



Registered Charity No 1116739

NEWSLETTER No 110

July 2008

ISSN 0308-9959

# OxClean

## Developments and feedback

In the March Newsletter, issue 109, we gave you pictures of *OxClean's Spring Clean 2008* weekend – these can still be seen, with many more, on [www.oxclean.org.uk](http://www.oxclean.org.uk) We described the huge success of the event and promised to give feedback in this issue. Our close working partners, City Works, gave us statistics quickly and these amazed us all: 94 community groups, and approximately 1500 people, over three days, collected –

- **990 kg** of recyclable material, roughly equivalent to 250 household collections
- **7,580 kg** of landfill material, roughly equivalent to 500 household collections
- **3,000 kg** of scrap metal – this was not planned for, yet City Works rose magnificently to the challenge of unscheduled collection. Do look at the pictures – they are extraordinary. As a result (and thanks to volunteers) nature reserves in the city are clear of years of accumulated scrap – bedsteads, prams, shopping trolleys etc. etc.

With all the benefits of a cleaner and brighter city, we then asked the question “*What now ?*” at an open Debrief Session, jointly hosted by the City Council & **OxClean**, in the Town Hall on 2 April. The main conclusions were three-fold:

- to change littering behaviour;
- to reduce the amount of litter generated;
- to make Spring Clean an annual event.

This becomes, jointly, an educational and a house-keeping and a clean-up approach. We believe all three elements are essential. With this in mind, and with *Spring Clean 2009* already scheduled to take place on **March 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>**, we are concentrating on three new campaign priorities, to be launched in the autumn and designed to tackle the respective problems of:

- Eating & Drinking ‘on-the-go’
- Fly-tipping
- Cigarette Butts

## City Works – our working partnership

We meet every month with colleagues from City Works and exchanges are positive and mutually beneficial. This is a genuine partnership and we have come to a better understanding of some of the challenges faced. At the same time we press for improvements.

## Schools Anti-Litter Campaign

The Civic Society’s Anti-Litter campaign project in schools, primary and secondary, falls within *OxClean’s* operations and is an important plank in our strategy. Each school is visited once a term (and entirely unannounced) by a volunteer who assesses attitude and progress in littering behaviour. A graded Certificate of Merit is then given to each participating primary school, whilst a shield, kindly donated by Sir Hugo Brunner, is awarded to the ‘best’ secondary school.

The winning secondary school for 2008 is **St Gregory the Great Oxford Catholic School**. We are delighted that St Gregory's should have performed so well, since this school was the venue for our launch of *Ox-Clean/Spring Clean 2008* in February.

We warmly welcome the endeavours of 30 primary schools that have joined the campaign this year – all of them keen to set and maintain high standards of litter control.

### Next Steps

Steering Group members have learnt much from our inaugural event and, over the next few months, will be aiming to expand the activities of *OxClean* by :

- inviting people at grass roots level to help us;
- seeking (i) involvement across the city, (ii) to involve **Oxford University** more, and (iii) sponsorship from local businesses for equipment and advertising;
- working with **The Oxford Times**, our media partner, on regular coverage from September onwards;
- developing flying squads to deal with 'grotspots';
- increasing the visibility of publicity material so that *OxClean* becomes well-recognised and established.

We celebrate the community spirit which made *Spring Clean 2008* so successful and we will be working for, and with, you as members to meet the challenges we have outlined above, in the year to come. We joke that we will be putting ourselves out of a job! But this has to be our ultimate aim.

We do want you, as members, to be involved, to say what you think and to give us ideas. Please contact us by email to [info@oxclean.org.uk](mailto:info@oxclean.org.uk) so that we can take account of your views. Thank you.

