

MINUTES of the 2022 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on Tuesday 22 March 2022 at 7.30pm
in Rewley House, Wellington Square.

<p>PRESENT: Sir Clive Booth (President, in the Chair); Margaret Maden (Vice President); Ian Green (Chairman); Gillian Coates (Vice Chairman); Richard Dodd (Hon Treasurer); Vernon Porter (Hon Secretary); Chris Church, Jim Girling, Liz Grosvenor, Penelope Lenon, Thelma Martin, Louise Thomas (trustees), Gillian Argyle, Peter Thompson (retiring trustees); Ian Salusbury (trustee-elect); and a further 19 members.</p>	
1	<p>President's Opening Remarks</p> <p>The President welcomed everyone to the Society's first in-person AGM since 2019. He noted that the papers for the meeting, including the Accounts and the Annual Review of the Society's activities, had been circulated in advance and made available on the Society's website well ahead of the meeting.</p>
2	<p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Received from Sarah Hendriks (trustee) and 14 other members.</p>
3	<p>Minutes of the AGM held on 18 March 2021</p> <p>The motion to accept the Minutes as an accurate record of the 2021 AGM was proposed by Gillian Coates and carried unopposed.</p>
4	<p>There were no Matters arising from the 2021 AGM Minutes</p>
5	<p>Chairman's Report</p> <p>Having been available for some time in the Annual Review, this was taken as read. The motion to accept the Report was proposed by Penelope Lenon and carried unopposed.</p> <p>The President paid tribute to Hilary Bradley, absent because of illness, for all her work on the Annual Review and the Society's other publications.</p>

<p>6</p>	<p>2021 Accounts</p> <p>Similarly available for some time, these were also taken as read.</p> <p>In response to a question from Stephen Brown, the Treasurer acknowledged that two elements in the balance sheet could be designated restricted funds. The larger of the two is a legacy from the estate of Keith Holly, a keen member of the Oxfordshire Pedestrians Association (OxPA) and the Ramblers Association, and a long-time supporter of Cutteslowe Park. OxPA, the intended recipient of the legacy, was unable to accept the money because it is not a registered charity, so the estate executed a Deed of Variation in OCS's favour. Although the family was content for OCS to spend the legacy as we saw fit, we feel a moral obligation to follow the wishes of OxPA and the monies are being disbursed in close consultation with them. A first £2,500 has been spent on improving walkways through the woods in Cutteslowe Park. Deborah Glass-Woodin added that OxPA is in protracted negotiations with the City Council over the installation of benches.</p> <p>The smaller sum comprises funds raised in excess of immediate requirements through our JustGiving appeal after the theft of our litter-pickers. They will be spent on OxClean equipment in due course.</p> <p>The motion to accept the Report and Accounts was proposed by Ian Green and carried unopposed. Richard Dodd was sincerely thanked for all his work as Treasurer.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Votes of thanks</p> <p>The Chairman was delighted that, although stepping down as trustees, both Gillian Argyle and Peter Thompson would continue to be involved with the Society's activities, and he thanked them both for past and future service.</p> <p>He was very pleased that Gillian could attend this AGM in person, as she had not enjoyed Zoom meetings. Hers has been a kindly and always positive voice in the Executive Committee's discussions. She is also a great asset at the Society's public events, where she welcomes arrivals with warmth and enthusiasm.</p> <p>Peter Thompson has been a formidable trustee, and served with distinction as Chairman for some seven years. He was the driver of the Society's important reports in 2013-14, and continues to contribute a great deal to the work of the Planning, Futures and Transport Groups.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Election of officers for 2022-23</p> <p>The four officers of the Society (Ian Green – Chairman; Gillian Coates – Vice Chairman; Richard Dodd – Hon Treasurer; Vernon Porter – Hon Secretary) were re-elected unopposed.</p>

