

Environmental group report, January 2010

Despite the holiday season things in our group are moving on apace and we have many positive things to present. Some areas however are lagging a bit but that's to be expected as nothing in life is ever perfect.

From the village plan an important area earmarked for upgrading was the **street lighting**. This was identified as being inefficient in places and also the style of the lights is not in keeping with the outstanding natural beauty of our village. Together with Alan Cockbill from the Oxford County Council (OCC) we have begun an improvement plan which will gradually replace these out dated poorly functioning lights with up to date energy saving lights with a smart design. The area adjacent to the toll bridge has been pointed out as being very dark and this stems from the fact that the light there is poorly situated. We will be replacing this and moving it to a new site which will benefit both pedestrians and motorists and hence improve safety. The second area which we intend improve is at the junction of the High Street with Manor Road. The present light which is attached to a telegraph pole is poorly positioned and unsightly. This will be replaced by a smart new free standing light. The bin is also due for renewal as it is well past its sell by date. The two lights will be changed immediately and the others in the High Street over the next few years achieving a smart uniformity of quality lighting. One other important result was that after many e-mails the light at the top of Muddy Lane was finally restored to full working order after a site visit by myself and Alan. Also the OCC have agreed to adopt the light and add it to their maintenance schedule.

The Jubilee Pathway is another area which requires attention since its undergrowth has not been looked after and it is growing out of control. John Southey and I have identified areas which are causing problems to motorists on the road side and to walkers on the inside. With carefully designed pruning and cutting away of inappropriate growth and yet still retaining the excellent natural shape and quality of the pathway. The problem is in John's words that *'The trees have grown upwards and outwards towards the light, forming the pleasing tunnel in which the footpath runs. Several now sag across the path and some larger branches overhang the road presenting a hazard to high sided vehicles that occasionally use Hardwick Road. Unless action is taken to reduce the overhang of the seriously sagging trunks, they will slowly droop lower and eventually tear out into the road. Usually overhang is not a problem because small twigs growing into the path of vehicles are broken off before they can develop into arm sized branches. The fact that a number of such branches have developed such they were shattered by passing lorries indicates sagging of the entire limb. Therefore selective removal of the limb is needed rather than cutting off the part that overhangs.'* This scale of work is beyond that of the amateur and so the Parish Council will be employing professional tree-surgeons supervised by John.

The last item is that of the **replacement of our unsightly bins** which we have been promised by Fred Thompson-Brown of South Oxford District Council (SODC) this will involve removal of the bin at the junction of Hardwick Road with the High Street which is currently attached to the road sign and resiting across the road! This area in fact is one

that I have spent some time clearing leaves from and planting bulbs which I hope will enhance its beauty in the spring. Since it's the first thing one sees coming into the village, from the north, it is an important first impression of Whitchurch on Thames.

Dr Keith Brooks