



The Fields

Iffley Fields Residents Association

Email: iffleyfields@gmail.com, www.ifra.uk

March 2025

IFRA AGM

Monday March 10th 8 PM at the Falcon Boat Club, 331 Meadow Lane, OX4 4BJ.

Mark Seal, Boatman for LMH, Merton and Longbridges will discuss his ideas about how we can improve the tow path.



Mark Seal has called to stakeholders to engage and agree a SHARED plan to manage the towpath and riverbank in the central section of Oxford to make it a SAFER and a better place for ALL users.

The towpath is a public space, used for different and sometimes competing purposes – a busy cycle route and pedestrian use, with electric scooters and bikes adding a new hazard to a highway already too narrow in many places. End to end boats and unmanaged vegetation has reduced the line of sight that rowing coaches require and further narrowed the path making it more hazardous for cycles and pedestrians to share. In the last decade, there has been increased use by residential houseboat owners, (currently more than 80) on unofficial moorings without any services or facilities. In 2024 the Environmental Agency (EA) reported there were 83 boats, 23 did not hold a licence and 6 were sunk. The EA and the City Council do not reliably enforce mooring limits on their own registered land. The sunken boats will stay that way until they break apart as the EA will only intervene with boats obstructing the middle 1/3 of the river.

Only with all stakeholders working together can we make the tow path a safer and pleasanter place for everyone to enjoy.

Ideas for improving the towpath

Mark Seal has suggested actions that would make the river more of a Community Asset, encouraging people to visit and enjoy nature and the views.

- Manage the vegetation to keep maximum width to the path, keeping overhead growth in check for cyclists and allowing rescue access from bank to river.
- Greater gaps between boats to provide a fire break and allow for anyone in difficulty to gain access to exit steps that should be installed in many sites to allow for exit in an emergency and allow wild swimmers to gain access.
- A mooring policy with mandatory inspection of safety certificates as a requirement to moor, including proof of insurance, especially regarding salvage.
- Make it more difficult to launch a boat on this section of the river without showing documentation – locking of the City Council controlled barrier at Donnington Bridge.
- Prevent Pollution from sewage and sunken boats by providing amenities or restrict moorings. if sewage disposal is not possible.
- Plan for removal of all sunken boats and prevent sinkings and abandonment of boats and the pollution they bring
- Establish a walking trail from the City centre along the river, including Longbridges Bathing place as a stop off, Longbridges Nature Reserve, the Isis Farmhouse and into Iffley
- Widen the towpath wherever possible so it can be more safely shared by pedestrians and cyclists.

It is up to us now to act. If we don't it will only get worse.

Do you love poetry?

If you would like to join a poetry group, please contact Melissa on
07549416346

The Kidneys- Site visit 10 am Sunday 9 March



This winter it has been possible to access the Kidneys without wading through mud and we are very grateful to ODS for the new firm paths. Buggies and wheelchairs can now use some of the paths. Further resurfacing is needed to increase access, while avoiding making a circuit that would attract cycles.

Other welcome changes would be log seats, and better access to the river. A short stretch could link the two existing narrow paths between brambles that lead down to the river. This requires the brambles to be cleared and kept cut back. We could also improve the colour and diversity of the Kidneys with smaller trees such as rowan, crab-apple and silver-birch along with shrubby plants like pussy-willow.

For anyone interested in improving the Kidneys, there will be a walk around the area lead by Ruth Ashcroft from Friends of Aston Eyot to discuss what might be done and an opportunity to get started clearing a short stretch of riverbank (bring gardening gloves if you can). Ruth will also bring tools for the active part of the meeting. Join us 10 am Sunday 9th March. Contact Margaret on margthompson01@gmail.com to join the Kidneys WhatsApp group or just turn up and join for the discussion and if you can stay for the working party. We will meet at the yellow square at the entrance near the allotments.

An orchard in the Recreation Ground

There are also proposals for an orchard on the recreation ground. Cllr Emily Kerr is working with the City Council to identify a good place where the trees will not interfere with informal sports or underground pipes. There will be a consultation about the siting.

