

FEDORA

The Voice for Oxshott

Minutes of the fourth AGM of FEDORA - the Voice for Oxshott CIC held on
Wednesday 9th October 2024 at 7.00pm at the Royal Kent School,
Oakshade Road

1. Present

FEDORA Directors

- Anthony Wolfe (Chair & Treasurer) – meeting chair
- Ian Dilks (Planning)
- Mike Wheeler (Roads)
- Simon Harker (CSW)

- David Lewis, Surrey CC councillor

- Katie Hancock, Headmistress, Royal Kent School
- Jonathan Wade, National Highways

51 FEDORA Members and Supporters

2. Introduction- Anthony Wolfe

Anthony Wolfe welcomed the members present, the local councillors and Katie Hancock, Headmistress of Royal Kent School.

It was explained that the formalities of the meeting would be split into six elements:

- Formalities (two resolutions)
- The Chairman's Statement
- A vision of the future Oxshott community from pupils of Royal Kent School
- An update of progress with Junction 10 with a focus on restoration by Jonathan Wade, Project Manager from National Highways
- Overview of Roads – Ian Dilks
- Overview of Planning – Mike Wheeler

3. Quorum

As required in the Articles of Association of FEDORA - the Voice for Oxshott CIC, it was recorded that with some 47 members, and so more than 10 percent of the membership, the meeting was declared quorate.

4. Resolutions

Approval of Accounts

The accounts for FEDORA – the Voice for Oxshott CIC for the year ending 31st December 2023 were unanimously approved.

Re-election of Directors

The re-election of the current directors Ian Dilks, Simon Harker, Mike Wheeler and Anthony Wolfe was unanimously approved. It was noted that Mike Wheeler had given notice that he would be resigning in three months at the end of the 2024 calendar year.

5. Chairman's Statement – Anthony Wolfe

As suggested at this time last year, the new Government has significantly changed the challenges that the community will have to face.

With Elmbridge's Local Plan in the bin and the Inspectors recommendation that the Council look at building on parts of the Green Belt, our community and those of our neighbours across Elmbridge face difficult questions.

A key to agreeing a way forward will be the readiness of the various settlements across Elmbridge to face these questions without resorting to extreme NIMBYism, but working co-operatively and sharing the load.

Most of the local community will not argue against the need for more affordable housing. But there are very real challenges:

- how, in practice, that affordable housing is to be built
- the nature and density of that housing development
- its impact on the Green Belt
- its impact on the character of the various settlements
- and ensuring the much-needed infrastructure is secured prior to any build

Just one example of the issues to be faced is traffic on the A244: the implications of the scale that is being demanded of Elmbridge are significant. With the inevitable increase in the local population and the consequent rise in the volume of traffic, the impact on the A244 will be significant.

This is at a time when roads in and around Oxshott seem to be in a permanent state of being dug up.

Through a Freedom of Information request it has now been established that the A244 through Oxshott, from the A3 to the M25 roundabout exit between January 1st 2022 and August 5th 2024, (a TOTAL of 948 days) the total number of days where roadworks obstructed the free flow of traffic was more than 1000 – with utility companies responsible for roadworks for over 93% of that time.

On a more positive note, hopefully the development of Junction 10 of the M25 and A3 will be completed next year.

However, we will have to cope with the implications of the development of the large new village at Wisley.

Now for the other key point to raise tonight: volunteers

Anno Domini - none of us are getting any younger!

We need to ensure we have a dynamic and enthusiastic team to continue to ensure Oxshott's voice is heard and that FEDORA does not become moribund and just a talking shop.

It is coming to the time when the current leadership should be seeking to hand over to the next generation so that it:

- Benefits from that positive energy that comes from new blood, new commitment and new ideas
- Ensures the community of Oxshott is safeguarded
- Sustains the relevance of the organisation as the Voice for Oxshott.

CURRENTLY the TEAM

Although we are very grateful to the teams that distribute the magazine, the litter pickers and the Green Spaces team, in essence FEDORA is still only a small team – currently 8, soon to be 9 of us.

They are:

- Ian Dilks – Roads
- Mike Wheeler – Planning
- Deborah Chitty – Membership Secretary
- Simon Harker – Leader of Community Speed Watch.
- Lindy Wheeler – Green Spaces

In the past year we have had 3 notable additions to the FEDORA team:

Nick Shannon - Website

Maureen Dufficy- Advertising

And most recently, Melanie Bayliss – Co-ordinating the magazine distributors and taking responsibility for the emails sent out to both members and supporters.

I am also delighted that we now have 3 photographers

- Melanie Kaveh
- Michael de Glanville
- Colin Sheen

At the same time, we are saying good-bye and thank you to Mike Wheeler, Nix Birrell and Sandra Elmes.

Mike has done a special job:

- assisting local residents with individual planning issues
- providing real leadership on addressing issues with the local plan
- and liaising with other local bodies and our local councillors

Thank you, Mike, we all have a lot to thank you for.

Nix Birrell who has been our wonderful Editor of the “FEDORA” magazine but sadly is now stepping back as she moves away from Oxshott. She has been a force for good, re-energising the magazine, with a new look and feel and a clear identity. Thanks Nix, you will be sorely missed.

At the same time, our thanks to Sandra Elmes who has decided to retire from the distribution and production of the magazine. She has worked hand in glove with Nix in transforming the magazine and we are most grateful for everything she has contributed to FEDORA over the years.

So, despite the 3 additions, we are still short of team members in roles that most of which only require a limited time commitment:

1. Planning and development – to replace Mike
2. Magazine Editor and, separately Producer/publisher of the Magazine - the magazine is published twice a year, so these are not full-time roles.
3. We need a Company Secretary to take care of minutes of meetings and lodging the required annual forms at Companies House - a commitment of maybe an hour or two per month, at the most.
4. We are at a time when the team of magazine distributors needs refreshing. A good number have given long and loyal service but we now need the next generation to step forward. The commitment is just twice a year, with a walk that will take an hour of your time. Not a lot to ask.

