

# Oxford Pedestrians Association



OXFORD PEDESTRIANS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER MARCH/APRIL 1999  
ISSUE NO. 26

**Welcome to Issue no. 26 of OxPA's Newsletter!** Although nothing has changed for the better for pedestrians in Oxford recently, walkers have been on several agendas, on both the City and the County Councils. The Powers That Be are at least paying lip service to our needs. Hopefully from this will follow action, especially if we keep reminding them we are real and exist and have voices which we want them to hear. Even if readers write one letter, make one phone call, or attend one meeting a year (and I'm sure we all do more than that) we are making our presence felt. Our membership currently stands at 84, which is enough people, theoretically, for at least one letter/phonecall etc. per week. Let's make the final year of the millennium the year that makes a difference for pedestrians in Oxford!

**1) County Walking Strategy.** The County Officer in charge of this, Craig Rossington, came to talk to our January meeting. The Strategy is pedestrian-centred, with recommendations such as that pedestrians should be in the centre of transport planning and that it is not enough to have pedestrianised areas in towns if the routes leading to those areas are impossible for anyone outside a vehicle to negotiate. Sadly, Mr Rossington's brief covers the whole County **excluding Oxford City**, for which the City Council is thought to be doing a separate plan. But now it turns out the City only intend to adapt bits of their Local Plan to take pedestrian needs into account, instead of researching and writing up a proper Strategy. Jenny investigated and was told that the City will be bound by the County Strategy, which begs the question why the City is specifically excluded from that. The County thinks that Peter Mann is doing a City Walking Strategy; perhaps one or two letters or phonecalls from members simply inquiring about this would not come amiss... OxPA sent a submission to the consultation on the draft Walking Strategy. Anyone who would like a copy can contact Jenny (contact no. at end of Newsletter). Concern was expressed by groups like CPRE and the Ramblers Association about a lack of consultation. OxPA found out it was happening via the National Pedestrians' Association! **The Strategy will be discussed at the next meeting of Environmental Committee, in County Hall on March 24th. Members of public can attend, and may address the meeting if they give at least 24 hours notice.**

**2) Pedestrian Officer.** City Councillors at Full Council voted against creating a post of Pedestrian Officer, arguing that it would 'marginalise pedestrian issues.' When asked why therefore they have a Cycling Officer, the reply was that, 'Cycling has more technical issues.' There is no comment to be made here as it speaks for itself, and demonstrates just how important we walkers and our technical needs are to those we elected to represent us.

**3) Sadly, despite many protests from local residents, OxPA, Cyclox, Cyclists Touring Club and several individual cyclists and walkers, not to mention the Councillors who represent the area, a cycle route is to be put on the pavement of Parks Road, in the centre of Oxford.** It will run right in front of University Park and the Museum, which are heavily used by walkers at all times of year, especially in summer. Apparently it is yet another 'vital part of Oxford Transport Strategy,' the aim of which is to 'improve conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.' Your Newsletter Editor wonders if the mind(s) behind the strategy are those of regular walkers themselves, or drivers in Council offices merely looking at maps and vehicle flows.

**4) Grave concern has been expressed over the state of the station site junction as workers dismantling the Grade II\* listed LMS building have run into problems and delays.** All the traffic islands have been removed, traffic lights along the route have been switched off, and a temporary roundabout has been put in front of the Royal Oxford Hotel. OxPA members, especially Jenny, have done all they can to try to get something done, but whilst everyone approached (including the County Chief Executive John Harwood, who



went down to look at the issue, and the police who said the junction was 'too dangerous' for them to send an officer down to monitor the situation) agreed that it was a problem, nobody was willing to take responsibility for changing anything. The result is continuing nightmarish traffic congestion and danger, a free-for-all for motorists, who drive along bad-temperedly, unwilling to stop for anyone to cross the road, and it has become a no-go area for anyone not in a vehicle. Added to the misery and danger is the pollution. **For a plan supposedly intended to benefit pedestrians it is not doing well so far. Please contact the following County Officers if you wish to comment or complain; John Harwood, David Young, Roger Williams. The switchboard no. is 792422, and they will put you through.**

**5) Please note the National Pedestrians' Associations new address at the end of this Newsletter.**

**6) Two pedestrian motions went to the County's Highway and Road Safety Sub-Committee. The first was trying to get a bylaw passed to make pavement-parking illegal, enforceable by the SPA wardens.** Christina spoke eloquently to them on the subject, and your Newsletter Editor spoke too. Sadly although Councillors seemed minded to pass it, on the subsequent advice of Officers they voted against it. Reasons given by Officers were that they had already done an awareness-raising campaign on pavement parking a few years ago, and that the Director was aware of the problem. David Young, the Director of Environmental Services, offered to write a report on the subject for the next meeting of the Sub-Committee, which was agreed. This, though a small thing, is something, unlike the result of **the other motion, calling for pedestrian crossings on some of the routes leading across the unofficial inner ring road into the centre of Oxford.** This motion was turned down by Councillors because it referred to the City and not the whole County; because not enough accidents had been recorded at those points (Hythe Bridge St., Worcester College to Gloucester Green, St. John's St. to Gloucester Green, St Giles, the University area and Longwall St.); because some crossings are already being thought about (not on desire lines and not across this traffic dominated route); and because OTS will apparently solve the majority of pedestrian problems in Oxford centre.

**7) OxPA has had success in getting the timing for a crossing improved for pedestrians by contacting Ron Collis at the County Council (tel. no. 815658).** If any member has concerns about lights which do not give pedestrians enough (or any!) time to cross, he is the man to contact. Note that most pelican crossings are set on a 30 second vehicle priority time (ie if you push the pedestrian button immediately after the pedestrian phase, it will allow vehicles 30 seconds of green time, before it changes again to the pedestrian phase). However, there is no general legislation about what it should be. In Teignmouth, there is a pelican crossing with a 15 second vehicle green phase, where the delay to pedestrians is minimal! (technical note supplied by Patrick Lingwood)

**8) Representatives of Thames Water (the woman from their PR dept., and one of the workers on the ground) are coming to our March meeting to talk about how they affect pavements when they do their work.** Please come with any questions or comments you may have. Non-members are also welcome (of course we hope they'll be so impressed that they'll join).

**Our next two meetings are on Mondays March 15th and April 19th at 7.30pm in the Town Hall. Please come, and please feel free to bring a friend, relative, or any other interested person. Everybody is welcome!**

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