

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT LOSRA 2024 AGM

As most residents will be aware, LOSRA usually publishes 3 newsletters each year, in the early Spring, the Autumn and shortly before the AGM in June, which are delivered to over 4,000 households in the Lower Sunbury community using the Sunbury Matters distribution network. If you don't receive Sunbury Matters and haven't yet seen the AGM newsletter, there are some available at the back of the hall, or you can view it, or contact us for further information, through the website – losra.org.

Just short of 1000 residents subscribe to our free weekly e-News bulletin - if you're not already signed up for this, just go to the website - it takes less than 1 minute. We also post items from time to time on the Sunbury Facebook pages, and we have a regular feature in Sunbury Matters. We try to keep people up to date with what we have been doing on your behalf, to meet our primary objective of “optimising and enhancing the quality of life for Lower Sunbury residents by all appropriate means”. A reminder of LOSRA's Aims is available on the website, together with a summary of some of LOSRA's campaigns and achievements since it's foundation.

Last December, we again took a stand at the Lower Sunbury Business Community Christmas fair. We hope to be able to resume our stand at the Sunbury Regatta in August, and we sincerely hope that enough volunteers will come forward to enable the Regatta to take place in its customary form this year, not least because it is one of the few opportunities we have to give our new Gazebo an airing!

LOSRA is composed of a management Committee, being a small core of Officers, and up to 10 other members, some of whom I shall be proposing for your approval to re-elect shortly. We are all volunteers and give generously of such time and talents as we have on your behalf. Our principal motivation is a desire to help, as far as possible, protect, maintain and preserve for future generations the environment in which we all so much enjoy living. Our constitution requires that we shall have no political or religious affiliations, and we strictly abide by that. We do however work in partnership with Spelthorne Council or other political representatives wherever appropriate but for no other reason than to meet our stated Aims. As you will have seen from the AGM newsletter, we currently have some vacancies for new members, so if anyone is interested in finding out more about what being a Committee member involves, please have a chat with me afterwards, contact our Membership

Secretary Colleen as mentioned in the newsletter, or come along to our next meeting.

Our committee meetings are open to observers, and we have continued our practice of inviting, from time to time, a representative from our Sunbury Ward Councillors, and County Councillor to our monthly meetings. We believe this has broadened communication between ourselves and our elected representatives.

In the last 12 months or so, we have been involved in one way or another with a wide range of local issues, including attending the Council Residents Association meetings - now retitled the Spelthorne Partnership Assembly - being part of the process of the upcoming Best Value Inspection, which Daniel will cover later in his address, objecting to proposed developments where we believe they would be overbearing or out of character with the surrounding street-scene, providing advice to individual residents and groups on various planning issues, discussions with developers regarding prospective sites, liaison with Hazelwood London Irish on the implications of any change in ownership, representation on the River Users Group, and Charlton Lane Eco Park Community Liaison Group, making representations to TFL & SBC on the provision of toilet facilities for bus drivers at Sunbury Park, which we hope will become part of a proposed Community Toilet scheme, and serving on the Patient Participation Group of Sunbury Health Centre. One year on, NHS Estates, who own the building, and Spelthorne Borough Council, having agreed a match funding deal utilising accumulated Community Infrastructure Levy funds for significant modernisation measures totalling £1.6M, have still to pin down the final legal detail. Once the work has been completed not only will the environment for patients and staff be significantly improved, but also the Health Centre's capacity for appointments.

I'd like to mention 3 specific issues:

Proposed Sunbury BESS

BESS means Battery Energy Storage System. Our views on this are covered in much detail in the AGM Newsletter. In a nutshell, we believe that it is a high risk development on an entirely inappropriate site, which represents an existential threat to the environment and the safety of Sunbury and its environs. We are not alone – at the last count well over 250 objections have been registered on the Council planning portal. I am delighted to report that the Planning Officers have now recommended

that this application be refused at the upcoming Planning Committee meeting on 26th June. Along with our colleagues from Shepperton and Charlton Village residents associations, we have applied for permission to speak at the meeting to reinforce our reasons for objection. I would like to publicly thank on your behalf our Committee member, Nigel Spooner, who unfortunately can't be here this evening due to prior commitments, for the immense amount of work he has put in to analysing the technical detail of both this, as well as the next issue, which is

The proposed River Thames scheme

Again, this is covered in some detail in the AGM newsletter. To say that LOSRA is sceptical that Lower Sunbury will actually see a reduction in flood levels as a result of the scheme would be an understatement. We continue to wrestle with getting clarity on some of the evidence base. Either way, LOSRA has long championed the idea of a new foot/cycle river crossing in Lower Sunbury, which would also give our residents access, via the Thames Path on the other side of the river, to the proposed Active Travel Route, and the idea is still a long-term objective, subject to securing the necessary funding, the inclusion of which in the Scheme we are actively pursuing. I am pleased to be able to tell you that LOSRA will be represented on the RTS Residents Community Group.

Local Plan

We have been engaged on the emerging Plan for a very long time. Again, a summary of the latest known position is provided in the AGM newsletter. The Council's decision to both 'pause' the process, and subsequently modify the outline Plan after submission for Public Examination leaves us in limbo, which is exacerbated by the upcoming General Election 'pre-election period' or *purdah* as it used to be known. The absence of a current Local Plan leaves the Council open to opportunistic planning applications from developers and whilst the Planning Authority can always refuse applications, the reasons must be sustainable on appeal.

As well as these main items I have mentioned, individual committee members have been involved with a variety of issues where LOSRA's expertise has been helpful to residents and others in Lower Sunbury. I would encourage members to come to us when issues arise where they think we may be able to help. This might involve LOSRA taking it up on your behalf, or simply signposting you to where you can get the help and answers you need.

As you will see from the Treasurer's report and accounts which follow my report, through prudent management of costs, LOSRA has accumulated reserves over the years against eventualities such as the need for expert legal advice so I am pleased to report that it will not be necessary to ask for additional funding this year. However, the current membership fee of £5 per household has not been reviewed since 2008, so this will be kept under review for the future. Additional donations are always welcome and the Treasurer will explain how you can do this!

In closing, I want to express my sincere thanks to the other Committee members for their continued participation and support, and especially to John Hirsh, our Vice Chairman, and one of my predecessors as Chairman. John is our planning 'guru' and his encyclopaedic knowledge of Planning Regulations has been much appreciated over the years. He is standing down as Vice Chairman this year, and I wish to put on record his invaluable support to me during my time as Chairman. I am very grateful, especially as he is remaining on the Committee. I am delighted that Stacey Pinto has agreed to take on the Vice Chair role. Thanks also to Graeme Tye & Nesli Ziler for the sound & technical assistance. I also want to thank you, our members, and our Corporate Sponsors from the Lower Sunbury Business Community, for your ongoing financial support.

2023 was the 51st anniversary of LOSRA's formation. I hope that we may continue to serve the community for a long time – but, as I said earlier, to do so, we need some fresh, young, blood, so if you feel youthful, keen and energetic, particularly if you have IT/Communications or Administration and Social Media skills, please do seriously consider putting your name forward for the Committee! We can always co-opt you mid-year!