

## OXFORD PEDESTRIANS NEWSLETTER NO 59

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2004

**Welcome to Issue no 59 of OxPA's Newsletter!** Your Newsletter Editor is currently in Girona, northern Spain, writing this, and it is interesting to observe pedestrian provision in another country. Although there are no pavement extensions, every side street in Girona, however narrow, has a zebra crossing giving walkers priority, and drivers observe this to the extent of stopping before people step onto the road. There are crossings on all desire lines on main roads, even close to roundabouts, (which are not the no-go areas they are in Britain, often having a garden, play park or fountain in the middle) and most lights change quickly once the button is pressed. They all stay green for walkers crossing for a long enough time to allow the slowest pedestrians time to cross easily. In the centre of town is a huge pedestrian area, with thriving street cafes and speciality shops. There is a long double row of trees on each of the main pedestrianised streets, and plenty of benches. On all streets are also waste bins, regularly emptied. There are several public drinking fountains. The pedestrianised streets are thronging with walkers at all times, with children running about freely. Interestingly, the local people are fit and slim, and the only obese people in evidence are tourists. Also interestingly, the streets and buildings are clean and pleasant, and the drivers courteous towards other road users! RoX could learn a thing or two about shop opening hours from here; people shop in the evenings and everyone, including children, workers, residents, tourists and wheelchair users, promenaded the streets at dusk. Unlike in Oxford it is clear that small businesses do well here. Street performers are encouraged, and it is all very pleasant indeed. Shows what is possible!

**1) Car-Free day is on Wednesday September 22<sup>nd</sup>.** Several OxPA members intend to either leaflet stationary cars during rush hour on the 21st, with a leaflet about car-free being carefree, and/or to man an OxPA stall at midday on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, at the Carfax end of Cornmarket, and/or to attend a demo at 5pm on the 22<sup>nd</sup> on St Giles. **Anyone wishing to join in or help with any of these, which will be fun, please contact Corinne, whose details are at the end of this Newsletter.**

**2) Speed cameras.** New legislation will soon allow police forces to install cameras without (as at present) having to wait until four people have died on the roads at that point. The Chief Constable of North Wales, Richard Brunstrom, seems to be the prime mover in enforcing speed limits and resisting the motoring lobby. Corinne is writing on behalf of OxPA to support him in his work.

**3) The answers to questions sent to Mr David McKibben, Oxfordshire County Council's Head of Transport, are as follows:** (i) Policy on zebra crossings. **'The County Council is still using zebra crossings where considered appropriate...The scheme for Cowley Rd includes two new zebra crossings...New zebras are also planned for Abingdon and Banbury.'** (ii) Criteria for waiting times at controlled crossings (too long, people cross before the signal to do so), and what monitoring is there of this? **'The point made is recognised as a frustration and at times a danger, hence the development of PUFFINS, which are appropriate at some locations but not others.'** *N.B. If OxPA can give four top 'problem installations' Mr McKibben promises to commission a review of those sites to decide, if appropriate, to adjust those timings. Please make a note of such, and bring them to one of our next two meetings.* (iii) How is the County planning to increase walking rates in Oxford? **'The Integrated Transport Strategy approach for urban areas is specifically designed for mode shift away from cars, spending is designed to improve pedestrian environment and safety; also Community safety programme targeting accident problems, including pedestrians; Education and marketing through Better Ways to School; Work Travel Plans - planned to increase work in this area particularly with partnerships such as Health Authority.'** (iv) Targets for walking and cycling. **'LTP targets for journey to work by 2011 are - cycling 20% (of all journeys), and walking 15% of all journeys.'** (Newsletter Editor's comment: The County is not on track to meet these targets.)

(v) What is the policy on pedestrians crossing side roads accessing the main road? **'Raised side street crossings...where pedestrian flow is high. The cost of treating all side roads in urban areas would be prohibitive, but whenever changes are made side road crossings are usually considered.'**

(vi) Why do the thousands of pedestrians walking across the raised crossing Oxford's railway station have to give way to traffic? **'The forecourt of the Station is private land...the County Council has no direct control over the layout and priorities set out for traffic and people movement.'**

(vii) How to improve OCC staff's understanding of what people on foot really need? **'Although cross-discipline awareness has already been improved I accept we should not be complacent and I shall raise your concerns with my Group Managers. The role of special interest groups such as OxPA is valued – as part of the scrutiny of the Council's work.'**

(viii) Could the process of consultation be reformed so that residents can have some input BEFORE detailed plans are drawn up.? **'Problem of cost-effectiveness, Money spent on consultation is not available for the actual scheme. The Cowley Road project has tried a new approach, and we are learning valuable lessons from that. I am personally committed to engagement as much as consultation. Issue of lights at the top of George St/north end of Cornmarket. OxPA was consulted at OTS meetings. No detailed consultation was carried out for this crossing as it was deemed 'appropriate' through internal consultation.'**

(ix) How can we ensure that money received by Oxford on the basis of a pedestrian and cycle-friendly LTP is used for those purposes? **'The County Council has control over how the spending decisions are made but there is a requirement to report to the DfT through the Annual Progress Report on what money has been spent on and what the effect has been against objectives and targets, which include walking and cycling levels.'**

(x) The LTP and City Structure Plan both call for improvements to footpath networks in the City. In what specific ways do you intend to (a) develop the network in the near future away from roadside pavements, thereby encouraging health and recreation, and (b) to secure the necessary cooperation with other departments and local authorities? **'Development control decisions may require developers to put in links – both within large sites such as at the JR Hospital, and at smaller sites linking to the network via the shortest route. In general the network of roads and pavements in urban areas are the routes which meet pedestrians' requirements. Land is most often at a premium in these areas which can produce disproportionate costs for such measures. However, opportunities are taken as they arise. In rural areas the Sustrans network encourages access by walking as well as for cycling. OCC's Countryways/quiet lanes programme is set to deliver safer and more pleasant rural walking routes. The Council's Rights of Way Officer is in place to ensure that legal public access routes are maintained.'**

**4) Pedestrian access to, and at, the to-be-expanded Churchill Hospital.** There is no continuous pedestrian access on to or on the site. Although the deadline for comments has expired it is worth making your comments known. **The application reference is FPS/N3100/7/03, and the person overseeing the plan is Paul Semple of Oxford City Council, tel no. 252156.**

**Our next two meetings are on Monday September 20th and Monday October 18th at 7pm in St Aldates Centre, Pembroke Street. Please come, and bring a friend. Everyone is welcome!**

#### **Contact Numbers**

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