If you feel you want to help the community of Oxshott, then please do not hesitate to step forward and come and have a chat.

Equally, I am aware that there are lot of you here tonight who have been stalwarts of the community over the years, so thank you for all you do.....but perhaps you can spread the word or talk to those who you think would be interested in helping us.

Your community needs you!

6. Vision of the future Oxshott community - pupils of Royal Kent School

Eight pupils from the Royal Kent School (“RKS”) spoke with an eloquence that did credit both to them and to their school about their hopes and concerns for the future of Oxshott.

Litter: They were disappointed about how much litter was being dropped around the village. It should be put in bins or taken home. They especially thanked those volunteers who went out and picked it up.

Speeding: There was far too much speeding around the village. There was even a lot of speeding outside their school even though a 20mph speed limit was in place. We should all remember that where children are around “Twenty is plenty”.

Dog Poo: We are lucky to have Oxshott Heath on our doorstep but why do dog walkers pile up bags of dog poo on top of the bins? If the bins are full, they should take their bag home and dispose of it there.

The Community Hub: The new Community Hub is great for activities for children but they are also looking forward to something being done soon to improve the Littleheath Recreation Ground.

RKS is a Green Flag School: They have been working on eco-friendly projects in particular on the theme of “Our Oceans, Our Future” about getting us all to use less single use plastic.

No Mow: RKS is leaving some of its grassy areas uncut to increase wildlife and general biodiversity. The children encourage others to do the same and also to think about putting up bird and bat boxes

The pupils concluded by expressing the hope that Oxshott would remain a safe, clean and friendly place in which to live both now and in the future. They thanked those who already volunteered to help in the community and encouraged others too to get involved.

7. An update of progress with Junction 10 with a focus on restoration -

Jonathan Wade, Project Manager, National Highways

Jonathan spoke about the major works being undertaken at junction 10 of the M25 and the particular issues that made this a particularly complex project. Paramount were environmental issues, in particular the need to safeguard nationally important habitats for woodlarks and nightjars and, insofar as these were affected, to provide compensatory habitats nearby.

Jonathan was aware of the concern over the loss of trees. Over 22 hectares had been cut down. However, he explained that these were non-native Scots pine that had been planted between the wars as a source of pits props for a now non-existent coal mining industry. Surrey had over the years lost 85% of its heath land and the removal of these trees and the top layer of soil has revealed the underlying sand and in it dormant heather seeds. This will enable the heathland to regenerate. There was, however, still a problem with encroaching bracken to be resolved.

The works at junction 10 and the widening of parts of the A3 involve the removal of old bridges and the installation of new wider bridges and gantries. Services such as gas mains that run alongside the highway also need to be re-sited. All these works are complicated by the sheer volume of traffic on the M25 and A3 and the existing high accident rate at this junction. National Highways and their contractor Balfour Beatty are very conscious of the need to keep traffic flowing and to reduce the risk of accidents both to road users and workers. To this end they have tried to keep road closures to a minimum by prefabricating as many bridge components as they can off-site in order to speed up the installation process.

It was noted that a copy of the slides used by Jonathan would be made available on the FEDORA website.

8. Roads – Ian Dilks

Ian Dilks reported that progress on various roads issues continued to be made. More detail would be in the forthcoming magazine but in summary:

- The 20mph speed limit is now in force with visible signs. Recent speed measurement shows it has been successful in reducing speeds in six of the seven measured sites. The greatest reduction is to the south of Oxshott, the lowest in Oakshade Road, particularly by the school.
- The “experimental” overnight HGV ban is operational and expected to become final by the end of the year. Feedback from residents shows it has been generally successful albeit the continuing works at J10 continue to divert more traffic through the village. Traffic volume measurement shows an increase in

recent years of almost 20% to the south of the village although this is much less than the increase on the A243 to Malden Rushett of over 50%.

- As Anthony Wolfe has already mentioned a recent Freedom of Information request by a resident has shown the extent of roadworks on the A244 which is an issue we will discuss with Surrey Highways.
- Sadly, there is little progress to report on improving footpaths.

Ian Dilks also noted that Surrey has recently introduced an easier way to report problems related to roads called Fix My Street. Further details will be in the forthcoming magazine.

9. Planning – Mike Wheeler

Mike Wheeler reported on the status of the Local Plan and the potential effect of the Government's planned housing policy reforms.

The Local Plan has stalled. The Government appointed Inspector challenged the soundness of the plan earlier this summer on the basis that the evidence of available sites did not support the ability to deliver sufficient new homes. Elmbridge BC therefore has a problem as to whether to come up within six months with a revised plan that conforms to the housing target or withdraw the plan and start afresh on a new plan. The former is regarded as impossible so unless dispensation is provided by MHCLG, it seems as if a new plan will be required.

The current housing target required by MHCLG is 650; this compares with a commitment of 450 in the draft Local Plan. But the Inspector has suggested a modified number of 850. If the Local plan is withdrawn, it is likely that there will be a new target calculated by reference to the revised methodology being promoted by MHCLG. That has the potential to increase the target significantly to 1,440 to which will need to be added a buffer of 20% to reflect past underperformance producing a revised target of 1,730. This is about four times higher than the average level of delivery over the last few years. Meeting this revised higher target will result in both greater urban densification and inevitably loss of Green Belt. With significant Green Belt around Oxshott, a major change to the local environment is likely, assuming that the capacity exists in the construction industry to increase housebuilding substantially.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.