

March 2022

Number 151

Why we need simpler county-wide planning



Begbroke Science Park, where major development is planned by the University. See the Transport Group's report for some good news about the project (page 8).

Photo courtesy of Roddy Maddocks

There is no shortage of plans or strategies in our region but the whole planning process needs to be simplified.

Many plans and strategies have been made, or are being made, to meet the employment, housing, transport, environmental and social challenges faced by the city and county. There are Local Plans of the four District Councils and the Oxford City Council, the Oxfordshire 2050 Spatial Plan, the County Council Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, an updated Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (Stage 1), an Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy and many more. The recent consultation on the draft Oxford Economic Strategy listed 15 city and county strategies with which it needs to be aligned. The diagram overleaf shows some of the plans and strategies and how they fit together, on paper at least.

The Society keeps abreast of these plans and strategies: we attend meetings, respond to consultations and make personal contact with the key actors to exchange views. We have recently responded to the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan consultation, the Oxford Economic Strategy consultation and are now responding to the consultation on the County Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. We do this because we are sure that the quality of life in Oxford and the county depends on the quality of these plans and strategies.

But the current arrangements are confusing, inefficient and ineffective. The array of plans and strategies could be much simpler. **First, it would be helpful if there was a clear understanding of what is a plan and what is a strategy.** There are many ways of defining these. For the sake of argument, let's say that a plan shows us the destination we hope or want to reach and a strategy tells us how to reach the destination. Looked at this way the Oxfordshire Vision is a plan – it provides a target (the centre of the diagram) for strategies to achieve. The economic, environmental and social plans, strategies, frameworks in the diagram are all, in effect, strategies – they tell us how to get to the overall destination.

Second, there are far too many strategies. Effective strategies integrate their economic, environmental and social components and integration would reduce the number of strategies. For example, the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan (that we would call a strategy and which acknowledges medium-term employment and housing development commitments and identifies longer-term distributions of employment and housing development) should include at least key elements of the local transport and connectivity plan and the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, and some of the other plans and strategies in the diagram.

County-wide planning ... (continued)



Image courtesy of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (as presented at the OCS debates How can we ensure good growth in Oxfordshire, May 2021)

Third, **the strategies are unnecessarily complex**. To respond to the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan, Oxford Infrastructure Strategy and current Local Transport and Connectivity Plan consultations it was essential to understand: the level of employment and housing growth committed to 2035/40 (to meet committed growth in existing district and city local plans); what level of employment and housing development is being assumed for the period to 2050; if the locations of employment and housing in the committed local plans are being serviced adequately by the current and new transport plans and by the Stage 1 Infrastructure Strategy; and what are the longer-term transport plans and Stage 2 Infrastructure Strategy to service employment and housing areas to 2050. But this basic information is hard to find in the over-long and over-complex reports. Clear presentation of these crucial details is necessary for and by the district, city and county councils and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership – and importantly for meaningful discussion with community and interest groups and the public.

Fourth, **the administration of the preparation and implementation of the integrated plans/strategies needs to be**

simpler. The agreed Future Oxfordshire Partnership's functions are: to coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits; support the development of local planning policy that meets the UK Government's stated aim of net zero carbon by 2050, and contributes towards biodiversity gain while embracing the changes needed for a low carbon world; and seek to secure funding in the pursuit of these aims and oversee the delivery of related work programmes delegated to it by the constituent local authority members. It does this by overseeing the delivery of projects that the councils of Oxfordshire are seeking to deliver collaboratively.

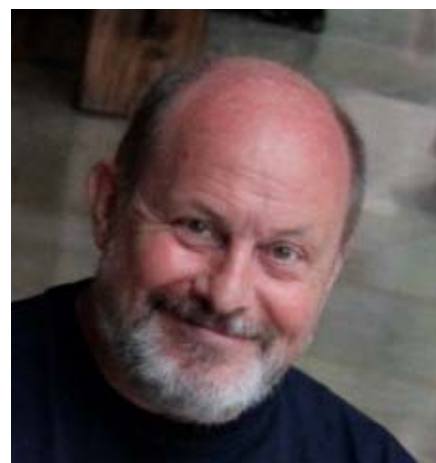
The agreed functions of the Partnership are what is needed, but integration of strategies is not yet as effective as it needs to be: organisational and institutional innovation is needed to integrate technical teams.

Fifth, **we need a continuous process of adjustments to the plans and frequent refocusing of strategies**. We are in an era of fast-moving major economic, environmental and social change and an iterative and continuous **process** of adjustments to respond to changes would be appropriate.