**Liz Storrar, Chair, OxClean Steering Group:**  
(Rosanne Bostock, Liz Grosvenor,  
Pauline Martin, Vernon Porter,  
Christine Thompson, Ros Weatherall)

## Chairman's Commentary

**(1) London Road Improvements:** Work has now started on the first phase between **Pullens Lane** and **Osler Road**. The aim is to make bus journeys quicker, more reliable and thus more attractive, partly at the expense of other traffic, by providing an out-bound bus lane between Gipsy Lane and Headley Way, where the road is wide enough; also to increase safety and to enhance the environment with a 20mph speed limit from Brookes' entrance at **Pullens Lane** along the front of **Headington School**, where there will in addition be a new pedestrian crossing. Bus stops will be improved with partial lay-bys.

The work will take until February 2009 and though the county hope to maintain two-way traffic, there will be inevitable delays, with the consequent increase in rat-running through the residential side roads.

It remains to be seen how much bus transit times improve until the next stage of the work through the **Headington shopping area** has tackled the remaining bottlenecks, and whether any really significant improvement to traffic conditions in Headington can be achieved without the fundamental approach to hospital access which a direct link from the Ring Road would provide. With **Brookes'** paying for much of the enhancement costs in their area, and new bus shelters provided under the City's agreement with **Adshel**, it will be salutary to see how much the County can achieve with £3 million of our money.

**(2) Public Realm – the High:** Further consultation continues on the County's plans for the enhancement of the central stretch of **the High**, which remains to be completed. The cut in central government funding has been a bitter blow when the carriageway is rapidly deteriorating under the weight of so many heavy coaches, and time is very short to find alternative funding for a scheme which would do proper justice to one of the

finest street scenes in the world.

### **(3) University Library Depository Public**

**Inquiry:** The two-week Inquiry into the City's refusal of planning permission for the massive new Depository on Osney Mead is expected to be completed in July, with the Inspector's report due by the end of August. We remain convinced that this is the wrong building for this site, and the wrong site for this building, and we do not believe that an alternative and far preferable site or sites cannot be found. The **Peartree triangle**, for example, seems an obvious candidate, strongly favoured by the City Council.

**Tony Joyce**

## **Executive Committee Reports:**

### **The Civic Trust** (by Vernon Porter)

Your Society is one of 750 similar 'Civic Societies' in England that are members of the Civic Trust. That makes you one of the quarter of a million people the Trust represents.

When he was appointed President of the Civic Trust, *Griff Rhys Jones* said: *"All over Britain people who love and care about their towns and cities, work to take responsibility for something that affects us all – our urban landscape. I salute them, respect them, and am delighted to be made their President and to support the work of the Civic Trust."*

The Civic Trust:

- Campaigns for better places in the built and green environment.
- Manages (on behalf of the **Dept of Communities & Local Government**) the **Green Flag Award Scheme**, celebrating and raising the standard of public parks.
- Rewards outstanding new buildings and public spaces with the **Civic Trust Awards**, which scheme celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2009.
- Organises **Heritage Open Days** - a national event which sees 3,500 buildings opening free of charge to 1 million visi-

tors every September in partnership with **English Heritage** (see also, item p 7).

- Is the leading organisation involved in improving town and city centres at night (see *Newsletter 109, March 2008, page 6*).

The Civic Trust maintains a lively website with details of current campaigns, planned and new legislation and activities of member societies. They also welcome individual membership. For further details, please visit **[www.civictrust.org.uk](http://www.civictrust.org.uk)**

**Editor's note:** As the Society's Hon Secretary, **Vernon Porter** represents OCS at Regional and National meetings of the **Civic Trust**. He is the Oxfordshire representative on the Executive Committee of **Civic Trust South East**.

### **A Tourism Strategy for Oxford**

(by Vernon Porter)

Oxford City & County Councils have commissioned **The Tourism Company**: *"To provide a vision, strategy and action plan for tourism over the next 5 years and beyond"*. Thus far they have held two workshops, attended by representatives of the Society, and undertaken some survey work.

