



# Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

January 2012

## Welcome to Newsletter 101 of the Oxford Pedestrians Association

Despite gloomy predictions the weather over the festive period at the darkest time of year has been surprisingly mild and excellent for walking, with reports of roses and hollyhocks flowering throughout. However we could still get a freeze, as February often has spells of snow or ice, which in Oxford means pavements and footways will be dangerously slippery except outside shops in the city centre. The only parts of the streets which are sanded/salted seem to be the middle of roads, but it doesn't have to be like this! Living Streets' has a campaign for ice-free pavements which increasing numbers are signing up to, and in response Bath and North East Somerset Council has taken practical action by launching its 'Snow Wardens' scheme. The council recruited volunteer wardens across 16 areas, who have received stocks of salt, a hand-driven spreader and appropriate training from the council to help them clear icy pavements in their area. Councillor Roger Symonds, Cabinet Member for Transport, who has signed up in support of Living Streets' campaign on ice-free pavements, said *"This scheme has really caught the imagination of people who want to serve their communities by clearing local roads and pavements of snow and ice. The equipment and training will be provided by the council. If successful the scheme could be expanded next year."* Tony Armstrong, Chief Executive of Living Streets, said 'Councils have a legal duty to keep pavements safe and this kind of initiative shows that, where councils provide strong leadership and take action on icy pavements, communities are willing to get involved and help out in their neighbourhoods. Councillors and officers can look at our 'Winter Contract' and case studies for inspiration on taking action in their area - and if you want your council to follow Bath and North East Somerset's example this winter, make sure you let your councillors know.'

**STOP PRESS: Traffic signals.**  
**Let us have your questions for Mike Best's talk on Tuesday 17 January: details below.**

**Pavements cracking under pressure**  
A new report reveals the true financial cost of pavement parking to councils. Written by **Guide Dogs for the Blind** using the Freedom of Information Act to obtain their figures from more than 400 local councils, the report, **Cracking under Pressure**, reveals that councils in Britain collectively spent more than £1 billion in repairing broken pavements between 2006 and 2010. An urban council typically spends tens of millions on pavement and kerb repairs as well as paying out hundreds of thousands or even

millions of pounds in compensation to people injured on badly maintained pavements. Pavement parking is one of the most common causes of damage to pavements: West Sussex County Council says that nearly 20% of cracks are caused this way because pavements and kerbs are not designed to take the weight of vehicles. Hence the high cost in upkeep, not to mention the extra hazard to pedestrians. Parking on pavements also creates an obstacle for pedestrians making it difficult for mothers with pushchairs, wheelchair users and other people to use the pavement safely. At worst, pavements obstructed with poorly parked cars can stop visually impaired people from being able to leave their homes or get to the local

shops. David Cowdrey, Guide Dogs' Head of Public Policy and Campaigns, said:

***"We were staggered to discover how much councils are having to spend each year on repairing pavements and paying compensation claims, costs that could be easily avoided ... Every single one of us is paying for this through our taxes. We'd like to see local authorities take action to stop illegal parking on pavements and invest the money back in to vital local services."***

As we reported in Walktalk 97 and on our website, new legislation in 2011 has given local authorities power to prevent this abuse and save tax payers millions. Living Streets' Chief Executive, Tony Armstrong, concluded that taking action on pavement parking is in everyone's interests, including councils'. It is also a reminder that planned, coordinated street management and maintenance is far more efficient than making reactive repairs when problems like potholes and cracked pavements are already severe.

### **Controlled Parking Zones**

The Guide Dogs report is especially timely, since our Highway Authority is about to launch another CPZ for East Oxford. While an efficient CPZ is desperately needed in East Oxford's crowded streets, it is clear that legitimising pavement parking can only be a short-term solution, which may temporarily please local car-owners, but will cost all of us, including those without cars, a lot of money, as well as depriving our communities of safe and pleasant streets. We all have a stake in how city pavements are maintained, so make sure your voice is heard before our pavements are transformed into parking lots. OxPA still has some of the official Police/County Council no-pavement parking stickers for your use if your neighbourhood is plagued by unsocially-parked cars.

### **Station Pedestrian and Cycle Access**

After several attempts to get local councillors to take an interest in the footway to nowhere at the railway station (or more accurately the footway/cycleway from north Oxford and Jericho straight into the streams of traffic at the rail station), OxPA and members of cycling groups got together to protest. The issue is that the footway/cycleway has been narrowed by building works to a single track width, and the pavement which used to join with it at the end for pedestrians has been completely removed to make way for a new car park entrance for the Business School. This leaves vulnerable road users absolutely no option but to navigate streams of traffic in a busy road. Campaigning is

continuing to try to resolve the problem before someone is injured or killed.

### **Winter Stalls**

We held successful stalls at both the OneWorld and the Green Winter Fairs before Christmas, gaining new members and publicising our campaigns for pedestrians. We look forward to more opportunities to meet the public at open-air fairs during the summer. Contact Felicity (tel 251212) if you would like to be involved.

### **Pavement Cycling**

OxPA has been invited to speak at a meeting in Headington on Tuesday February 21st. The questions posed are:

*Should Headington have safer cycle routes?*

*Should more be done to help pedestrians?*

This is a non-party-political Ward Focus Meeting on cycling- and pedestrian-related issues; please come along if you live in Headington and have views on how pavements are used - and abused - in this part of Oxford. Tuesday 21 February, 6pm - 8pm, Headington School, London Road

### **Subscriptions are now due.**

We prefer to run annual membership from January to December for everyone, to make the growing membership of OxPA easier to administrate, so this month is the time to pay your 2012 subscription if you have not already done so. Please bring cash or cheques to the next meeting or send to OxPA Secretary (address below). Or make out a standing order with your bank. For £5 you get 6 newsletters, notice of monthly meetings and walks - and help to fund our activities.

### **Next meetings**

**January 17th (NOTE EARLIER DATE)** 7pm at the Town Hall: "Pedestrian Crossings - how they work" with guest speaker Mike Best, of Oxfordshire County Council.

**February 28th;** Guest Speaker Gordon Reid, City Centre Manager, who will update us and answer questions on accessibility in the City Centre.

### **Contacts**

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**Web-site:** [www.oxpa.org.uk](http://www.oxpa.org.uk)

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