Sixth, **integrated planning at local level is not helped by the present arrangements at national level**. For example, plans for industry, transport, infrastructure and housing are drawn up with little regard for one another. There are conflicts within and between policy documents, inadequate recognition of the links between development planning and transport planning, lack of integration across government departments and between central and local government. These shortcomings are colossally problematic. Current consideration of planning reforms could address these kinds of problems.

'Good development' is what we want to see in Oxford and Oxfordshire. That requires integrated employment, housing, transport, environment (including climate change) and social policies to be conceived, designed and delivered iteratively across relevant areas, with public engagement. We're making progress but we need to do more, and urgently.

Ian Green
Chairman



CONTENTS

- 1–2 Why we need simpler county-wide planning
- 3 Addressing inequality
- 4 Blue Plaques in 2021 / Volunteers
- 5 ROQ: the humanities building
- 6–7 Reducing traffic in our city
- 8 Transport Group's report
- 9 On being High Sheriff
- 10–11 Programme April–July 2022
- 12 AGM / OxClean Spring Clean / Legacy / Contacts

Addressing inequality in our communities

Gillian Coates reports on our newest initiatives

We have become involved in a new partnership and set up our own working group to consider what role we can play in reducing inequality in our city region.

One of the Society's aims, Aim 3, states that we will **"cooperate with Oxford's residents' associations and civic societies nationally to develop, and campaign for, community-led solutions to shared problems including engaging with diverse/hard to reach communities"**.

Oxford and Oxfordshire are among the fastest-growing local economies in the UK but also among the least equal. For example, the male residents of North Oxford live, on average, eight years longer than men in the south of the city, while for women the gap is almost seven years. This is totally unacceptable. Our remit is to examine what fundamental structural changes may be needed to ensure future growth delivers benefits to **all** residents and serves to narrow the inequalities gap.

So, it was the most natural step for us to become involved with an **Oxford Strategic Partnership** initiative concerning inequality. The **Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP)** is part of a county partnership of organisations who have come together to develop an inclusive economy agenda countywide. OIEP plans to launch a **Charter scheme** so that businesses and residents can pledge commitment and resource to the work of levelling up. Core members are drawn from statutory services (Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, National Health Service, Thames Valley Police). Further members are invited representatives of key organisations and partnerships who have a significant contribution to make in delivering the vision for Oxford.

Our Chair, Ian Green, sits on the Steering Group and we have representation from our Executive Committee on the

working groups focusing on Educational Attainment (Margaret Maden), Place-Based Interventions (Thelma Martin) and Inclusive Employers (Louise Thomas).

The remit of each working group is to focus on perceived problem issues and to offer solutions by the use of case studies and existing datasets. The groups will also consider how any proposed interventions will have a real impact on outcomes and what added value is offered. OIEP will consider formal proposals from these groups and will consider specific funding implications. To date there are no outcomes to report as the initiative is very much work in progress.

Alongside our involvement with OIEP, we have set up our own working group, **Oxford Community Impact Group (OCIG)** which I have agreed to chair. Part of the work of OCIG is to look broadly at what communities are doing now to address inequality. To this end we have designed and issued a survey for resident and community groups. As we aim to reach as many of these organisations as possible, **we would welcome responses from our readership who are in touch with, or represent, a local group.** The survey is on our website www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk/communities-survey/

We anticipate the data we collect will be invaluable to the work of OIEP and will also put the Society in touch with a greater number of associations and communities in the City.

The Society offers small grants (up to £500) to support projects led by community groups that help us meet our aims. See our website for details: www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk/what-we-do/ocs-grant-scheme/

Every year the Rose Hill community turns out in force to support OxClean Spring Clean. OxClean has been very successful in helping to create or reinforce a sense of community right across the city. Our new initiative aims to look strategically at how we help to address inequality between the city's neighbourhoods.

Photo courtesy of Rose Hill Community Centre

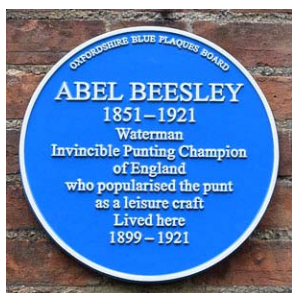


Blue Plaques: still going strong!

Eda Forbes looks back at 2021

Despite the pandemic, the Blue Plaques Board was able to unveil five new plaques in the year.

It was a pleasure to honour two Oxford townsmen. **Thomas Henry Kingerlee (1843–1928)**, prolific Oxford builder and twice Mayor, was honoured at the **River Hotel**, his home 1889–1905. He built swathes of suburban housing as the city expanded, as well as many notable public buildings.



