

Minutes of AGM of New Marston (South) Residents' Association at 7.30 pm on
Wednesday 18th September at St Michael and All Angels Church

Present: 35 local residents plus Cllr Kate Robinson and Dr Judy Webb (speaker)

Adam Wright (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The minutes of the last AGM were approved.

Report by the chair (including finance report):

His first year as chair has been a busy one, with most activities taking place on the western flank of the area. These include the sports hub proposed by Exeter and Hertford Colleges to make the sports facilities better used and to reduce anti-social behaviour. The plan is to build padel tennis courts and other sports facilities e.g. cricket nets, and to provide changing rooms, a café and community space in the Hertford college squash court building. For access, the plan is to provide a footpath running parallel to the current path which runs adjacent to Hertford college's sports field, with low level lighting. An exhibition was held in June and well attended by local people, with broad support for the proposals. Once a planning application has been issued the association will respond to this.

Another development is the changes to management of Park farm/New Marston meadows. A bollard is to be installed at the bottom of the lane down to the farm to limit access by cars for safety reasons and to enable access by farm machinery. This is subject to planning consent. To stop parking, logs were installed (now replaced by planters). This has resulted in parking on Ferry Lane and encroachment on the cycle track. A meeting was recently held with the Estates team at the University and local city councillors to try and resolve the parking issue.

The University will be installing stock fencing either side of the cycle track so they can safely graze cattle and a native hedge will be planted this winter along Ferry Lane. The meadows will be managed in accordance with Natural England.

Other developments: former chair Roy Darke has pursued efforts to get New Marston meadows and Millham Ford School on to the Oxford Heritage Asset Register. Oxford Brookes University continues its plans to move all their facilities on the Headington Hill site. The bus gates on Marston Ferry Road have been postponed pending the re-opening of Botley Road. The association now has a website: nmsra.org.uk, this is still work in progress.

Finances: funds currently stand at £130.92 and are now held in a new business account. The website has been the association's main financial outlay. Total running expenses for the association are about £100 a year. Donations are always welcome. Adam thanked his fellow committee members for their hard work and thanked people for attending the meeting.

Points arising from the report:

- There is concern that the tenant of college land behind houses on Ferry Road is not managing this properly and that SSSI status will be removed. The grass has not been cut

this year. Judy Webb commented that she has included the meadow in a report she recently did for the University. She too has concerns about it and recommended that the association contact Natural England to express their concerns over lack of proper management. Adam read out an email from Trinity college which said that they had been assured by the tenant that the grass would soon be cut.

- There were queries about the need to fence off the cycle track.
- There is concern about the speed of moped bikes (these are illegal) on the cycle track and whether CCTV could be installed and/or traffic calming measures. Better signage is also needed about the rules.
- Cllr Robinson gave an update on parking on Ferry Lane: the County Council is not keen to take action as the lane is unadopted. It may be that the local community will need to take matters into their own hands to resolve this.

Talk by Dr Judy Webb:

Judy was a biology teacher at Millham Ford school from 1987 until it closed in 2003. She set up an “eco-activist group” which created a pond and persuaded the school to allow some of the grass to grow long to benefit wildlife. When the school closed, JW set up the New Marston Wildlife group and oversaw the re-wilding of the grounds of the school (formerly a pig farm) when Harberton Heights were built. S106 moneys were used to resurrect the buried stream, create 5 inter-linked ponds and to plant trees and move orchids from the housing site.

The stream now acts as a SUD and with the increase in biodiversity the area has been designated a Local Wildlife site. JW runs a small volunteer group which helps maintain the ponds and scythe round them. Volunteers also manage bird boxes on trees on the site. JW has worked hard to save the poplars on the site; these are regularly pollarded rather than being removed. The grass is mown by the council in August each year. The site has seen an increase in orchids (common spotted and pyramidal), great burnet and cowslips and a huge increase in biodiversity. Seeds are collected each year. The lime rich water on the site is crucial for orchids. JW is concerned that if Oxford Brookes vacates the school site the quadrangle (which forms part of the wildlife site and is rich in orchids but sadly not open to the public) will be lost through development.

Elections of committee: Adam Wright (Chair), Tessa Hennessy (Secretary), other committee members: Liz Adams, Roy Darke, Mike Charles, Nigel Berry. There were no nominations for treasurer.

AOB:

- Mobile coverage in the area is poor and needs to be improved.
- JW offered to do a guided walk of Millham Ford park on National Meadow Day in July 2025.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm