

OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO. 58
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Welcome to Issue number 58 of OxPA's Newsletter!

With a heavy heart your Newsletter Editor reports the death of Oxford City Cllr Mike Woodin, aged 38, who despite never having smoked, died early in the morning of July 9th, of aggressive lung cancer. Mike was a great believer in the rights of walkers, who himself walked and cycled everywhere. He provided OxPA with information and support since our beginning, and attended all of our demonstrations and street celebrations. Mike never lost sight of the ordinary person; the person walking to catch a bus and crossing hostile roads, the people who breathe polluted air every day in Oxford city centre, and those who are unable to leave their homes because the walking environment has become too difficult to negotiate. Oxford's walkers have lost, among other things, a champion for OxPA's cause, and he is, and will be, sadly missed.

1. **Now that summer is here** Oxford is packed with walkers; tourists, visitors, and local people who come out on foot when it is not too cold. **However despite all OxPA's meetings with representatives of Thames Water and Southern Electric, it is still the norm for footways to be blocked by vehicles and signs to drivers whilst road-works are underway. Please be aware that this is not legal. If you experience any problems of this nature in Oxford city, ring the Area Office on 844300.** Either the obstruction should be moved, or accessible and safe alternative access should be provided.

2. **At our May meeting we had guest speaker Mr David McKibben, Oxfordshire County Council's new Head of Transport.** He commutes daily by train from Winchester since joining OCC in January. Since the departments within the County have been restructured there are three main areas dealing with transport throughout Oxfordshire: (i) policy and strategy; (ii) devising, promoting and planning the programme; and (iii) implementation. **For those needing to contact representatives of specific issues, Highway Maintenance is under Brian Fell, the Capital Programme is Richard Dix, and Richard Dudding is the Director of Environment and Economy.** Mr McKibben joined Oxfordshire with an impression of innovation and a forward-thinking strategy, but as we who live here are aware, Oxfordshire has struggled to deliver to its targets. **By 2011 Oxfordshire is committed to increasing walking by 15% and cycling by 20%.** When asked how these will be achieved Mr McKibben explained that there is no one solution except 'promoting sustainable transport', 'being realistic at taking account of all modes in a sustainable integrated strategy' and 'getting that balance right'. He added that 'education will help'. **Mr McKibben sees no prejudice against pedestrians in the thinking of the Council and says all pressure groups feel marginalised.** A cost-benefit analysis of Control Plus (the traffic wardens) is about to take place. **Regarding implementing 20mph zones and Home Zones, Mr McKibben said Home Zones are good but very expensive to set up, and that the police are opposed to 20mph zones unless they include some actual traffic calming on the ground.** Regarding zebra crossings, we were told that, **'Zebra crossings are still in our tool box but we have more choices now.'** Mr McKibben believes OCC could 'consult smarter than they do.' In terms of Oxford's appalling air quality, the council is focussing on the bus part of the problem, encouraging bus companies to install cleaner engines, to switch their engines off whilst not moving, and to switch people from cars to buses.

No mention was made of how pollution problems on car-congested streets like Hythe Bridge St, Worcester Place, and Beaumont St will be tackled.

We sent a list of questions to David MacKibben, which he has replied to in writing. Anyone wanting a copy please contact myself or Corinne (details at end of Newsletter). They will also appear in the next Newsletter.

3. We have been fortunate to have a media student attached to us for three weeks. Bruce Gerry is studying Media with Cultural and Communication at Trinity and All Saints College in Leeds, and has written an article for us:

A Visitor's View of Walking in Oxford

Being new to Oxford, and indeed to OxPA, it has been interesting and eye-opening to discover just what the City of Oxford has to offer its pedestrians. Having been well versed in the cultural and social delights of the city, the museums, punting and so forth, I was eager to see just how pedestrians fared amongst their ring-road rivals.

As my lodgings are situated north of Summertown, gaining access in and around the city is vital, and without my usual mode of transportation (my trusty bike) my reliance on footpaths has been great. Where the problem lies is not access to the city centre. In fact the 40 minute walk through Summertown and beyond University Park into Cornmarket Street is easy and enjoyable. It is when it comes to access to surrounding areas, such as Cowley and Haedington, pedestrians have been somewhat pushed to the sidelines. In order to reach the Tesco in Cowley without running the gauntlet, commonly known as the A40, I would have to detour into the City Centre before reassigning myself back on route via the Cowley Road bus. Not only does the current lack of pedestrian walkways deny me access to Tescos, but also to the newly-built Multiplex and Football Stadium.

My stay in Oxford has barely exceeded two weeks, and although I have been keen to familiarise myself with problems pedestrians face, it has not been my top priority to find faults with the lack of footpaths. The problems I have encountered are those which any walker is facing on a daily basis. The Government's ongoing battle to reduce traffic congestion around the country seems increasingly unrealistic when no real effort is made to cater for those of us without vehicles.

From what I have encountered in Oxford, cyclists seem to fare slightly better. Yet there is still a lack of consistency in some of the cycleways. Many cease to exist at the most critical places. It seems the Councils are confident that all drivers are aware and considerate of cyclists, which is not necessarily the case.

The Government must address safety issues. Increasing the number of road crossing points would be a good place to begin, and ensuring all pavements are wide and consistent is vital.

Our next two meetings are on Mondays July 19th and August 16th, at 7pm, in St Aldates Centre, Pembroke Street. Please come, and bring a friend. Everyone is welcome!

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