With some 9 million visitors each year, spending around £1.4 billion, Oxford is seen as a tourism success that contributes significantly to the local economy. But the market is evolving and continuing this level of success is not assured. It seems likely that the Strategy will make recommendations on the marketing of Oxford and the future management of visitors. It will also look at visitor facilities and the lack of a world class 'public realm' (which includes items such as toilets, seating, street signage, pavements and road surfaces)

The **West End redevelopment** will give Oxford an opportunity to redesign the coach park with better facilities and better routing to the city centre. It will also fund some improvements to the public realm in that area. The work on the Strategy is making clear that improvements to the public

realm in the rest of the city centre are needed. Residents would also welcome these. Hopefully the Tourism Strategy will contribute to the search for funding for such improvements.

It is hoped that the draft of the **Strategy & Action Plan** will be available in August / September.

### Corporate Membership of OCS (by Gordon Balme & Stuart White)

The Executive Committee has launched a phased programme of mailings to businesses in Oxford inviting them to join the Society as Corporate Members. The first phase was sent out in early June and the responses are now coming in.

Corporate Members will have the same rights as ordinary members in most respects, but the main thrust of their membership will be the opportunity to contribute to the debates that take place within the Society on matters that affect the well-being of our city.

Their financial contribution will strengthen our ability to launch and support new initiatives such as *OxClean*; to attract eminent speakers on topical issues; to publish further ad hoc reports, eg 'The Bus Stops Here' (Feb 2008) and 'Signage in Central Oxford' (Jan 2006).

Further phased mailings will continue until November with an update in the next Newsletter.

**Editor's note:** the dual role of **Corporate Liaison** is shared between two Executive Committee members – **Gordon Balme** is our Hon Treasurer and **Stuart White** has special responsibility for University links.



### **Report from the Planning Sub-Committee**

*Update on applications mentioned in the March 2008 newsletter:* Demolition of the **Lemon Tree Restaurant** at **268 Woodstock Road** was *refused* in December: it is still there and still functioning. Development at **91 Lime**

**Walk** was *refused* in June. Plans for the Middle Eastern Library at **St Antony's College** have been withdrawn, revised and re-submitted this month with minimal change; a decision is yet to come. Likewise plans at the **Iffley Road Oxford University Sports Centre** are still not decided.

New applications in *early March* included the threat of demolition of a significant wall in front of **20 Beaumont Buildings**, but the proposal was *refused* in April. The Friar PH, at **2 Old Marston Road**, was also threatened with demolition, and replacement by a 3-storey building for shops on the ground floor and six 1-bed flats on the two upper floors, but this is still undecided. A proposal to illuminate Addison's Walk in **Magdalen College** grounds with 15 lighting columns, just under a metre tall, has been withdrawn.

*Late March* and *April* brought yet another repeat application for demolition of **9 Kirk Close** and replacement by a semi-detached pair of houses, again *refused*. Garages at **1 to 4 Walton Lane** are due for demolition as *permission* has come for replacement by a semi-detached pair of 4-bed 3-storey houses, with basement rooms. Local consternation has been caused by proposals at **Alexandra Tennis Courts, Middle Way**, to resurface the hard courts, reduce the number of grass courts, and possibly create a large sports hall, but no decision has so far been made. At **21 Staunton Road, Headington**, a large single storey side extension was proposed plus a loft conversion with side and front dormers: this was *permitted* in May.

Also in *May*, **Morton's Café** at **39 Little Clarendon Street** applied to put out tables and chairs on the street: the proposal was *agreed* in June. In Lower Wolvercote there were plans to extend **20 Meadow Prospect** to side and rear, at least doubling the floor area; this was *refused* in December but further plans with changes were *permitted* in June. There were plans, still undecided, to alter the windows of **Cantay House, 39**

**Park End Street** and to cover its handsome brickwork frontage with plaster 'render'.

The thirteen *June* applications on which we commented have not yet been decided. They include development of the site of a workshop at **29 Wellington Square** in Jericho, to an ingenious design for a 2-storey office building and three 1-bed flats each with its own roof garden, but sadly these overlook neighbours' gardens.

