

Friends of South Hinksey

Chairman's Annual Review 2008 Annual General Meeting Tuesday 28th October 2008

The Friends of South Hinksey are a group of local people dedicated to preserve the distinctive character of the Parish, to promote the provision of suitable amenities and to encourage a community spirit amongst it's populace. It is non-political, non-religious, non-racial and non-profit making and all parishioners are deemed to be members. We were reconstituted in 2003 after a period of dormancy with a new steering committee, comprising seven members all of whom are still members. We prepared a Parish Plan for South Hinksey and published this in February 2005 listing 21 proposed actions. 2008 marks the end of a three-year programme to bring to fruition improvements to the Parish environs. We have seen our role as encouraging other authorities, councils and private land owners to meet parishioners' needs and as project managers to identify site potential, plan and design schemes and obtain funding and oversee projects to completion.

The successes achieved so far include setting up a parish website Southhinksey.org, establishing a communication network called Shinfo, supporting the regular publication of the Echo parish newsletter and producing a welcome pack for new parishioners. Much of this work has been headed by Linda Slater and we are most grateful to her.

The Community Woodland project at Chilswell Path was completed in March 2008 with the contractor planting over 2500 trees, paid for by grants obtained by FOSH from the Doris Field Foundation, the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment and the Forestry Commission. We also co-opted assistance from the Northmoor Trust, teenagers from Peers School, the North Hinksey CE schoolchildren and several of our own parishioners. A few trees were donated by interested friends. Maintenance will be needed from time to time and we have already organized ragwort removal - and grass cutting for the trails donated freely by Sunny one of our parishioners. Sincere thanks to him.

Peter and Richard have been working with Sustrans, under the auspices of the Parish Council, to get cycle ramps on the bridge over the railway on the Devil's Backbone path. A licence has been applied for from Network Rail and the outcome is

awaited. They have also been considering trying to establish a cycle path to North Hinksey via the Electric Road. This will be pursued if the ramps go ahead.

The cycle trail from Chilswell Path to Betty Lane requires approval from private owners and the Parish Council is currently pursuing this matter.

Extensive nature survey work has resulted in the publication of a recent report on the Birds of Chilswell Environs which are available here. A draft Nature Conservation Strategy for the Parish has been placed in the website so please inspect and feed back any views to us. This year we are conducting parish pond surveys and next year hedgerow surveys are planned. Once these are completed it is intended to publish a final version of the Nature Conservation Strategy in 2009.

Transport problems relating to speeding, air and noise pollution and access are now being dealt with by the Parish Council and we have requested to have 50 mph limits on the A34, 20 mph throughout the village and 30 mph on the hill - but we are subject to the whims of the Highways Agency and the County Council Transport Department.

You will be pleased to learn the proposed Oxford University Library Depository building was finally refused permission after appeal and no further news has been heard of the Olympic Rowing Lake, new electric pylons or wind turbines. The Parish Council will remain vigilant on planning matters especially as there is a current threat to make housing incursions into the Oxford Green Belt.

Peter Rawcliffe and his colleagues in the Oxford Flood Alliance, has been very active in making representations to the authorities throughout the year. They have made significant progress in identifying and getting action on three so-called pinch-points at Redbridge. Work is being carried out here over the next 3 months. They have now submitted further proposals to the Environment Agency, which include the clearing of Hinksey Stream between the village and Redbridge: the hope is that this will be included in plans for the next financial year.

Litter clean ups and fly posting removal were carried out by three workgroups of parishioners in the spring and representations were made to the Highways Agency and the County Council and Vale to clean up the heavy litter in the road ditches and stream courses. Some of this has been completed in recent weeks but the A34 work is still outstanding. Again the Parish Council is pursuing this matter.

Community land issues are still proceeding with the Oxford City Council to exchange uses, not ownership of parish owned land at Chilswell with land to the rear of the Village Hall for community use. Planning permission needs to be obtained.

Parking problems in the village, the proposed extension to the Chilswell Nature Reserve and the creation of a wetland reserve near the Pub car park are all matters still being pursued by the Parish Council.

A detailed review of the 21 actions from the Parish Plan will be posted on the website in the next few weeks to confirm progress made.

Substantial gains have been made from the Parish Plan exercise and we are all proud to have been part of this in FOSH. Outstanding issues referred to above are now being dealt with by the Parish Council and we feel we have achieved much of what we set out to do. Unless new projects can be identified and new people step forward FOSH can now take a well earned rest.

Clive Briffett, Chairman of the Friends of South Hinksey