

FeCRA – The Federation of Cambridge Residents' Associations



FeCRA 2020/2021 Annual General Meeting Held on 7th October 2021 6.00 -7.30 pm

by Zoom starting at 6pm

In the light of Covid 19 restrictions it remained necessary to hold the meeting by Zoom. It was intended to hold a larger event when circumstances allow.

Attendance

There were 136 participants, including representatives from many City Residents' Associations and community groups; it was unfortunate that not everyone who had signed up was able to log in (236 had signed up) but those who were not able to attend were sent a link to the recording.

The Chair, Wendy Blythe, introduced the current committee, who were all present.

Apologies for absence - 10 apologies were received.

1. Minutes of the previous AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM held on 16 July 2020 were approved nem con

2. Election of Officers

The Chair, thanked the present Committee, who had agreed to stand for another year and the Chair encouraged the participation of others who wished to be more involved in FeCRA. The officers were elected nem con:-

Wendy Blythe as Chair, Jean Glasberg as Vice Chair and John Latham as Treasurer.

3. Accounts

The Treasurer presented the accounts to 28th February 2021. A deficit of £111 had been recorded, and a bank balance of £747 carried forward. FeCRA remained entirely reliant on the generosity of individuals and Residents' Associations. Those attending were invited to make donations via the website.

The Accounts were approved nem con.

Chair's Report

The Chair delivered her report, a copy of which is available on the website and also available as a YouTube recording which includes the slides. See link below

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BM6X1K4x2iE>

The challenges to the quality of life in Cambridge were highlighted along with concerns about the impact that overseas investment and global development and a high level of employment-led growth was having on the UK's most overheated and water stressed region. The Chair described how *The Times*, *Guardian*, *Financial Times* and others had all reported that there were concerns about China's growing involvement in Cambridge and reported that many residents were asking: 'Is Cambridge and the Ox-Cam Arc, part of China's so-called "Belt and Road Initiative".'

She pointed out that Ant Breach, senior researcher for Cambridge City Council's external partner Centre for Cities, a think tank funded by the Cambridge University Chancellor had tweeted earlier that year: "I make no apologies for demanding growth and a spicy, hot labour market. The CaMKOX are below the national average for CO2 emissions which is why we should build 1.5m homes in them." The Chair asked: 'Who are the interests promoting the "spicy hot labour market"?'

She highlighted the role that members of FeCRA had played in providing support through the pandemic and the positive achievements that hard working community groups round the city were making

She drew attention to questions and concerns raised by RA representatives, and reported that public realm, social inclusion and environmental issues such as water had continued to be key issues for RAs and community groups. The committee was hearing increasing concerns from so many residents about the pace of growth in and around Cambridge, and the impact this was having on all aspects of peoples' lives and she asked why these issues, especially the water crisis, had not featured in the evidence base for the local plan together with a vision for the city.

She explained that the context in which much of this was happening was the 'Ox-Cam Arc' - five counties from Oxford to Cambridge that had been selected by central government for massive growth in buildings and infrastructure and introduced the first speaker David Rogers, Emeritus Professor of Ecology at the University of Oxford, who represented the campaign group Stop the Arc.

Professor Rogers gave a keynote speech on the ways in which increasing house building in the areas linking Oxford and Cambridge by 53% to 61%, when the average need, nationally, is assessed at a 13% increase was unsustainable for our environment. Prof David Rogers asked: "What are we not being told?" Link below to his talk.

<https://youtu.be/4wNxf-5pYwE>

Water shortages, pollution and loss of biodiversity will be the outcome, he said despite planners claiming that they are going to "double nature". He pointed out that politicians still follow the mantra that economic growth is the gauge of societal and electoral advantage, ignoring our environment's fitness for human habitation.

David Rogers described the OxCam Arc' as 'an environmental catastrophe' that 'will benefit the developers, including Oxford and Cambridge Universities, but not the vast majority of the 3 million people in the area, most of whom knew nothing about what was being planned or how fragmented

and concreted the vision. It will embody a huge increase in carbon emissions and threatened the survival of our rivers and streams through over-abstraction and pollution.

Professor Rogers said it was important for people to make their views heard loud and clear, and warned that the government had too many “leading questions” for it to deliver accurate results. That is why, he explained, the campaign group Stop the Arc had created an alternative, 5 minute questionnaire to that created by the government for the stage 1 of the consultation.

Following his talk the Chair introduced residents from different parts of the city who gave their views on key aspects of the ‘growth agenda’, and the implications of this for everyone’s future and for the next generation.

Cllr Sam Davies, Chair of Queen Edith’s Community Forum talked about the high level of ‘Employment led growth’.

<https://youtu.be/s5IW7f0cXKQ>

Community historian Antony Carpen spoke about ‘Visions for Cambridge 2065’.

<https://youtu.be/bNjHK1NNJqA>

Andrew Milbourn, Chair of the Hurst Park Estate Residents Association describing the ‘Plans for North East Cambridge asked: ‘Are we being greenwashed?’.

<https://youtu.be/1DNWtTbpHFQ>

Professor Tony Booth asked if this was about ‘Scoping nature for investment or becoming nature’s guardians’.

<https://youtu.be/BdkBTcA4guA>

John Preston, Environmental historian, and Kati Preston of the Cambridge Market Community asked: ‘Has Cambridge City Centre and Cambridge’s Market and the city’s green spaces been scoped for investment as event destinations to support the Ox-Cam Arc’s high level of employment growth ? Who is the heart of Cambridge for?’

https://youtu.be/oEog_g4YoKl

Monica Hone of Friends of the Cam, the final speaker talked about the impact of development on the Cam and chalk streams, describing what was happening to the environment as “egocide”. Trees were dying, chalk streams were drying up, she asked ‘Is this the death of our river?’ Unsustainable growth was an eco crime.

<https://youtu.be/FxBkyYrB6Cl>

Questions from attendees were interesting, reflecting the varied network of Cambridge community groups who were at the meeting. They included the following questions:

William Harrold of Cambridge Approaches asked Professor Rogers about natural capital accounting and the estimate from MCHLG which he felt gave a rather low valuation of the capital value of eco system service <https://youtu.be/84kVgS91bD8>

Jean Glasberg the Chair of Newnham Croft expressed concern about all the growth arcs impacting Cambridge and asked: ‘What we can we do when consultations are tick box exercises and leading politicians from all political parties have signed up to the growth agenda?’

<https://youtu.be/-4DnGbxlwos>

The Chair thanked all the speakers and attendees for making it a most interesting evening, and said the FeCRA Committee looked forward to wider engagement around the issues that had been discussed.

WB 08.11. 22