on 01865.249811) for collection in person from the front desk, since it is too bulky to be mailed.

Recycling

Plans to increase recycling rates within the city have taken a fresh turn under the new administration at the Town Hall. The first very welcome move will be to extend the green waste & cardboard collection (green canvas bags) to the whole city - it is hoped in September. Green boxes will continue to take paper & glass, and blue boxes will be introduced for cans, lower grade paper & plastics. The more controversial wheelie bins will be phased in gradually. There will be a sack alternative for those who prefer - the first wave of consultation letters will go out to households in August. Unfortunately it will not be possible to collect and separate food from the residual waste until the County has set up a proper in-vessel composting facility and this may take up to two years to achieve.

The problem for householders will be that each type of collection will be on a fortnightly rota (including food/residual waste). We are urging the city to make this as simple, comprehensible and well publicised as possible.

Tony Joyce, Chairman

Anti-litter campaign in local schools

The Anti-Litter Campaign for Oxford City Secondary Schools is up and running. This involves grading the 6 secondary schools each term on first impression of school entrance, recreational areas around the classrooms and the playing fields. Some schools are making huge efforts, with early signs of improvement.

The aim is to persuade the children to be more litter conscious and to dispose of rubbish in bins, although these are not always provided. The schools will be judged in summer 2007, probably with some difficulty. The winning school has pledged to give the pupils an outing and Oxford's Lord Lieutenant, Hugo Brunner, has kindly offered to present a shield engraved with the school's name. There will be some media coverage.

Two of the schools' Head teachers have previously worked in Buckinghamshire where they were familiar with this sort of anti-litter campaign, run by the local authority there.

*Rosanne Bostock, Activist
(see Rosanne's further letter, on page 8)*

Climate Outreach Information Network

COIN is an Oxford based charitable trust, supporting initiatives and organisations that increase public understanding and awareness of climate change. They are running a series of monthly speaker events, of which two forthcoming examples are:-

Thursday 17th August : 'Sun Screen: films on climate change' Location tbc. Free admission.

Thursday 14th September: 'Carbon offsets – salvation/ distraction?' 7-9pm, Ruskin College.

Further details from Co-ordinator Mim Saxl, COIN, 16B Cherwell St, OX4 1BG (07932 073091); E-mail mim@COINet.org.uk; Web: www.COINet.org.uk

Greetings Card, 2006-7

The Executive Committee is again most grateful to the members of the Society's Cards Group for all their hard work in making avail-

able to us another very appealing greetings card, as you will see from the sample enclosed. Happily, last year's prices continue for 2006-7, making this year's card even more of a bargain purchase for personal use or as a gift, or indeed as a seasonal Christmas card.

Order Form and full details also enclosed!

www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk

We are all much indebted to Stephanie Jenkins for the design and dedicated maintenance of the Society's website for many years. Stephanie has now resigned as Webmaster, and we are delighted to accept Tony Roberts's kind offer to take over the role, which he has now done. With Tony's help, we are embarking on a re-design of the site to facilitate some of our internal administration but mostly to ensure that we are making up-to-date information and comment available to users.

If you regularly use the site, or are perhaps a first time visitor, please pass any suggestions for enhancement or improved functionality to Tony via webmaster@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk

NB Please note the Society's new email address – info@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk (Editor)

A further, warm welcome to ..

Keith Dyke, Fellow of Wadham since 1970 and Professor Emeritus of Microbiology, who has joined the Executive Committee and continues to work with the Programme Group.

Christine Thompson whose previous experience in advertising, advising blue-chip clients, is proving invaluable to us in implementing 'The Way Forward'.

Honorary Secretary

The restructuring of the work of the Committee and of the Groups which carry it out has created a vacancy for a new, central role — that of Honorary Secretary, to work closely with Executive Committee officers.

Please contact the Chairman, informally, for further details and to express an interest.



Your letters page –

To contribute, contact the Editor at the address shown below
or email ocsnewsletter@aol.com
Copy deadline for our next issue is *Friday 10 November 2006*

from Paul Cullen, 8 Richmond Road, OX1 2JJ
d_paul_cullen@ntlworld.com (01865 426805)

'Life Begins at 20'!

Recently, Lord Mayor Jim Campbell launched this campaign for a 20mph speed limit on Oxford's streets. Increasing evidence shows such a speed restriction to allow people, not motor vehicles, the freedom of their streets. Collisions between motor vehicles and pedestrians or cyclists not only reduce in number, but also result in fewer fatalities.

Parents find that they can let their children play out of doors or walk down to the local shops, and much of the paraphernalia of managing 30mph streets can be removed.

Oxford already has a number of 20mph areas but they are not joined up. Recently the City of Portsmouth agreed to lower speed limits on almost all its streets to 20mph by 2008. It would be wonderful if this could happen in our own city too.

Please contact me for an information pack.

from Rosanne Bostock 12 Chalfont Road, OX2 6TH
rosannebostock@btinternet.com (01865 514579)

Oxford's Litter

I have received several offers of help in recent months, but cannot measure their success because of lack of feedback, flourishing greenery and because the London Road roundabout (one of the worst areas), is under long-term reconstruction as we all know. I do think there has been some improvement on Heyford Hill, however.

I therefore list below appropriate contact details and urge all members to complain. We might even get the Ring Road cleaned up, not to mention the A34. What is important, and here your help is vital, is to maintain the pressure, so that the authorities are constantly urged to raise standards.

Finally, our City Council is trying out a mowing machine from Holland that not only cuts grass, but also chews and sucks up crisp packets, plastic bottles etc. Has anyone seen this in action yet?

Do please stay in contact with me sharing any news, feedback, or problems, etc. Thank you.

A34 Southern By Pass (Vale of White Horse & Cherwell)

Contact: **David Wilson**, Waste Manager and **Kate Morris** – **01235 520202** waste.team@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Northern By Pass, (Cotswold side of road, South Oxfordshire)

Contact: **Fred Thomson Brown** – **01491 823457**

OxCity Waste Management Supervisor, **Stewart Downes** – **01865 252966** or **252941**

(1) Street Scene Manager (North Oxford area & Northern By Pass, Oxford side, Pear Tree to Marston Ferry turn)

Dave Huddle – **01865 252958** dhuddle@oxford.gov.uk

(2) Street Scene Manager (East Oxford area & Heyford Hill to Driftway (Homebase))

Shaun Hatton – **01865 252927** shatton@oxford.gov.uk

(3) Street Scene Manager (North East Oxford area & Driftway to Marston Ferry turn)

Dave Walker – **01865 252937** dwalker@oxford.gov.uk

Sainsburys :-

(1) Simon Tennant

Manager.HeyfordHill@sainsburys.co.uk

(2) Vince Brimble

Manager.Kidlington@sainsburys.co.uk



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