At **26 Barton Village Road, Barton**, a stone cottage is threatened with demolition and replacement by two houses crammed on to the plot. At **16 Bradmore Road** it is proposed to put an extension over the garage for a bedroom and bathroom, but unfortunately this would hide a treasured view of trees beyond, in this Conservation Area. In Old Headington, another Conservation Area, there is a proposal to fix a satellite dish onto a handsome stone house at **3 Larkins Lane**.

A house is proposed at the far end of the garden of **259 Woodstock Road**, accessed from Woodstock Road by a long drive and close to a large semi-natural pool which could be a danger for children: this would be an unfortunate precedent for further 'back-land development'.

#### Notification of Planning Applications

The City has now restricted the number of notifications of planning applications it sends out, in line with the statutory requirement whereby only those immediately adjacent to an application site are directly informed (whilst many other near neighbours may also be affected).

This places a greater onus on residents' representatives and other community groups to maintain vigilance (via the City's planning website for example). We hope the City will develop other means of inexpensive communication to compensate for what has in the past been a costly, though much valued, service.

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

**Editor's note:** readers are reminded that –

(1) The full list of the Planning Sub Committee's monthly comments on applications, in summary form, can be viewed on the home page of our website. Go to [www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk) and click on the *Planning Views* button. This is regularly updated.

(2) In addition, the OCS site's main *Planning* section links directly to **Oxford City Council's** website where a comprehensive history of each application, and all comments received, is published under its relevant reference number.

### Transport Notes

The Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals Trust is continuing its efforts to reduce the demand for parking spaces at the JR and, hence, reduce traffic in Headington by enabling the X13 bus service from Abingdon to the hospital to call at the Redbridge P&R site. A £70,000 investment in a revised entrance and exit for buses, including new traffic signals, means that people can now park at Redbridge and travel to the hospital by a direct bus. There is the added advantage that the X3 to the railway station also calls at Redbridge, potentially reducing traffic further.

Those of you who have suffered from large numbers of language students filling buses in the summer months will be glad to know that the Oxford Bus Company is introducing a fleet of "**Q-Busters**". These buses will be added to affected routes when necessary – as long as the language schools relay the requisite information to OBC. We must hope that this initiative is successful.

The railways have had quite a lot of publicity recently, ranging from the '*definite*' to the '*maybe*'. It is certainly true that rail travel is now more extensive than at any-time since 1946, when thousands of service men and women were de-mobilised after the war and very few people had cars. Severe overcrowding has led to a need to increase capacity on some routes and this is why double track is to be reinstated on a large part of the line between Oxford and Worcester. This should be completed in two years' time. However, the extra plat-

form at Oxford station and other improvements between there and Didcot have not yet won the 'go ahead' from the Office of Rail Regulation. Network Rail is to produce a 'more robust business case' and we must live in hope.

Even further into the future is the possibility of completely new high-speed lines through Oxfordshire. An exciting prospect but one that will no doubt be of concern to many people as to the exact route(s) to be taken!

**STOP PRESS** – I have just learned, and am pleased to advise, that First Great Western has joined other train operating companies in offering through-fares from Oxford to Paris and Brussels, from £69 return.

**David Townsend, Transport Secretary**

### Notes from Travel Behaviour Group

**Bus Connectivity, questionnaire** – We are putting together a short report about the bus services in Oxford, and in order to gather some direct experiences to illustrate this, we recently circulated a questionnaire to those members living within the city boundary. We are most grateful to everyone who found time to respond: 443 completed forms were returned to us.

Two common problems were the walk along the length of Cornmarket and the difficulty of getting by bus to the railway station, especially with luggage, but a full analysis will reveal other problems, which we will be passing to the County Council. More details in the November newsletter.

**"The Bus Stops Here"** – Since publishing our booklet in February 2008, new bus shelters are beginning to appear around Oxford. **Adshel** have designed shelters, coloured Oxford Blue, in a variety of types - with/without seating, for example. We have suggested to the **County's Transport Scrutiny Committee** that they investigate bus stop provision which is still split between City and County, leading to upgrading of only some aspects: we await their response.