<p>9</p>	<p>Election of Executive Committee Members for 2022-23</p> <p>Seven existing Committee Members (Chris Church, Jim Girling, Liz Grosvenor, Sarah Hendriks, Penelope Lenon, Thelma Martin, Louise Thomas) and one new member (Ian Salusbury, current leader of the Programme Group) were elected unopposed.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>The meeting gladly endorsed the Chairman’s proposal that Peter Thompson be appointed an additional Vice President of the Society, alongside Tony Joyce, Margaret Maden, Monawar Hussain and Richard Venables.</p> <p>The President thanked the Hon Secretary for his work setting up and managing meetings, including this AGM, and Penelope Lenon for her clerical support to the Executive Committee and work on press relations.</p> <p>The formal part of the meeting was closed at 7.55pm and the floor opened to general discussion.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Open Forum</p> <p>Thanking the President for his expeditious conduct of the AGM, the Chairman started discussions by reiterating the Society’s four aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to <u>influence</u> developments in the city, largely through the work of the Futures, Planning and Transport Groups; 2. to <u>inform</u> the membership of those developments, largely through the work of the Communications and Programme Groups; 3. to <u>cooperate</u> with Residents’ Associations and other community groups (including engaging with our diverse / hard to reach communities) and to engage with civic societies nationally – something we are trying to strengthen, not least through engagement with the City Council’s Oxford Inclusive Economy Partnership, shifting focus towards environmental concerns and inclusivity; 4. to <u>learn</u> from other cities in the UK and abroad. <p>Evelyn Sanderson noted that these aims fit well with work by TOES (Transforming Oxford’s Economic Strategy) which is looking at “doughnut economics” as a means of ensuring a vibrant society that includes everyone. Devon and Cornwall have both adopted such a framework of holistic and inclusive decision-making. Ian Green was aware of something similar in Amsterdam, and confirmed his interest in being involved. He noted that planners were struggling to integrate climate change issues within existing systems.</p> <p>Hugo Brunner observed that the emphasis on local decision-making tends to ignore the fact that local authorities are heavily dependent on central government decisions and funding. Ian Green agreed, but noted that Civic Voice are beginning to wield</p>

more influence through Select Committee appearances and similar. He also reported that OCS is campaigning for planning reforms to enable a form of Land Value Capture, something which is hinted at in the Government's White Paper on "Levelling Up". Nevertheless, he envisaged difficult times ahead: the White Paper discusses devolution for the north but not the south, and the suggestion that Oxfordshire might be made bigger and subject to a single unitary authority was very worrying. His work with Louise Thomas on Historic Towns had shown that such towns lose focus without their own administrative body. It would be necessary to build an evidence-base to demonstrate the advantages of perhaps a smaller central area unitary authority.

Deborah Glass-Woodin commented that the present City Council is also very centrist in its approach. There is much talk about consultations, but few participate – and the exercises often seem designed to confirm decisions already taken. At the same time, they seem to confuse inclusivity with equitability. Louise Thomas agreed that, as work on the Historic Towns project has shown, people tend not to engage with planning systems because decisions appear already to have been taken. Ian Green was encouraged that the new County Council is starting to address the problem of poor communications. But in the meantime, a notable example is the way in which traffic reduction measures such as the Workplace Parking Levy and the Zero Emission Zone are being introduced without either sufficient explanation or adequate alternatives: the population are unlikely to be won over by too much stick and too little carrot. Margaret Maden felt there was little recognition of the differences between people's needs: City Councillor Tom Hayes tends to focus on walkers and cyclists to the exclusion of the other 80% of the population. Although recognising the need to protect the city's heritage, Chris Church felt the main problem was simply resistance to change.

Peter Thompson cited OxClean as a great example of successful engagement with the populace and wondered whether the Society might use it as a springboard for greater outreach. Gillian Argyle took the opportunity of Hugo Brunner's attendance to remind the meeting of his key role in establishing OxClean; he in turn acknowledged the role played by Rosanne Bostock, and the enthusiasm with which OCS embraced the initiative. Gillian Coates reported that numbers registered for this month's Spring Clean event were slightly down on last year, but that there were more people going out at other times. She further mentioned the Society's recently-formed Communities Impact Group, and hoped to pursue discussions with Evelyn Sanderson after the meeting. Chris Church noted that OxClean attracted younger and more diverse people than the Society's other events, and wondered how they might be encouraged to participate in more activities. He also noted that discussion after the recent talk on river bathing had turned political in an interesting way, and perhaps there might be greater scope for this. Ian Salusbury acknowledged that there was a certain disconnect between the programme and the aims and working groups, but speakers on planning and transport issues were hard to find.

At 8.30pm, the Chairman drew the discussion in the hall to a close, but encouraged members to continue discussions informally in the bar.