

OXFORD WEST END REGENERATION NEWSLETTER

Ice Rink Refurbishment



Oxford's popular ice rink on Oxpens Road has recently undergone major improvements. The rink was closed for three weeks in November, allowing for the installation of a state-of-the-art refrigeration unit, a new rink barrier, a replacement boiler

system, and upgrades to the changing and shower facilities. High level maintenance was also carried out on the ceiling area above the rink. Oxford City Council invested over £700,000 in the improvements to extend the life of the much-loved facility. General Manager Peter Ennals said: 'This is great news for the ice rink. The refrigeration unit was nearing the end of its life and this has ensured its smooth running for years to come while making it much more environmentally friendly and efficient'. The new look facility reopened in early December in time for the busy Christmas season.

Old Fire Station – What's New?

Plans to transform the Old Fire Station at Gloucester Green into a high quality centre for the arts and social enterprise are back on track following delays to the building project. Construction began in mid-2010 but was held up when the principal contractor ran into financial difficulty. A new contractor, Kingerlee, has since been appointed and work is scheduled to recommence in January 2011. A local firm, Kingerlee has worked in and around Oxford for almost 150 years and was involved in the construction of the original building, which opened in 1896. The Old Fire Station remained Oxford's main working fire station until as recently as 1971.

West End Scoops Two Oxford Preservation Trust Awards



Two contrasting West End projects were recognised for enhancing the local environment at the annual Oxford Preservation Trust awards in November 2010: the Hythe Bridge Pocket Park scheme and the 'Knowledge and Understanding' sculpture in Bonn Square. The Hythe Bridge scheme, a joint venture between British Waterways and the West End Partnership, was completed in summer 2009, making the gateway to the Oxford canal safer and more inviting to visitors and walkers. The scheme saw a raft of improvements to the waterside park, including landscaping, new seating, replanting and grass seeding, and the dredging of the end of the canal.

The Bonn Square sculpture (pictured left) by artist Diana Bell was commissioned as a gift from the City of Bonn to Oxford, and consists of two piles of books standing together, symbolising the close ties between the two university cities. The books are cast in bronze and the titles read Knowledge, Understanding, Friendship, Trust, alongside their German equivalents: Wissen, Verstandigung, Freundschaft and Vertrauen. To see it for yourself why not follow the Oxford Public Art Trail, a map and guide which showcases new and innovative art works within Oxford's public realm – see <http://tinyurl.com/WEpublicart>.

Spotlight on... Bonn Square

Since its redevelopment in 2008 the £2m transformation of Bonn Square has been the focus of robust debate, receiving both criticism and strong public support. As one of the few public spaces in Oxford's historic central core, reclaiming Bonn Square as a welcoming space for all whilst enhancing heritage elements, such as the Grade II listed Tirah memorial, was one of the most important tasks facing the West End Partnership. Two years on many of its doubters have been won over as the area is being used as it was originally intended – as a thriving, flexible space that provides a venue for cultural events and activities, such as the recent Christmas Light Night parade, and an attractive backdrop to the life of the city.



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Science Oxford Announces New West End Cultural Centre

In an exciting development for the West End, Science Oxford has announced its acquisition of Macclesfield House next to the Castle Mound, with a view to opening an inspirational £30 million centre for science and enterprise by 2015. The aim is to provide Oxford with a public face for science that will become a major tourist destination, attracting up to 100,000 visitors a year. The centre will showcase the inspiring discoveries and inventions that drive Oxford's economy, conveying the excitement of science and technology to young and old. The new centre will include an innovation and enterprise facility offering rentable office space to businesses alongside conference and corporate event facilities. Architects Foster + Partners aim to create a signature destination on the old Macclesfield House site (formerly Oxfordshire County Council's education department), and are developing their plans with a view to establishing a creative synergy between the historic Castle area and the state-of-the-art science centre. Keith Mitchell, leader of Oxfordshire County Council, said at the launch event that he hoped to see an access route from the Castle to the new facility, linking the two attractions as part of the ongoing regeneration of the West End. A digital planetarium, public plaza and café are also planned, along with three interactive galleries set to include a tour of science in Oxford.



Modern Art Oxford Draws Crowds



Modern Art Oxford is celebrating record visitor numbers since its redesign in April 2010. The West End attraction has seen a 50% increase in footfall since the £250,000 refurbishment was completed, with over 21,000 people viewing its exhibitions from June to August 2010. The Pembroke Street gallery reopened its doors on April 16th after a major redesign by dRMM architects, which saw a new entrance created on St Ebbe's Street and the interior yard transformed into a flexible social and artistic space. The existing building, which began its life as a brewery in the 1800s, was also redefined, creating a multi-use area for a programme of performance events, films, installations and a café bar, bringing life and vitality to the West End. The gallery has further cause to celebrate with the transformed "Yard" space being shortlisted at the World Architecture Festival Awards in the 'Interiors and Fit Out' category, as well as for an International Art and Work Award. The innovative scheme was also shortlisted in the 'Conversion' category of the Contractworld Awards, to be announced on January 15th.

Christmas in the West End

The annual Christmas Light Night parade has become a much-loved fixture on the Oxford calendar, attracting as many as 20,000 revellers to the streets of Oxford. The November 27th procession, which featured 400 local children with hand-made lanterns, began at Bonn Square and rolled through the city as the Christmas lights were switched on before culminating at Oxford Castle for the opening of the German-style Christmas market. Other West End venues, including the Museum of Oxford, New Theatre, Town Hall and the Playhouse, celebrated into the night with music, family activities, special exhibitions and free tours. For details of this superb event see <http://tinyurl.com/WEox-mas>.



Accessibility Page 'Go Live'

A new accessibility section of the Oxford West End website has recently been launched, outlining the many ways visitors can adjust their computer, browser, keyboard and mouse settings to make our site more intuitive and user-friendly. We hope it will enhance visitor experience and enable more people to understand, navigate and interact with our site. To see the page for yourself visit <http://tinyurl.com/WEaccessibility>.