Number 4 Upper Fisher Row was home to a colourful local figure, the waterman **Abel Beesley (1851–1921)**, invincible Professional Punting Champion of England for 13 years until he voluntarily stood down. He trained undergraduates in the art of punting and helped to establish it as a

popular leisure activity in Oxford.

In **Thame** we recognised **Frank Howard Kirby VC (1871–1956)** at **18 High Street** where he was born, the son of an ironmonger. He gained the VC in the Boer War while serving as corporal in the Royal Engineers. After transferring to the fledgling air force in WWI, he ended his career as a group captain.

We were delighted to add more women to our pantheon. **Grace Hadow (1875–1940)** was commemorated at **7 Fyfield Road**. She was an academic, suffragist, pioneer of rural community services (while Secretary of Barnett House), and promoter of women's role and adult education. She helped to found the National Federation of Women's Institutes, serving as Vice Chairman until her death and was Principal of the Society of Oxford Home Students, now St Anne's College, 1929–1940.

Violet Butler (1884–1982) was a social reformer, researcher and activist concerned with housing conditions, job opportunities and prospects for women. She pioneered and directed social work training at Barnett House, founded as a town and gown initiative in 1914. The plaque adorns **14 Norham Gardens**

where she was born into an old academic family and lived for much of her life. The photo shows her family at the unveiling.

Photo courtesy of Stephanie Jenkins



How many does it take to run the Society?

The short answers are 'more than you might think' and 'always room for more'!

One thing that we rarely refer to in this newsletter is the people-power that drives the organisation. **We're proud to say that we have about 105 volunteers** (with some double counting in this figure as, for example, our energetic Chair is a member of several groups). Between them the volunteers support the Executive Committee plus no fewer than seven working groups. We can't thank them enough.

It means that a high proportion of our membership is active in the Society and says a great deal about how members are inspired by our cause and by the people who lead it. And of course there are many who relish the opportunity to pursue a personal interest whether that's policy-making or photography. Many of our working groups have arisen as a result of someone's passion, **OxClean** being one such group, founded 15 years ago by the indefatigable Rosanne Bostock.



Liz Grosvenor, shown here, is one of our longest-serving volunteers, having taken on the key role of Membership Secretary back in 2005. Liz says: "I was looking for something interesting to do in retirement and I thought I'd give this a try. I'm still involved because I enjoy the work but most of all I enjoy the company and being part of a team."

If you'd like to join in, please look out for 'vacancies' at www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk/membership/volunteers. Currently we are looking for an **Assistant Webmaster**, newcomers to join the **Programme Group** (see also page 10), and helpers for the **OxClean** team. Or ask us about starting a **new group** to tackle something that ignites your enthusiasm.

We'd like to assure those members who definitely don't want to volunteer that we value your support too. Our strength comes in part from our numbers and we can't have too many supporting us from the side lines! A sincere thank you for your loyalty to the Society.

The last piece of the ROQ jigsaw

Gillian Coates reports on the Planning Group

The Planning Group welcomes the plans for the new humanities building in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter.

Of all the major developments the Group has looked at in the last few months, and there have been many, the University's plans for a new humanities building to accommodate the dispersed elements of the Faculty are the most exciting. Made possible by a generous gift to the University from Stephen A Schwarzman (the chief executive of Blackstone, one of the world's largest private equity firms) the building will be constructed on the empty plot between the Mathematical Institute and the Blavatnik School of Government. Both these buildings are modern in design and very different from what is planned for humanities.

The Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities will be a four-storey structure designed to serve as the new home for the entire family of the humanities. It will also include a new Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence, the Oxford Internet Institute and a new library. While retaining an architectural style which is reminiscent of much of the old college and University buildings, the design draws out architectural elements from its massing and scale to its colonnaded frontage. Using a combination of traditional and modern materials, ranging from honey-coloured stone and matching brick to triple-glazed windows, the building is designed to age well and integrate with the ROQ.

Opinions on style will vary and the Planning Group was divided on preferences for classical vs brutal vs innovative modern, but what the building can offer to both the University and the public is to be applauded. Aside from the modest Holywell Music Room and the uncomfortable Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford lacks a decent-sized, purpose-built concert hall. The new building will fill this gap as it contains a 500-seat concert hall, a 250-seat theatre and a 100-seat Black Box lab to be used for experimental forms of performance.

The site for the new building with the Observatory on the right

Photo courtesy of the University



The new humanities building, designed by Hopkins Architects, will follow a classical design and incorporate many features to ensure that it is environmentally sustainable

Image courtesy of Hopkins Architects

Gone will be the ugly 1960s buildings, the 'temporary' portakabin buildings which were anything but. Over the years they have been replaced by modern, some would say controversial and unattractive buildings. But the important thing is the site will be fully utilised and not just by the University. Provided all goes to plan the Centre will open in the academic year 2024-25.