🌸 IFRA Open Gardens 2025 Sunday June 22nd, 2-5pm 🌸

A selection of local gardens are kindly being opened by Iffley Fields residents and there will be tours available at the Fairacres Allotments. Admission to the gardens and allotments is by purchasing a programme on the day. This includes a map of the location of the gardens and a Children's Garden Trail. A plant stall, pre-loved gardening books & magazines & other gardening items for sale. Donation of items welcomed for these stalls nearer the time.

Save the date for this community family friendly event, a fund raiser for 3 local charities. If you feel you are able to open *your* garden please contact susanbedford7@btinternet.com

Friends of Longbridges

The group has authored a new improvement plan for the Longbridges site after meeting in January. You can see the plan www.ifra.uk. The next community work party is scheduled on 23rd February (all welcome). Repairs to the collapsing bank were completed by ODS in the Autumn. Eradicating Himalayan Balsam on the site will take several years of work through the summer months. Please contact Adam friendsoflongbridges@gmail.com if you would like to be added to our WhatsApp [././group](https://www.whatsapp.com/group/...) or to be kept informed about our fun and sociable work parties!

Meadow Lane Playground

The toddler slide and sandpit have been fenced off for over 5 months, IFRA have complained to the council. We have been informed that ODS Highways have now taken over the job of installation of a trim trail to replace the old wobbly bridge and remove the fencing. We still await a start date. Plans are being drawn up by a group of local residents to transform the unused space into a natural play area with plants, stepping stones, logs, a mural on the back fence etc. We hope to resume our Community Play Mornings and Working Party and Pizza evenings when the weather warms up a bit! Volunteers are welcome to help with ideas and project planning, please get in touch if you would like to help with the natural play project, or be added to our event mailing list.

Falcon Boat Club Open Day: 13th July

Falcon Boat Club was founded in 1869 and has been on Meadow Lane since the 1950s. After years of fund-raising by members and thanks to a loan from Sport England, our fantastic new boathouse, also built by one of our members, was opened in 2022. You are invited to come and take a look around at a Community Open Day from 1PM, Sunday 13th July.

Falcon is unusual in that it offers Kayaking and Canoeing as well as Rowing. Altogether we have nearly 500 members and the club is entirely volunteer run. The Open Day is part of a growing Outreach programme, aimed at forging links with our community and encouraging more local residents to experience water sports on their local river.

Canoeists and kayakers have for some years been working with children and adults with disabilities and learning difficulties through KEEN, John Watson School, and Style Acre as well as with partially sighted and blind juniors and adults (with My Vision Oxfordshire). Falcon members have also raised money to allow us to start rowing clubs in our two local secondary schools: Greyfriars and Oxford Spires. If you are interested in helping out with our schools programme, please email: outreach.falconrowing@gmail.com

The Open Day will include a tour of the new boathouse and opportunities to get out on the water and try your hand at canoeing, kayaking or rowing. Other attractions will include a choice of food and entertainment for young children. Look out for publicity nearer the time and on our website for more information: www.falconboatclub.org.uk.



Ex-Olympian Ollie Cook, Falcon Captain Jon Crooks with pupils from Greyfriars School
Credit Andrew Bailey

Wanted -Two Picnic Tables for Meadow Lane Recreation Ground

IFRA, in partnership with the City Council, local councillors, Friends of Aston Eyot –(FOAE) and our local guerilla gardeners have slowly transformed the Meadow Lane Recreation Ground into a multi-purpose place to relax, meet friends, play sport and exercise thus meeting the varied needs of our local community.



Talking with young people particularly girls, parents and grandparents, we have identified that a couple of picnic tables would be a very welcome addition to the facilities at the Meadow Lane recreation ground. One might be placed near to the skate park and the other at the Jackdaw Lane side of the field approximately opposite the

University Sports facilities turning. The costs for one picnic table plus securing 2 cement bases are £1696.60, and an additional VAT charge £339.32. So, for two picnic tables we need to raise a total of £4071.84. As the City Council own and manage the land we are required to meet their required specifications and installers. In the past, many of the successful projects carried out at Meadow Lane Recreation Ground have been a collaboration with a variety of partners but all of them have included crowdfunding. We are again asking for support this project and money to cover the cost.

