



Oxfordshire
Association for the Blind



Newsletter

August 2019

Update from the Chair of Trustees

In common with many charities OAB has had a challenging year. As you know, for several years our finances have not been good. We have had to rely on reserves to meet our costs and this depletion of reserves has not been matched by incoming funds. We are not in a unique position in this regard: many in the charity sector have been trying to come to terms with the effects of the recession and the continuing effects of very low interest rates. Anyone with a mortgage will have been delighted by this but anyone with savings will not! Since much of any charity's income comes from sources of invested money, whether it be individuals' savings or charitable trusts - or,

indeed, local councils - the effects have been very damaging. In order to maintain OAB's services we need to raise nearly £300,000 a year. That equates to a cost of about £150 per hour. The quality of our services has been maintained at a high level for many years but unless this cost is covered by income it will start to decline.

Trustees are well aware of all this – indeed we speak of little else. As a consequence, we have undergone a huge exercise over the past nine months to put together a re-financing package designed to see us into the future in good health. We have approached two big charitable lending organisations with a carefully-structured and comprehensive business plan put together through the hard work of the Director and Trustees,

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**Oxfordshire Association for the Blind
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Telephone: 01865 725 595

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Opening Hours: 10am to 3pm Mon-Fri



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**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

*OAB is a registered charity (No: 1140556)
and limited company (No: 07465300)*

>>> and that is currently being assessed by the lenders. Its purpose, among other things, is to allow us to increase the effort on the fund-raising side of OAB's activities. We have never been able in the past to devote sufficient resources to this important activity and now we have a chance to do so.

I mentioned the hard work put in by Clare Pearce, our Director, and it is with some regret that for personal reasons she has decided to move on. She has accomplished a huge round of essential tasks in her time with us and we now have an organisation whose systems are fitter for purpose.

OAB AGM 2019

The Trustees are hopeful that our efforts will bear fruit soon and we can look forward to a more positive report in 2020.

Meanwhile things are buzzing at Bradbury Lodge and out in the county. Keep an eye open to see what we have planned in the next few months. We had a successful day on 12th July to celebrate the great work done by volunteers of OAB. Laura Finnis has organised some wonderful events for VI children, from ice-skating to museum visits. The resource centre continues to be a busy place providing a wealth of helpful advice, learning and equipment.

With best wishes to you all for a happy summer

David Warr

On the back of this newsletter is an invitation to the OAB AGM being held on 10th September 2019. This year our speaker will be Professor Stephen Hicks. Stephen Hicks visited us five years ago to talk about his smart glasses project. He was working on a pair of glasses that will enhance a person's vision, particularly if you had peripheral vision loss. Five years on he has now established a company, Ox sight and the glasses are commercially available. Come along and find out what else Stephen and his team are working on and how the glasses have developed over the years.



Membership & Regular Giving

Thank you so much to everyone who became a member through our appeal in the last newsletter; membership of OAB is only £10 a year and it can help support the work we do. You can also give to OAB on a regular basis through a standing order: we have enclosed a form if you would like to do this - just a little bit each month can really help. Or if you would like to become a member and you haven't, please give us a call to request a form.

Oxtalk is celebrating 40 years as Oxford's Talking Newspaper

By Margaret Simpson, Chair of Oxtalk

In 1979 a small group of community-minded people realised there was a gap in the services for visually impaired people living in Oxford and the surrounding districts. So in February 1979 they set about organising and establishing a new charity called Oxtalk by fundraising to buy equipment, finding volunteers who would be interested in selecting the news items from the local papers, including all the free papers that there were 40 years ago; also finding volunteers to read the news items, volunteers to record the readers and volunteers who would help duplicate the cassettes so they could be posted out to listeners. A recording base was needed and free postal services arranged. All these preparations did not happen overnight but by July 1979 a recording base had been located at Radio Cherwell, the Hospitals Radio Station; the equipment had been bought, there were enough volunteers to make a start and the names of visually impaired people who

wanted to receive the weekly talking newspaper had been given to the Oxtalk volunteers.

For many years Joan Oldfield, a visually impaired listener herself, would sit in and listen to the group of readers reading the news items each week.

Joan was Oxtalk's 'quality control system' and if a reader mispronounced a word or was not reading clearly Joan would let the reader know and the item was read again! Joan might not have been able to see the readers but she made sure she could hear them clearly!

From 1979 until 2007 the weekly recording was sent out as a cassette tape recording. Each tape was checked before being sent out and this was quite a long process so the recordings were on a Tuesday evening, with the copying on a Wednesday evening.

Before digital technology, listening by cassette player was the only way to hear the Talking Newspaper and Oxtalk had around 300 listeners each week.