A missed opportunity?

But there is something that has been overlooked in the completion of the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter. A much-loved building sits on the boundary of the site. This is St Paul's Church, no longer consecrated and for some years running as Freud's Café. This is a Grade II listed building but it is in a state of considerable disrepair.

The opportunity for this building to be incorporated into the Schwarzman project is ripe for the taking. In very much the same way as the University adapted St Luke's Chapel in the grounds of the Infirmary as a meeting and conference venue, St Paul's could serve a similar function. But there needs to be a willingness for this to happen and to date neither the University nor Mr Freud has been receptive to suggestions. Much has changed in the recent past and perhaps attitudes will change. **We will be asking the Council to survey its condition.**

What do readers think about St Paul's? Drop a line to the Editor (see the back page for our address.)

Read more about the planned uses of the building at www.schwarzmancentre.ox.ac.uk/About

Reducing traffic in our city ...

Peter Headicar, our Special Advisor on transport, sums up the issues

Traffic on our city roads has reached unsustainable levels with congestion and air pollution costing us dearly, not to mention the toll on the planet. Our local councils must take some difficult decisions. Are we ready for them?

Surveys of our members regularly reveal that 'traffic reduction' would most improve people's quality of life. What is not known is whether this is on the basis of improving members' own experience as drivers or other road users, the enjoyment of their own street or the good of the planet!

This illustrates the different perspectives which can be taken on traffic reduction – itself an objective which can be pursued at levels as diverse as national motoring taxation at one extreme and bollards installed at the end of one's street at the other.

In local debates any proposal is likely to evoke responses reflecting these different perspectives. Even as individuals we are not entirely consistent – arguing to protect the interests of, say, motorists (or residents) in some situations and those of the environment in others.

Council policies

In principle the policy stance adopted by the County Council (as highway and traffic authority) is clear. In its 2016 Local Transport Plan 4 it asserted that population growth meant that, in terms of the physical operation of the network alone, traffic reduction was necessary on a per capita basis if (poor) conditions were not to worsen further. More recently national and local adoption of net zero targets for carbon emissions have given added impetus to traffic reduction to bolster the gains from transitioning to electric vehicles.

Over 40,000 people commute into Oxford each day and the majority of them drive. How to persuade more drivers to take the train, bus or cycle for all or part of their journey?
Photo courtesy of Roddy Maddocks



Traffic reduction can be pursued by a combination of 'sticks' (to prevent or discourage car use) and 'carrots' to encourage use of alternative modes. For several decades we have been familiar with such a combination to contain traffic volumes in Oxford city centre. This has been achieved mainly by parking controls and charges on the one hand and bus priority measures on the other, plus physical restrictions on individual streets. Some features (such as residents' parking zones) have permeated suburban areas but we have now reached the point where a more comprehensive approach needs to be considered.

In 2019 the County Council published and conducted initial consultation on a package of such measures labelled **Connecting Oxford***. Two fall into the 'stick' category:

- a set of 'traffic filters' (restriction points for most types of vehicles) at key locations around the city centre designed to eliminate or divert cross-town movements
- a workplace parking levy (WPL) on larger employers throughout the 'Eastern Arc' of the city intended to reduce private off-street parking provision and/or the passing on of a charge to deter commuting motorists.

In the 'carrot' category the traffic reduction on main radial roads resulting from the filters is expected to improve bus journey speeds, reliability and operating costs. Revenue from the WPL will be used to fund provision of Park and Ride services and additional bus priority measures throughout the Eastern Arc.

Other more recent initiatives complement the Connecting Oxford package: Zero Emission Zones, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and Cycle Networks.

Zero Emission Zones (ZEZ)

A pilot zone promoted by the City Council covering a few minor central streets is due to be introduced in February 2022. Subject to the experience gained a wider central area zone is planned to follow. It will act like a congestion charging zone with exemptions for zero-emission vehicles. In its initial years when the majority of vehicles will be charged the scheme will have a restraining effect on cross-town car journeys as well as ones destined for central car parks. Given this potential overlap the Society has argued that the impact of the full ZEZ and the central traffic filters should be examined together.

There are also difficult practical issues to be resolved in terms of providing advance notice to visiting motorists of the complex mix of regulations covering movement and parking in and across the central area.

