

OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO 46
JULY/AUGUST 2002

Welcome to Issue no. 46 of OxPA's Newsletter.

- 1) Some of our members *still* have not renewed! Please send a cheque for only £3 (although donations are welcome) to Ray Jones, 72 Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9HU.** Otherwise those people who have not renewed will no longer receive this radical and intelligent Newsletter. Should any member have a complaint about OxPA or our Newsletter please do not keep silent, but contact us by e-mail (info@oxpa.org.uk) and speak up rather than just ceasing to renew.
- 2) Vulnerable Road Users Audit.** The County Council wants to develop an audit for all new developments to look at the effects of what is planned, on pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users, people on sticks and crutches, equestrians, blind people etc. OxPA wanted to be involved in compiling the Audit. The County Director of Environmental Services (David Young) said we would have a month to make comments on the draft. However (I wonder if any of our readers will be surprised by this?) Babtie, the consultancy firm often used by OCC, wrote up a draft which gave no quarter whatsoever to pedestrians' needs, and gave OxPA ***under a week*** to comment. Undaunted, Jill sent OxPA's comments off. For a long time we heard nothing, then Babtie said they were having a meeting to discuss issues **for cyclists and pedestrians (together) up in Birmingham** and would we go there. OxPA refused, and Jill contacted County Officer Andy Nellist, who is sending the draft guidelines back to Babtie so they can redo the Audit. **Apparently the team writing the Audit asked, "But where can we find out about what pedestrians want?" and when referred to the 'Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot' said, "Oh, we thought that was irrelevant."**
- 3) A piece of good news for a change - Botley Road is to be 'done' in this financial year.** Cycle and pedestrian routes are going to be altered where there is conflict, and pavement extensions are to be put in over minor side roads. Whatever it means, there will also be 'improvements' to pedestrian crossings.
- 4) The Headington and Marston Area Transport Strategy (HAMATS) is underway, with a major section of it concerned with access to the hospitals (JR and Churchill).** At both sites pedestrian access is very difficult and discouraging, and only vehicle users are really catered for properly. In addition, the Headington main street is impossible for pedestrians, being primarily a through route for endless London-bound traffic. **Measures planned are: traffic calming/traffic management schemes on Lime Walk, in Headington Quarry and Marston village; a study of measures to prevent or deter traffic from using Divinity Rd and Southfields Rd as rat-runs; on-street parking controls; and travel plans for the major employment sites, including the restriction of private parking for employees with reasonable alternative means of travel.** We need to be on our guard though, because there is an unconscious hierarchy with motorised vehicles, in this case buses, at the top, and cyclists and pedestrians tend to be pushed together and made to share the same cycle/footways.

5) Oxford's canal towpath, used by all types of transport except motorised, is eroding, to the extent that there are huge dangerous holes in it. The holes are not signed by warnings, and it is just a matter of time before somebody breaks a leg falling into one. Apparently the County is responsible, but because the footway is un-surfaced it counts as 'rural' which means there is no obligation to repair it. What were we saying about unconscious hierarchies?

6) A piece of interesting information; traffic growth is rising faster in Oxfordshire than the average growth for the UK. Air and noise pollution have therefore increased faster too. Traffic growth in rural Oxfordshire is *much* higher than the national average for rural areas.

7) European Car Free Day (Sunday September 22nd). Since we have not got the support of the County Council, Corinne (our hard-working heroine!) filled in a form to seek permission to close the street, having first contacted colleges and traders on Broad Street. But the proposed closure, which we may not get anyway, required us to fill in a public liability order, which means that **should anyone in Broad Street on September 22nd hurt themselves, or see their profits fall, or feel they have a case for complaint, whether related to OxPA or not, OxPA would officially be liable.** So after a long debate OxPA decided we would not send the form, and instead will organise an event without official closure of Broad Street.

8) Planning - Delivering a Fundamental Change. The Ramblers Association have drawn to our attention a Green Paper proposing the end of the County Structure Plan so that planning decisions are made on a regional basis. Along with this the right to be consulted on many major development plans will be lost. The Government's aim is to speed up what it considers to be a cumbersome planning process. Sadly this appears to go against their much-publicised support for grass-roots democracy. **If the Government does not hear anything against it, it will just go ahead with this extremely controversial plan.** Please write to your MP as soon as possible in the strongest terms. We stand in real danger of having rights we take for granted suddenly eroded.

9) Elder Stubbs Festival, where OxPA will have a Stall, is on Saturday 17th August.

Our next two meetings are on Mondays July 8th (note the change of week), and August 19th, at 7pm, in the Town Hall. Please come, and bring a friend. Everyone is welcome!