Once digital technology and the internet were available Oxtalk needed to change to the new technology, so recordings were sent out each week on a USB memory stick as well as being uploaded onto the Oxtalk website.

Oxtalk had to move to new premises in 2015 and is now based in Oxfordshire Association for the Blind's Oxford Offices. The weekly recording and copying all takes place on one evening, a Tuesday evening. Up to 130 listeners may receive Oxtalk each week as many other people now choose to listen via the website. There is still a need for Talking Newspapers but because of access to the internet the national and local news can be heard using many different formats.

Oxtalk is still a charity and in order to keep this a free service to visually impaired listeners there is an on-going need for fundraising. Oxtalk is promoted by awareness-raising through talks and leaflets, and its seamless service is provided by 55 volunteers.

To contact Oxtalk email mail@oxtalk.org.uk or visit the website www.oxtalk.org.uk



Oxtalk volunteers recording the weekly news

Gentle Chair Yoga

This is a Yoga class promoting connection to the breath, mind and body, involving seated or standing postures and a guided meditation.

The class promotes development of body awareness, self confidence, strength and co-ordination.

Students are very welcome to come for a trial class, with time given to raise questions, voice concerns and gain more information. Classes will be on Thursdays, starting from

5th September 11am-12noon at Oxfordshire Association for the Blind.

Classes will be free of charge through Yoga Quota, a charity set up to promote accessibility and inclusion to Yoga within the community. Please contact me to talk more and to book.

I am happy to contact you by phone and support you through the registration and booking process.

Looking forward to seeing you there. Relatives and carers are welcome to join in too. Jessamy Chanel 07971 444639

contact@jessamychanelyoga.com

Oxford City Home Visiting Scheme

Venetia, who is 85 and has four specific eye conditions, says that her volunteer Georgie (21) “ is a colossal help with shopping. We go on long walks together and we have fun. We share plenty of cake and friendship.” Georgie is just as enthusiastic about her time with Venetia, saying “I now consider Venetia to be my friend. It’s really nice to spend time with



her. Venetia is someone I would not have normally met, until OAB introduced us.”

If you live in Oxford City and would like to participate in this scheme, either as a client or a volunteer, please contact Laura Finnis (see details on page 2). There is quite a waiting list so if you are offering your services as a volunteer, I would be doubly delighted to hear from you! Thank you.



RETINA UK

WORKING FOR PEOPLE WITH INHERITED SIGHT LOSS

**RETINA UK LOCAL
PEER SUPPORT GROUP - OXFORD
THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER
Oxfordshire Association for the Blind, Bradbury Lodge
Gordon Woodward Way, OX1 4XL**

Do you live in Oxford or surrounding areas and want to meet other people with retinitis pigmentosa (RP) or an inherited retinal dystrophy?

We are looking for people to join our Group and share experiences, tips and information.

If you would like to attend the meeting or you have any further questions, please contact Clair Pudaruth at Retina UK:

T: 01280 821334
E: Oxford@RetinaUK.org.uk

Join our Facebook group: Retina UK Local - South East England (link via QR code, right)



Reg charity number: 1153851



Coffee Clubs & Meet-Ups



Oxford Coffee Mornings

Come and join us for an informal coffee morning for visually impaired people and carers/family. This is a chance to meet others, enjoy tea, coffee and biscuits, relax and be a part of the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind community. There is no charge, but donations are always welcome.

The upcoming dates for 2019 are as follows:

- **17th September**
- **15th October**
- **19th November**
- **17th December**

The coffee mornings will be held at OAB's Bradbury Lodge from 10.30am-12.30pm

If you would like to attend please call OAB on 01865 725595 or email: clientservices@oxeyes.org.uk

Didcot Coffee Club

If you live in the Didcot area and want to come along to an informal meet up of visually impaired people, come along to our Didcot coffee club. We'll be meeting at The Cornerstone Arts Centre café, 25 Station Road, Didcot, OX11 7NE on the 2nd Wednesday of every month from 10.30am until 12.30pm. The sessions are free of charge but you will need to purchase your own drink.