... a mix of sticks and carrots

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs)

At the onset of the pandemic local authorities were asked to facilitate walking and cycling using new Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders. In order to speed implementation these dispensed with formal consultation and approval procedures prior to introduction for a limited trial period. One initiative in the Cowley area created three residential enclaves known as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods from which through traffic has been excluded. These schemes are intended to improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists and to discourage residents from taking short trips by car.

The LTNs have provoked considerable controversy on account of inconvenience to resident motorists and delivery vehicles and the adverse effects of redistributing traffic on to perimeter roads. A decision is being made on whether to confirm the original Cowley schemes while trials are being introduced of three further schemes in East Oxford.

Cycle Networks

Furtherance of Active Travel as an end in itself and as an alternative to car use is also being pursued by the development of a two-tier network of cycle routes known as 'quickways' and 'quietways'. (The planned network for the city is shown in the Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan ** (LCWIP). Designs for quickways in East Oxford have recently been approved. They involve continuous lanes on most main roads which in many cases necessitate removal of residents' kerbside parking bays.



Even modest changes to junctions and roads can make cyclists feel more confident, as here on the junction of Beaumont Street and Worcester Street. Other measures however may be more controversial.

Photo courtesy of Roger Grosvenor

A 'chicken and egg' conundrum

Experience with LTNs in particular has highlighted the conundrum faced in seeking to reduce traffic by measures which involve the displacement of vehicles on to already congested roads. Public acceptance of such measures would be greatly eased if, on a broader scale, traffic volumes had already been reduced! Likewise motorists would be more willing to forgo some of their car use if buses were more reliable and frequent but this can only be achieved with less traffic!



Car parks on the sites of Headington's three major hospitals and the Old Road campus suck huge volumes of traffic into residential neighbourhoods. The proposed Workplace Parking Levy aims to reduce this traffic with the revenue supporting new Park & Ride services as reasonable alternatives.

Photo courtesy of Roddy Maddocks

Supporters of traffic restrictions point to the fact that, as was the case with the bus gate introduced in Oxford's High Street, not all the displaced traffic materialises on other routes – a phenomenon referred to as 'disappearing traffic'. However the trip suppression this represents is not without significance. A proportion may reasonably be dismissed as 'unnecessary'. But in other cases it reflects the inconvenience or hardship arising from disrupted travel patterns likely to underpin public opposition to any restriction scheme.

Barriers to integration

Ideally the various 'stick' and 'carrot' components of an overall strategy would be coordinated in time and place. In practice integration is inhibited by the piecemeal manner in which individual projects are funded – mostly via competitive bids to central government programmes which are typically time-limited and closely defined in their eligibility.

As a result actual delivery is inherently unpredictable and potentially haphazard and this uncertainty does not improve the climate in which the difficult process of public consultation is undertaken. Ultimately a successful outcome may depend less on the intrinsic merits of what is being proposed and more on identifying a pathway which can be delivered financially and politically. Given the proposals described here Oxford is poised to take significant steps forward if this can be achieved.

Peter Headicar, OCS Special Advisor (Transport) is a former Reader in Transport Planning at Oxford Brookes University and a member of the Society's Transport Group.

*Details can be viewed at www.connectingoxford.co.uk

** See Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet 17 March 2020, item 29

Seeing the potential

Andrew Pritchard reports on the Transport Group

The Transport Group is, as ever, pressing for significant change that will improve travel within the city region.

Canals and rivers are not often thought about as transport corridors, but we are concerned that the various local plans under consultation have ignored their potential. This may be because they fall between different organisations, so the Group is proposing to put forward a list of priorities that we can discuss with the authorities, particularly in view of major proposed regenerations, such as at Osney Mead.

We spoke again about the **Oxpens** development with the Bursar of Nuffield College, the CEO and the architect for the Oxford West End Development (OXWED). We asked why no account appeared to have been taken of connections to the station area and the Westgate, the poor links with Osney Mead and the imbalance between residential and industrial buildings that will add to commuting. We were also critical of the box-like structures proposed for many of the Oxpens buildings, which we felt contrasted unfavourably with the historic views of the spires and domes of the city. We were assured that our comments would be taken into account in the next stage of the plans.

The Woodstock Road proposals

We are among the stakeholders in the co-production of a scheme for the Woodstock Road to increase space for cycling and walking. Unfortunately there is not enough road space available for separate lanes for buses, cyclists and other traffic. Dedicated bus lanes would mean that cyclists and pedestrians have to share some space.

In our comments we also noted that no attention had been paid to planned traffic reduction measures such as the ZEZ, nor to the effects of increased traffic from the many developments planned or in progress between Witney and Oxford North, and thus the proposals were premature. We also urged that the modelling takes account of traffic on the Woodstock and Banbury Roads together, rather than treating them separately.