To help, look out for a link to the crowdfunding campaign early in the Spring Or donate to IFRA now and mark you donation 'Picnic Tables'. . Every contribution big or small helps. Please give what you can to help this project *come to fruition. In advance, thank you very much.*

Oxford Amateur Rowing Club- update

OARC approached the Council some time ago with a proposal of having a permanent building on the picnic area by Donnington Bridge. They were granted a 6-month licence to erect racking and a storage container for boats while they explore long-term options. This licence may be extended for a further 6 months and under these terms.

Defibrillator -now installed



The IFRA Defibrillator has been installed! It is located on Meadow Lane, opposite the children's playground. In an emergency call 999, they will supply an unlock code for the cabinet so the defibrillator can be removed and taken to where it is needed. Anyone can use it with no training necessary, there are very simple instructions and voice prompts on the defibrillator itself and the 999

operator will also talk through the process.

A big thank you to Tom Green and Councillor Emily Kerr for providing the funding, and to the household of 2 Argyle St for letting us use their back wall.

Meadow Lane Carpark

Still no date for a decision about its future. IFRA wants it back in public use.

IFRA Finances

Due to generous support from local residents, we now are in a healthier financial position. Currently, our unrestricted funds stand at £995. Our only financial outgoings are printing 2 editions of the newsletter each year and maintenance of the website and the IFRA defibrillator. In addition we are holding allocated funds for the Waterways Group £765, the defibrillator £372 and the playground £1373. We have also set up an interest-bearing account which hopefully will help going forward.

At the AGM we will decide whether to apply to become a CIO. As a CIO IFRA would be able to receive gift aid on donations and apply for grants. We will need to amend the Constitution and maintain a membership list of those

I would emphasise that IFRA depends on continued generous support from you. If you are able to contribute, here are the details. Iffley Fields Residents Association – Account No. 24751634, Sort Code 54-21-23 or visit www.ifra.uk

Sam Alston, Treasurer

IFRA

IFRA welcomes involvement of residents. If you have any issues you want to raise, contact any of the IFRA committee or your street connector, we meet every other month. Agenda and minutes are on www.ifra.uk.

Committee: Sue Hale (Chair), Ben Pinches, Jon Rees (Vice Chairs), Sam Alston (Treasurer), Christine Hogg (Secretary), Thelma Martin (Planning), Barbara Ashcroft, Susan Bedford, Luke Bolton, Simon Fisher, Janet Hall, Samantha Robertson, Peter Sidgwick.

Keep in touch -

If you want to keep up to date with what is happening in Iffley Fields, [sign up for email updates](mailto:iffleyfields@gmail.com) –Email us: iffleyfields@gmail.com

[Join your street WhatsApp group](#), ask your street connector.

[Join Facebook](#) –On IFRA's Facebook page, find out what is happening, get recommendations and offers. To join you need a Facebook account and search for IFRA. Administrators will accept anyone into the group if they look as if they are local.

Street Connectors

Street Connectors offer a point of contact for residents. If you would like to be a Street Connector, please contact Sue at sue_hale@btinternet.com.

Argyle: Sue Hale: sue_hale@btinternet.com, Sylvia Eades, seades@hotmail.co.uk, Simon Fisher: simonfishershuse@gmail.com.

Stratford: Ben Pinches, ben@pinches.biz; Tom Green, tomgreen77@gmail.com; Rosemary Cameron, rosemarycameron2@gmail.com

Fairacres: Barbara Ashcroft, barbara.ashcroft@btinternet.com; Margaret Thompson, margthompson01@gmail.com,

Chester Street: Luke Bolton, boltonluke@gmail.com

Chester/ Warwick: Sam Robertson, sr244667@gmail.com

Bedford Street: Janet Hall, janetmwhall@gmail.com,

Bannister Close: Jo Burch, jo.burch@rocketmail.com

Eyot Place: Margaret Thoroughgood, margaretthorogood@btinternet.com **Parker**

Street: Louise Perkins, randall.louise@gmail.com

Warwick Street: Darren Clahane, darren.clahane@gmail.com

Interest groups

Book Group, (to join text Sue 07780 697691); **Walking Group** (To join text: Margie 07879 440937); **Gardening Group** (To join email susanbedford7@btinternet.com);

Suggestions for new interest groups, text Sue 0778069769