The remaining dates for 2019 are:

- **11th September**
- **9th October**
- **13th November**
- **11th December**

If you would like to join us give us a call on 01865 725595 or email:

clientservices@oxeyes.org.uk



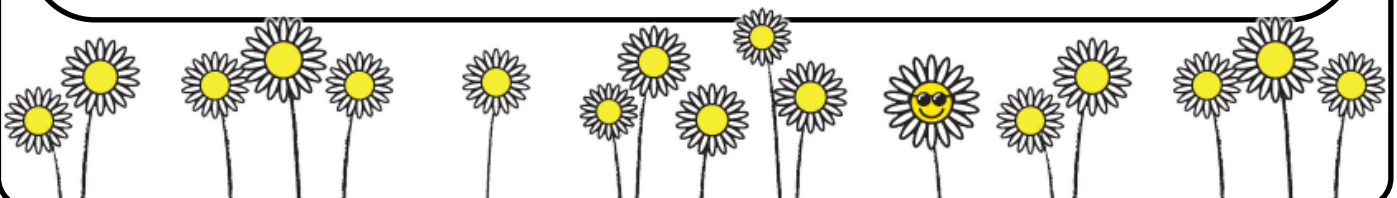
Support Team OAB!

A team of 15 OAB clients and supporters will be abseiling down the John Radcliffe Hospital on Saturday 14th September. The team would welcome your support by sponsoring them, either by calling OAB or visiting: www.justgiving.com/campaign/abseilOAB



Recycle for Good Causes

Earlier in the year we raised over £1,000 from items donated by you: thank you so much for sending these in. You can send us: used stamps, old jewellery, old mobile phones, laptops, tablets, watches, games consoles, old coins or bank notes, including foreign currency. You can either drop them in to the office or call to request a stamped envelope.



Talk by Dr Gurjeet Jutley

Dr Gurjeet Jutley will be back at OAB for another ophthalmology talk. This time he'll be covering the topic of eye conditions related to diabetes. He'll be speaking at OAB's Bradbury Lodge on Friday 18th October from 2pm. If you'd like to come along please contact Mark Upton on 01865 725595 or email: markupton@oxeyes.org.uk

Smart Speakers are getting smarter

If you have an Amazon Echo, you will know how useful they can be. Just by using your voice you can access a range of information and services, including: weather, traffic, news, music, audio books (through Audible), train times, audio games and quizzes, recipes, reminders and calendar updates, to name just a few!

Recently Amazon have partnered with the NHS to provide a voice-controlled symptom checker, so for example you will be able to say "Alexa what are the symptoms of flu?" and an answer will be

given. Although it is not a replacement for visiting your GP it is certainly a simple way you can check health information by using your voice.

Voice searching has risen rapidly over the past few years: devices like the Amazon Echo, Google Home and Apple's Siri have given people the ability to search the web and find out information in a very simple way. Experts have said that by 2020 over half of internet searches will be done via voice-assisted technology, which is definitely a good thing for those of us who have a visual impairment, making it easier to access information. If you'd like to find out more about technology and how it can help, give Mark Upton a call on 01865 725595 or email markupton@oxeyes.org.uk

Your Data

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter or you'd like to change the format to either: large print, audio memory stick or email then please call us on 01865 725595 or email admin@oxeyes.org.uk

Local Clubs and Groups

ActivEyes – 01865 725595.

Chipping Norton Group –
01608 810899.

Didcot Coffee Club - 01865
725595

Dreaming Spires ten pin
bowling – 01869 331778.

Henley Visually Impaired
Group – 01491 628284.

LOOK Oxfordshire – support for
families of visually impaired
children - 01189 722322.

Oxford Coffee Morning – 01865
725595.

Retina UK Group -
01235 511044.

Thame & District Society for the
Visually Impaired – 01865
725595.

‘VIBNO’ – Visually Impaired But
Not Old! - 01869 331778.

Wantage Blind Social Club -
01235 764646 or 01235
765849.

Witney Friends of the Visually
Impaired – 01865 725595.

Macular Support Groups

Abingdon - 01235 531857

Banbury - 01608 685293

Goring - 01865 725595

**Kidlington - 01865 376482
or 01865 373104**

Oxford - 01865 316245

Witney - 01993 771828.

Sensory Impairment Team

The County Council has an
excellent team of specially
trained staff supporting
people of all ages affected by
sensory impairment.

Their telephone number is:
01865 894935.

Carers Oxfordshire

A service for anyone who is
caring for another person and
would like some support.

Their number is: **0845
0507666**

OAB is assisted by:



The Chair and Executive Committee invite you to the
Annual General Meeting of

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

at **2.00pm on Tuesday 10th September 2019**

at the

North Oxford Association Community Centre,

Diamond Place, Summertown, Oxford,

OX2 7DP

Nominations for office and resolutions
must be made by a member by 31st August.

Guest speaker: Professor Stephen Hicks

RSVP

If you wish to attend, please let us know

Telephone: 01865 725595

Email: admin@oxeyes.org.uk

Or write your name on the dotted line

I

wish to attend the A.G.M

and return this page to

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind,

Bradbury Lodge, Gordon Woodward Way,

Oxford, OX1 4XL.