**Bikes & Buses (films)** – To promote a better relationship between drivers and cyclists, Oxford's cycling campaign group **Cyclox**, working with the bus companies, has made two short films. One shows a bus driver and a cyclist changing places, the other is a series of short interviews with bus drivers, cyclists and people on foot in the Cowley Road. Both major bus companies are using this in training their drivers. Copies of the DVD are available (£5) from **James Styling, 44 Southfield Road, OX4 1NZ** – email [cycloxcontact@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cycloxcontact@yahoo.co.uk)

**Streets for People Day** – In previous years, attempts have been made in Oxford to join a Europe-wide campaign variously called *Car Free Day*, *In Town Without My Car*, or *Streets for People Day*, which takes place each September. Usually this has meant a "closure" of part of Broad Street but little else. The City Council has not had the resources to organise a 2008 event, and asked OCS to assume a co-ordinating role.

It proved impossible, at short notice, to organise a worthwhile event for this year, but we are planning a **Streets for People Day** in 2009; we will convene a meeting of interested people later in the year. We are aware that a number of groups are arranging their own events in different parts of the city this year: please keep us informed of these. Contact **Ros Weatherall**, tel 01865 426805 or email [ros\\_weath@ntlworld.com](mailto:ros_weath@ntlworld.com)

**"Real time" bus times** – Bus users may not know that you can check from home when the next bus arrives at your local stop. The website [www.oxontime.com](http://www.oxontime.com) allows you to type in your postcode and should show you the times buses are due at your local stop - unless the buses on your route are not yet fitted with the right equipment!

Alternatively, use a mobile phone to text the code of your local bus stop to 84637 (these digits spell out *t-i-m-e-s*, alphabetically) for a list of routes and expected arrival times - as long as the buses are fully equipped, and the route is satellite tracked.

This can also be useful to check the time of your bus home, if you are out and about.

**Co-authors:** **Ros Weatherall** (Exec Committee member & Convenor, Environment Group);  
**Paul Cullen** (freelance Transport Consultant)

### Membership Matters

*A recent leaflet drop* – Grateful thanks to those leafleters who helped to deliver some 1,500 membership leaflets in the central Headington area on Friday 16th May, following lunch in “*The Britannia*”.

Later in the year we are planning to target **Walton Manor** and also **Norham Manor**. If you would like to sign up as a leafleter, then please let **Liz Grosvenor** know. It will be a pleasure to add your name to the list.

*Gift Aid* – almost two-thirds of the Society’s membership has now signed Gift Aid Declarations authorising us to claim an extra 28p for every £1 of subscriptions received from eligible tax-payers. This has increased our subscription revenue, for the last two tax years, by the very welcome sum of £2,760 received from Inland Revenue.

If you are not registered with us for **Gift Aid**, then you will find a letter from the Treasurer enclosed with your copy of this newsletter, and drawing your attention to the benefits. He would be pleased to speak to anyone who might need further information on this. (*Gordon Balme’s contact details are listed, with others, on the back cover - p 8.*)

**Liz Grosvenor, Membership Secretary**

### Website re-design

Those members who received the **Bus Connectivity questionnaire** (*see previous item, page 6*) will have seen, enclosed, an appeal for advice and help on the design and usability of our website. We did this because it is now a full year since our last, fundamental but internal review and we are keen for the site to stay contemporary.

We are very grateful indeed for a most attractive offer in response, which we are now

actively pursuing. We hope to have more to report in the November issue.

*Picture Gallery* – Please email any suitable photos you may have relating to the Society’s walks, talks or visits to [webman@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](mailto:webman@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk) for the attention of our Webmaster. Thank you.

**Pauline Martin, Communications Group Sec**

### Greetings Cards, 2008 - 2009

I am indebted to members **Gwyneth Tyson** and **Stan Young**, who have met me on a number of occasions and in many different locations to view and discuss potential pictures for this year’s cards. We finally chose a view of the **Jericho Boatyard**, which has been, and will continue to be, in the news as a potential development site. It was painted by Headington artist **Mike Lester** and is available as a notelet or postcard as you will see from the Order Form enclosed.

