

OXFORD GREEN BELT NETWORK

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Begbroke village hall at 7.30pm on Wednesday 11th November 2009

Present: Ian Scargill (in the Chair), five other members of the Steering Committee and 22 representatives and members of the public.

Apologies for absence were received from Jane Baldwin, Christopher Gowers, Martin Harris, Henry Towers (Steering Committee), Heather Palmer (Webmaster), Alan Jones (CPRE), Andrew Moore (Noke PM), Carl Smith (Gosford & Water Eaton PC), Geoff Russell (Dorchester PC), Dorothy Tonge (Baldons PC), Cllrs Tim Hallchurch and David Turner.

Minutes of the 2008 AGM, having been circulated and available on the website, were approved. There were no matters arising.

Hon Treasurer's Report and Accounts for the year to 30.09.2009: Michael Tyce presented the Accounts and details of the subscriptions paid over the past 4 years, copies of which are attached to the Minutes. There were no questions of the Hon Treasurer and the Accounts were approved.

Election of Steering Committee: No members of the Steering Committee having retired and there being no further nominations, the following were elected to the Committee: Joe Adams (Kidlington), Jane Baldwin (OPT), Clive Briffett (South Hinksey), Elizabeth Gillespie (Baldons), Christopher Gowers (Oxford City), Duncan Graham (Sunningwell), Martin Harris (Horspath), Moyra Haynes (Cumnor), Gillian Salway (CPRE), Ian Scargill (OPT), Liz Shatford (Sandford-on-Thames), Henry Towers (Stanton St John), Michael Tyce (Waterstock).

The Chairman drew attention to the possibility of co-opting representatives to the Steering Committee during the course of the year. It was felt that someone from Yarnton or Begbroke would be useful in view of likely future threats to this area.

Chairman's Annual Report: The Chairman presented a report on the activities of the Oxford Green Belt Network over the past year. A copy of the report is attached to the Minutes.

In discussion, Bruce Tremayne drew attention to a report by Natural England on the "State of the Green Belt" which is expected to be published in January 2010. The report will look at all 14 Green Belts in England and will assess how Natural England would like to see Green Belts functioning in the future. The meeting agreed that it would be important to study the report and the point was made that the Oxford Green Belt is unique and deserves to be recognized as such. Helena Whall stated that CPRE nationally had been consulted by Natural England.

Bruce Tremayne further drew attention to an announcement from Chiltern Railways expected later in November on their future plans.

Several residents observed that future expansion of the Begbroke science park was a matter of concern and there was general dislike of the new road access for which permission had been obtained. Most of the surrounding land was owned either by the University of Oxford or by Merton College. It was noted that the University had been one of the parties which had challenged the legality of the urban extension south of Grenoble Road. This was on the grounds that insufficient attention had been paid in the Regional Strategy to alternatives such as the Yarnton/Begbroke area. It was said that Cherwell DC was generally supportive of local concerns.

Michael Tyce observed that if the Government were to require a wider review of the Green Belt this would be likely to take a long time and the urban extension to Oxford might be dropped.

“Protecting the ecological assets of the Oxford Green Belt”

Dr Clive Briffett gave a Power Point presentation to the meeting on the above subject. In this, Clive illustrated the biodiversity of the Oxford Green Belt, its varied habitats and the threats posed to these habitats by development pressures. He went on to suggest what a parish council could do to maintain and enhance biodiversity, illustrating this from his own experience in South Hinksey.

In discussion, Bob Warne (Sunningwell) enquired about the likely impact of the Environment Agency’s plan to create a new watercourse across the Hinksey Meadows in order to reduce the flood risk. Clive Briffett expressed his opinion that this would not be effective and could create further problems. Work on the drainage “pinch point” at Redbridge was a better approach. Another speaker noted the importance of maintaining ditches.

In connection with birdlife, it was noted that birds of prey were generally increasing locally and also ravens. Enhancing and creating new habitats would be beneficial to birdlife by creating a balance between wildlife and predators and establishing a situation where the natural environment was able to look after itself.

Elizabeth Gillespie noted the importance of natural beauty in Oxford and its surroundings and the importance of recognizing this as an aim of Green Belt policy.

Helena Whall (CPRE) observed that one should not lose sight of the poorer areas of the Green Belt which could pose problems, particularly from developers, despite the fact that Green Belt policy aimed to protect all parts irrespective of biodiversity or landscape quality. Illustrating the point from his observations at Noke, Clive Briffett agreed that areas that appeared derelict could nevertheless be richer in wildlife than an over-managed garden.

Thanks were expressed to Clive for his very interesting and informative presentation

There being no further matters of business the meeting closed at 9.30pm with thanks to the Chairman from Gill Salway.



Treasurer's Report 08/09 Year to 30 September 2009

Balance as at October 1st 2008	£1621.98
Receipts from subscriptions	£ 690.00
Payments (Detail Below)	£ 492.34
Balance (estimated) as at 30th Sept 09	£1819.64

Detail of Expenses

11.12.08	Chairman's Expenses	£166.69
04.02.09	Subscription Mailing Costs	£ 25.65
07.05.09	To CPRE for joint Green Belt campaign	£ 300.00

Parish Membership

Subscriptions were gratefully received from 41 (last year 44) of the 63 Parishes which are all or partly in the Oxford Green Belt. Subscriptions were also received from 4 (last year 5) "Friends". Subscriptions are still however 2 up on 2006.

It is not known why some previous subscribers dropped out but it may be the credit crunch tightening finances.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Tyce".

Michael Tyce/Hon Treasurer