Oxford's Economic Strategy: a curate's egg

This strategy (OES), drawn up by City Council, recommends five fundamental investments and all are related to transport: a new railway station, investment in the Cowley line extension, Connecting Oxford to reduce congestion, improved bus provision and major investment in active travel modes. We took part in the consultation on these proposals.

Of these, funding for the construction of a fifth platform to the west of the station and the rebuilding of the Botley Road bridge, expected in November 2021, was not included in the



Woodstock Road lacks the space to fully separate the traffic. We are involved in a project to identify the best compromise.

Photo courtesy of Tony Turton

autumn government spending statement or its Integrated Rail Plan. No progress has been made on the Cowley line. Details of the planned bus gates that are the key part of Connecting Oxford have not been released. The response to the County's funding proposals for the government's Bus Service Improvement Plan are still awaited, but were mainly concerned with reinstating services that had been cut earlier, and took no account of public wish for more frequent services. Meanwhile some bus services have been adjusted or reduced to take account of drops in ridership due to Covid-19. Better provision for cyclists along the Botley Road is (still) a work in progress.

The OES, like the latest version of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan*, on which we shall be commenting, lacks detailed targets and timescales. It can hardly be called a plan in the normal sense, rather a list of aspirations and policies. It is also unclear how it relates to other plans such as the Oxfordshire Local Plan 2050.

A welcome offer from the University

We recently met the Vice-Chancellor for Planning of Oxford University, who told us that the **University is willing to fund a rail halt for their Begbroke development**, and also a feasibility study for a privately-financed **Oxford to Witney rail link**, both of which we encouraged.

**The consultation on this plan ends on 16 March and we urge members to take part: letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ltcp*

On being the High Sheriff of Oxfordshire

Imam Monawar Hussain reflects on an extraordinary year

Monawar Hussain, one of our four Vice Presidents, looks back on his year in the historic role of High Sheriff.

It has been a huge honour to serve as the High Sheriff of one of the most wonderful counties in the UK. I was brought up in a home which inculcated respect and affection for the Royal family, so words fail to convey the sense of pride and joy I and my family, friends and community felt on my appointment. This was after all a Royal appointment!

In England, High Sheriffs serve for a year and the role is now largely ceremonial (and unpaid). With a focus on supporting charitable aims, the office holder chooses a theme for the year. Clearly my focus had to further my work to promote more inclusive communities. If we are to create thriving communities, we must ensure that all our communities feel they have a stake in society. This is one of the reasons why I felt it was important to appoint seven High Sheriff's Chaplains rather than one, to recognise and celebrate the rich diversity of faiths and cultures in Oxfordshire.

There were a few 'butterflies in the stomach' moments as I approached my Shrieval year, but the support I received was invaluable. Listening to stories of how High Sheriffs, whose years had begun with the disruption and uncertainties of Covid-19, had successfully negotiated the challenges with stoicism and innovation – Amanda Ponsonby, my predecessor being one of them – was inspiring.

My swearing-in ceremony had to be a 'virtual' event because of the pandemic but that allowed me to have nearly 350 guests representing many voluntary groups and the public sector from across the county.

Remembering Covid-19's victims

My first major event was to organise the Thames Valley Multi-Faith Service in remembrance of the victims of Covid-19 and

their families. This was delivered with Shrieval partners and Lord Lieutenancies of the Thames Valley. It drew together leaders from across the region – civic, judiciary, health, police, faith, military, voluntary sectors, to name a few – around 200 people in the beautiful surroundings of Dorney Lake, generously provided by Eton College (where I work as a Muslim Tutor). The deeply moving and reflective service included a powerful contribution from Sam Foster, Chief Nurse, Oxford University Hospitals.

Celebrating Oxfordshire's heroes

I was guided by two insights during the pandemic. First, my direct experience as a Muslim Chaplain at Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. I witnessed colleagues at the start of the pandemic, in the most difficult and challenging circumstances, caring for patients with compassion, kindness and professionalism. Second, reading a 'superheroes' book during lockdown with our seven-year-old. In this book superheroes were 'ordinary' people – doctors, nurses, police, firefighters, delivery drivers, postal workers and the like. Few of these get the recognition they deserve.

The theme of 'heroes' has served me well. Following the awards ceremony for Covid heroes, which was a huge success, I announced that I would next celebrate Climate Action Heroes, individuals and groups who have made a real contribution to tackling this global challenge. The awards ceremony for these was on 21 February, with interfaith and community heroes awards providing the culmination of my year.

