

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT LOSRA 2026 AGM**

As most residents will be aware, LOSRA usually publishes 3 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 usually using the Sunbury Matters distribution network. However, due to a delivery glitch, the newsletter was delivered separately this month. If you 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](http://losra.org).

Over 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.

LOSRA is composed of a management Committee, being a small core of Officers, and up to 10 other members, most of whom I shall be proposing for your approval to re-elect shortly. We currently have one vacancy for a new member, 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 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.

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 helped broaden communication between ourselves and our elected representatives. We

have also established a good relationship with our local PCSO, Mark Lappin.

In the previous Newsletter, I reviewed our actions from the last AGM up to the end of last year. If you haven't seen that, it's available on the website. Since then, we have been involved in one way or another with a wide range of local issues.

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. Of particular concern this year has been the number of HMOs (Houses with multiple occupants) being created, as these often cause disturbance to close neighbours.

We regularly 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. This last year, we co-funded the new, larger TV screen in the waiting room, with the Lower Sunbury Business Community. The PPG publish regular updates in Sunbury Matters on enhancements to services and in the Autumn will be conducting a new survey of all patients to measure satisfaction and identify and monitor any ongoing issues. I urge you to respond to this when it's launched, which you can do on-line, or on paper- it only takes 10 minutes.

LOSRA has been an active supporter and partner of the Sunbury Ferry since its inception in 2021. The ferry is now in its sixth year of operation, continuing a tradition of ferries in Lower Sunbury going back centuries. You will hopefully have seen the new 'Historic Lower Sunbury' map and notice board that has been erected on Kings Lawn. LOSRA and Sunbury Ferry manage the notice board on behalf of the community to promote local events.

I'd also like to mention 2 specific issues:

## Proposed Sunbury BESS

BESS stands for Battery Energy Storage System. The application to construct a BESS on land adjacent to the Eco Park was refused by Spelthorne's Planning Committee, largely as a result of objections submitted on behalf of the 3 local residents' associations, as being inappropriate development on Green Belt land. Our joint view 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 local area. Our colleagues from Shepperton, and Charlton Village residents' associations, with whom we have been co-operating, are entirely in agreement.

However, as you may have read in the Newsletter, the developer appealed the decision to the Planning Inspectorate, which for patently questionable reasons, then not only overturned the Planning Committee's decision but also appears to have allowed a larger scheme than had originally been submitted to SBC for approval. To say we were outraged at this would be an understatement and we immediately challenged it with the Inspectorate. The problem though is that there was a narrow window to submit a formal challenge to the Inspectorate's decision, which would have involved the High Court and probably cost a very significant amount of money. By the time the Inspectorate had responded to us admitting it's errors and offering 'sincere apologies that this appeal was not handled to the standards to which we aspire', that window had already closed.

In these circumstances, we do not consider it acceptable that this Planning Inspectorate decision should be allowed to stand, and we believe that the news media would align with this view. We propose to escalate the situation formally, and are seeking the assistance of our MP, Lincoln Jopp, in doing so.

I want 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. We are very fortunate have someone on the Committee with his skills & determination, without which much of the Inspectorate's responses may well have gone unchallenged.

## Thames Landscape Strategy

The second issue is the proposed River Thames scheme & Thames Landscape Strategy.

With the pending Local Government reorganization, it's 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 has confirmed that improving the weirs remains the best option for reducing flood risk, with no changes needed to the flood defence design. It also recommends management improvements, which the Environment Agency & Surrey County Council are now implementing. Following Local Government reorganisation in April 2027, the EA will work with the new East & West Surrey Unitary Authorities. Updated proposals, including revised costs and delivery arrangements will be submitted to DEFRA & HM Treasury before the Summer [2027] with final timescales confirmed after approval.

LOSRA is sceptical that Lower Sunbury will actually see a reduction in flood levels because of the scheme. Clarity on some of the evidence base is still an unresolved issue. Either way, we have 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.

The Thames Path, which is accessible at weekends via the Sunbury Ferry and enjoyed by many local residents is 30 years old this year. There is a walk to celebrate this milestone and the section between Walton Bridge & Kingston will take place on Tuesday 23rd June if anyone would like to join in. The details will be posted on the LOSRA website.

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 carrying out 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, not least because it may well be necessary to seek legal advice on Kempton Park – but more on that later. We are keen to grow the subscribing membership and are giving consideration to how this may be achieved. Additional donations are always welcome!

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.