A view of **St Michaels Street** was chosen for the Christmas card; this was painted by **Betty Denny**, another local artist. It is also available as a postcard.

We look forward to your support of the Society in ordering your cards now, whilst stocks are healthy.

**Stuart White, Convenor, Cards Group**

### Heritage Open Days 2008

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September**

[www.heritageopendays.org](http://www.heritageopendays.org)

A timely reminder to readers of a particularly appealing date in the calendar. The full programme of events across England should be available soon on the website shown above.

This year, the selection of Oxford venues is to be greatly enhanced by Oxford Preservation Trust’s **Open Doors** initiative on **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September**. More information, and a detailed programme, will be posted in due course to the OPT website –

[www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk](http://www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk)

### *Arrivederci from Stephen Brown –*

In May I was elected to the City Council in Carfax Ward. One of my first acts was to resign from OCS as Vice-Chairman and as a Trustee. It was a decision made with heavy heart and some mixed emotions, but one of principle.



Our Society is apolitical. Indeed, this is the reason that OCS commands considerable respect amongst Officers and Councillors in both City and County. An opinion – whether expressed by our representative, notably our Chairman, or indeed more formally as a planning application comment made by the Planning Group – has much credence simply because it is seen to be a well-considered and representative opinion from a non-political organisation.

I was very closely involved in the Society's **Way Forward Group**, which was instrumental in bringing forward a programme of change over the last four years. The most noteworthy of these include the **OxClean Campaign**, our recent publications and campaigns, and improvements in how we communicate with members and the wider world, particularly through our website. An increase in our active membership has re-

sulted, and in my opinion the Society has in consequence become reinvigorated.

All this has been made possible through the support and enthusiasm of our committee, actively assisted by an increasing number of helpers, in turn supported by our strong membership base. To them all, I express my sincere thanks and appreciation.

Politics can be a very fickle business and who is to know – I may become closely involved again with the Society! For the moment, Margaret and I will continue as active members when time and new commitments allow, and we look forward to meeting our many friends at future meetings and events.

*“Arrivederci !! “*

---

#### **The Chairman comments:**

To have another City Councillor who is so fully in sympathy with the aims and aspirations of the Society, must always be counted a bonus. But we cannot let Stephen's return to the responsibilities of decision-making pass without a very special thank-you for all he has contributed to the Society's welfare and progress during the last four years.

His direct knowledge of the workings of the City administration has always been of value in our deliberations, but it has been his particular combination of progressive thinking and tactful implementation in chairing the *Way Forward Group* for which we must be most grateful.

With our best wishes go our hopes to see him and Margaret at many future Society events.

**Tony Joyce**

---

*Newsletter issued in March, July and November and published by*

**Oxford Civic Society, 67 Cunliffe Close, Oxford OX2 7BJ**

[www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk)

[www.oxclean.org.uk](http://www.oxclean.org.uk)

[info@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](mailto:info@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk)

[info@oxclean.org.uk](mailto:info@oxclean.org.uk)

**Chairman:** Tony Joyce, 68 Blenheim Drive, OX2 8DQ (556050)

**Treasurer:** Gordon Balme, 336 Woodstock Road, OX2 7NS (511387)

**Hon Secretary:** Vernon Porter, 67 Cunliffe Close, OX2 7BJ (557660)

**Membership Secretary:** Liz Grosvenor, 15 Lime Walk, Headington, OX3 7AB (765453)

**Newsletter Editor:** Pauline Martin, 112 Bridge Street, Osney Island, OX2 0DH (250870)

**Planning Group Convenor:** Kate Joyce, 68 Blenheim Drive, OX2 8DQ (556050)

**Programme Group Convenor:** Sheila Glazebrook, 116 Woodstock Road, OX2 7NF (310488)