As I near the conclusion of my time in office, my tweets alone have been seen some 400,000 times and much of the credit goes to my daughters. Thank you to all who've supported me, especially the Under Sheriff, Shrieval Remembrancer and the Communications team at Oxfordshire County Council, who've been outstanding.



A service held in remembrance of those who died of Covid-19 in the Thames Valley brought together representatives of many families, communities, public services and voluntary groups

Photo courtesy of Marion Mason

Booking details

Booking made easier

We are now using Eventbrite to take bookings for all our tours and visits.

Please go to the web links given below to book your place on these visits and pay for them. If you find we have reached our maximum capacity for a particular event, please make use of the waitlist function in Eventbrite.

Bookings are taken on a first come – first served basis but the lists will stay open until seven days before the event. If you are offered a ticket via the waitlist you have 72 hours to claim it. A joint member may book two tickets.

You can cancel your booking up to 30 days before the event and get a partial refund – Eventbrite takes a small percentage of the fee. After that no refunds can be offered.

If you book and cannot attend the event, we urge you to cancel as soon as you can so that someone else can take your place. Our events are popular and we almost always have a waiting list.

If you can't access a computer or smartphone to book via Eventbrite, please contact the Society so that we can arrange an alternative booking route for you. Note we no longer have an 'office' phone but you can contact us by email events@oxcivicsoc.org.uk or by post (see the back page). Please tell us which event/s you are booking for, how many tickets you need, and enclose a cheque payable to Oxford Civic Society (one cheque for each event).

Please note: our guided tours and visits are open to MEMBERS ONLY. If you book a ticket and are NOT a fully-paid-up member you will be required to join.

| Event | Price | Link |
|--|-------|---|
| Dorchester: a guided tour Sunday 24 April 2.30pm | £9 | https://bit.ly/ocs-dorchester |
| Science Oxford: a visit Thursday 5 May 6.30pm | £9 | https://bit.ly/ocs-sciox |
| Didcot Railway Centre: a visit Wednesday 15 June 2pm | £9 | https://bit.ly/ocs-didcot |
| Wadham College: a visit Thursday 28 July 2pm | £8 | https://bit.ly/ocs-wadham |

Could you be a Programme Groupie? We would welcome more members on the Programme Group to help plan and organise the events. We meet three times a year usually and do much of the work by email. New ideas about talks and places to visit are always needed. If you're interested please contact Ian Salusbury for an informal chat: events@oxcivicsoc.org.uk

OCS Calendar

'Cut out and keep'

April – July 2022

*ticketed events

18 – 20 March and 25 – 27 March

OxClean Spring Clean – read more on the OxClean website
www.oxclean.org.uk/

Tuesday 22 March 7.30pm

AGM and open forum
Rewley House

Wednesday 6 April * 2pm

The regeneration of Blackbird Leys,
a visit

Thursday 21 April 6.30pm

UK Biobank: a bold experiment in health research, a talk by Chief Scientist **Professor Naomi Allen**
Magdalen College Auditorium

Sunday 24 April * 2.30pm

Dorchester: a guided tour, led by Malcolm Ains

Thursday 5 May * 6:30pm

Science Oxford, a visit to Stansfeld Park, Headington

Tuesday 10 May 8pm

Curating the Pitt Rivers Museum a talk by the Director, **Professor Laura van Broekhoven**
Rewley House

Wednesday 15 June * 2pm

Didcot Railway Centre, a visit led by Laurence Waters

Wednesday 29 June 8pm

Morris' motopolis: the transformation of Oxford, a talk by **Simon Wenham**
Rewley House

Thursday 28 July * 2pm

Wadham College, a visit

Do bring a friend to our talks. If they wish they can join the Society at our welcome desk.



Programme April – July 2022

Talks – all welcome

Talks are free and don't need to be booked ahead, just turn up. We're assuming it will be possible to meet in person but will update you by e-bulletin if the situation changes.

UK Biobank: a bold experiment in health research

Thursday 21 April at 6.30pm (note earlier time)

Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street



UK Biobank was established to improve health by studying a huge cohort – half a million people – enabling scientific discoveries to be made. **Naomi Allen**, Professor of Epidemiology at the Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford, has been involved in the project since 2011, becoming Chief Scientist in 2019. She will describe

how the vast amount of data collected on genetic and life-style factors is casting new light on the science of health.

Curating the Pitt Rivers Museum

Tuesday 10 May at 8pm

Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square

Professor Laura van Broekhoven, Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum and Professor of Museum Studies, Ethics and

Material Culture at the University of Oxford, will talk on the curatorial work undertaken at the Museum to keep this unique and well-loved Oxford institution relevant today.

