

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

### LOSRA 2025 AGM

As most residents will be aware, LOSRA usually publishes three newsletters each year, in the early Spring, the Autumn and shortly before this meeting in June, which are delivered to over 4,000 households in the Lower Sunbury community using the Sunbury Matters distribution network. If you do not receive Sunbury Matters and have not 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](https://losra.org).

Over one thousand residents subscribe to our free weekly e-News bulletin - if you are 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 its foundation.

LOSRA is composed of a management Committee, being a small core of Officers, and up to ten other members, whom I shall be proposing for your approval to re-elect shortly. We are all volunteers and give 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 as an observer. These are held at 7.30 the Walled Garden café on 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month except August.

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. Last December, we again took a stand at the Lower Sunbury Business Community Christmas fair. Sadly, we were unable to resume our stand at the Sunbury Regatta in August, as not enough volunteers came forward to enable it to take place, so we are still looking for more opportunities to give our new Gazebo an airing!

We regularly attend the Spelthorne Council Partnership Assembly.

When appropriate, we object to proposed developments where we believe they would be overbearing or out of character with the surrounding street-scene, as well as providing advice to individual residents and groups on various planning issues, discussions with developers

regarding prospective sites including inputting to the proposed Lower Sunbury Street Improvements scheme.

We worked with John Carey from the Lower Sunbury Business Community to get the potentially lifesaving defibrillator funded and installed in Avenue Parade, liaise with Hazelwood London Irish on the implications of any change in ownership, are represented on the River Users Group, and Charlton Lane Eco Park Community Liaison Group, and Chair the Patient Participation Group at Sunbury Health Centre. The PPG publish regular updates in Sunbury Matters on enhancements to services and conducts a bi-annual survey of patients to identify and monitor ongoing issues.

LOSRA has been an active supporter and partner of the Sunbury Ferry since its inception in 2021. The ferry is now in its fifth year of operation, continuing a tradition of ferries in Lower Sunbury going back centuries. Considering this, Sunbury Ferry applied for funding to Surrey County Council for a new 'Historic Lower Sunbury' map and notice board that has just been erected on Kings Lawn. LOSRA and Sunbury Ferry will manage the notice board on behalf of the community to promote local events.

I would also like to mention three specific issues:

- **Proposed Local Government Devolution**

This is covered in much detail in the AGM newsletter, and we shall be extremely interested to hear what our MP Lincoln Jopp has to say about it. In previous years, we have focussed on the developing Spelthorne Local Plan, the present position on which is that the public consultation on the Main Modifications, or changes, to the draft Plan closed last month, and the Planning Inspector is now preparing his final report. The likelihood is that if, as hoped, the Plan is approved, it will still be necessary to renew it within a couple of years, as it is now over 6 years since the original work was commenced and the Plan period covers 5-15 years. Indeed, Spelthorne & Runnymede Councils have just today published a consultation on an assessment methodology for a new Strategic Land Availability Assessment, which is a precursor to the commencement of a new Local Plan. With both Councils effectively ceasing to exist under the Devolution plans, consideration will also need to be taken of other Boroughs in whichever unitary Authority we end up in.

- **Proposed Sunbury BESS**

BESS means Battery Energy Storage System. The application to construct a BESS on land adjacent to the Eco Park is now well over a year in running. The current status is that it has been paused to allow the developer to address objections from the Environment Authority, amongst others. Our view on this proposed development is that we believe 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. Our colleagues from Shepperton, Laleham and Charlton Village residents' associations, with whom we have been co-operating, are entirely in agreement. I would like to publicly thank on your behalf our Committee member, Nigel Spooner, for the immense amount of work he has put in to analysing the technical detail of this, as well as the next issue, which is

- **Proposed River Thames Scheme & Thames Landscape Strategy**

With the pending Local Government reorganization, it is not at all clear what will happen to this going forward. Technically, the River Thames scheme is being driven by the Environment

Agency, with funding from Surrey County Council, hence the uncertainty. In late Autumn, they commissioned an independent mid-project review of the Scheme (RTS). The review is to ensure that the scheme remains efficient, cost-effective and aligned with long-term goals; and to ensure the project delivers the flood risk benefits in a robust and sustainable manner.

The review was expected to last until the Spring – which is now been and gone. The team are conducting some final assurance activities to ensure the work that has been done is robust.

To say that LOSRA is sceptical that Lower Sunbury will actually see a reduction in flood levels because of the scheme would be an understatement. Clarity on some of the evidence base is still an unresolved issue. 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 will still pursue. I am pleased to be able to tell you that LOSRA is represented on the RTS Residents Community Group.

Residents who attended the AGM in 2023 Will remember the presentation by Becky Law from the Thames Landscape Strategy project. This project is part of a strategic vision to make a fundamental change in how we approach riverside management, improving flood risk mitigation along the Thames and embedding community values and priorities. Neil Huntingford from LOSRA has been working with TLS to produce Landscape Character Assessments for Sunbury and Shepperton riverside that encapsulates the character, sustainability and relationship with the river considering the increased pressure from climate change and flood risk. TLS hope to conducting engagement and community events (drop-in sessions/town halls etc) towards the latter half of the year – please look out for dates and information on social media and we will publish updates on the LOSRA website.

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 next,] 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 once again able 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. We are keen to grow the subscribing membership and are giving consideration to how this may be achieved. 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. Thanks also to Graeme Tye & Nesli Ziler from the Hall management 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.