

OxClean

Spring Clean 2008

*An Oxford Civic Society initiative
In partnership with Oxford City Council*

This report explains how the invitation to work in partnership with the Oxford Civic Society developed and how it produced outstanding results.

A note from Tony Joyce, Oxford Civic Society Chairman:

“The society has a long and honourable history of individual initiatives to brighten the face of the city, but these have not previously developed into a continuous and collaborative programme with the aim of enduring changes in behaviour and existing practices. Our Cleaner, Greener, Kinder Oxford Group now has the structure, with City Works help, to make a real and lasting difference. Experience elsewhere tells us that this can be done.”

The society first made contact with City Works in August of last year, enquiring into the possibility of visiting the depot in order to see for themselves what is involved in dealing with the daily issues and duties for maintaining refuse, recycling and cleansing services throughout Oxford. The proposed visit attracted a great deal of interest from their members. The visits had to be planned during a three week period, inviting 20 members at a time and these took place on 9th, 17th and 22nd October, 2007. They were given the opportunity to see the workload in both managing the service and operational requirements. The visit truly enlightened the members and the feedback was very complimentary. Members of the society felt more responsibility should be taken by the residents within the communities of Oxford creating a cleaner, safer, greener and friendly environment for all. Hence the proposal for OxClean 2008 seemed the answer.

An invitation was made by the society to Oxford City Council to work in partnership with the event. The council's role was being as an adviser and facilitator, delivery and collection service, helping with the publicity for the launch and collating accurate statistics for all to see.

On Friday 29th February, St Gregory the Great Catholic secondary school in Cricket Road, Cowley, was the venue for the official launch. The students took part in a ceremony attended by the Lord Mayor of Oxford Councillor John Tanner, the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire Hugo Brunner, City Councillors and officers, invited guests, fellow students and staff.

The aim was to involve a wide variety of local groups, organisations and residents in a three-fold, citywide action plan covering a three-day weekend: Friday 14th, Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th March:

- to clean up as much of Oxford's litter as possible in the course of the weekend,
- to draw attention to the problem and its causes,
- to start to change people's behaviour whilst improving the provision of disposal units.

The number of groups and volunteers who signed up was way beyond expectation. In total 99 groups registered, not including the many individuals who took it upon themselves to participate during the three day event. It was estimated that fifteen hundred people took part from residents' associations, neighbourhood groups, businesses, schools, youth groups, church congregations, student union members, allotment associations, canoeists, environmental groups, Rhodes Scholars and boat dwellers. It turned out to be a highly motivated, good-humoured event boosted by working to plan.

City Works was responsible for collecting litter and rubbish. The amount collected also turned out to be beyond expectations. It was felt we had a satisfactory recycling ratio, although it was never anticipated we would collect so much scrap metal.

Weights & Numbers

Recycling	Landfill	Scrap Metal	Syringes	Tyres
Glass, plastics, cardboard, paper		+		
		6 nos abandoned bikes	4 separate locations including one full bag	3 separate locations
990	3640	1100kg	58	8
	440	1900kg	2	4
	700		1	6
	100		1	
	640			
	600			
	1460			
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
990kg	7580kg	3000kg	62	18

What has been gained from the event is an unprecedented level of engagement and collaboration with local amenities and services, businesses, colleges and schools, individuals and resident associations, church groups and youth groups. Just as important, there is now an established agenda for 'change' in terms of a cleaner, more attractive city for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

What has been learnt is the shared experience of everyone who participated in the event, as well as those who helped, supported and encouraged it. We are determined to learn everything we can from that.