Morris' motopolis: the transformation of Oxford

Wednesday 29 June at 8pm

Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square

The old adage that things move slowly in Oxford changed completely when William Morris relocated his factory to the eastern suburbs of the city in 1912. His business became the biggest producer of cars in the country in the interwar period. **Simon Wenham**, a part-time tutor with Oxford University's Continuing Education Department, will explore how Oxford was transformed in the aftermath of becoming the fastest growing city in the country.



Members-only visits and guided tours

Tickets are needed for these events: tickets on a first come - first served basis. See page 10 for details.

Dorchester: a guided tour

Sunday 24 April, 2.30pm (note change of date)

Dorchester is a jewel of a town with its fine medieval abbey and 16th–18th century houses. **Professor Malcolm Airs**, recently awarded the OBE for services to the historic environment, will lead this two-hour tour.

Science Oxford: a visit to Stansfeld Park

Thursday 5 May, 6:30pm

A visit to Oxford Trust's new award-winning building in Headington, which offers lab space for start-up companies and innovative science teaching for schoolchildren. Our visit will include a short talk, a chance to experience 'hands on' science and a walk in the park's 15 acres of woodland.

Didcot Railway Centre – Living Museum of the GWR

Wednesday 15 June, 2pm

The Centre includes Grade II listed buildings and the largest collection of



Great Western locomotives, carriages and wagons.

Laurence Waters, the Honorary Photographic Archivist for the Great Western Society, will lead a tour of the site, taking us behind the scenes to see the Trust library building and archive. Steam trains will be running and everyone will be able to have a ride!

Wadham College, University of Oxford

Thursday 28 July, 2pm

The focus of this visit will be the new state-of-the-art Undergraduate Centre, a recognition of the importance of social spaces in today's universities, plus the Locke Access Centre. This was built to accommodate Wadham's extensive access programme including summer schools and aspiration days.

Join us for our AGM and open forum!

Vernon Porter issues a warm welcome

Our 53rd AGM will be held on Tuesday 22 March at 7.30pm at Rewley House in Wellington Square.

The AGM's formal business will be as brief as possible to allow for an open forum, giving you an opportunity to raise issues of concern or ask questions. We hope the bar will be open after the meeting to carry on the conversation in relaxed surroundings.

Please have this agenda with you along with the Annual Review of 2021 which was mailed with this newsletter. The Review is our report to members.

Copies of the minutes of the 2021 AGM and the full accounts for 2021 are available on the website or from me:

Vernon Porter, Hon Secretary, email: info@oxcivicsoc.org.uk
67 Cunliffe Close, Oxford OX2 7BJ

Agenda

- 1 President's welcome
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of AGM held on 18 March 2021
- 4 Matters arising from the minutes
- 5 Annual report
- 6 Accounts for 2021
- 7 Vote of thanks to retiring Officers and Trustees
- 8 Election of Officers for 2022-23
- 9 Election of Committee Members for 2022-23
- 10 Any other business of which notice has been given
- 11 Open forum

Still time to register for Spring Clean!

OxClean's annual litter pick will be held over two weekends: **18–20 March** and **25–27 March** and we can take more registrations. You can take part as an individual or register as a group for a two-hour litter pick in an area of your choice. Please register via OxClean's website where you can also see a map showing which areas we've already got covered – oxclean.org.uk

We lend the equipment you need and the City Council picks up the waste. By the way, it's great for kids who just love the mini-litter pickers and picking up tiny things! These grown-ups (Marston Wombles) look happy too!



An unexpected legacy

We are most grateful to Mr Rees, the Administrator of the estate of the late Mary Rees, a long-standing member, who has made a substantial donation in her memory. We are now considering how best to use this welcome gift. If you knew Mary and have suggestions please get in touch.

As a charity dependent on the generosity of members we welcome donations and legacies. You can now donate via our website: www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk/membership/

OCS is a society for people who care about Oxford, want to enjoy it fully and help shape its future.

Membership costs £15 (£25 for two people at the same address) with concessions for students and residents' associations. Corporate rates on application. You can join online or contact Liz Grosvenor at membership@oxcivicsoc.org.uk

Oxford Civic Society

67 Cunliffe Close, Oxford OX2 7BJ

info@oxcivicsoc.org.uk | chairman@oxcivicsoc.org.uk

oxcivicsoc.org.uk | oxclean.org.uk
oxfordfutures.org.uk | oxfordwalks.org.uk

Letters to the Editor and photos can be sent to Hilary Bradley newsletter@oxcivicsoc.org.uk or by post to the above address.

 Follow @oxcivicsoc

Visions is published in March, July and November ISSN 2051-137X

We are a registered charity No. 1116739