

**OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO. 62
MARCH/APRIL 2005**

Welcome to Issue Number 62 of OxPA's Newsletter!

In the last Newsletter it was stated that certain County Officers had 'discouraged interested parties' from publicising air pollution data. Following dialogue between a County representative and your Newsletter Editor, here is a clarification: County Officers rightly do not support the publicising of false data claiming that breathing in Oxford is like smoking 60 cigarettes per day. They do not object to accurate publicising of pollution figures (see para. 2 below).

- 1) One of the most major items of current interest for walkers of Oxford is the potential Westgate development.** As it is at the moment the whole area is a no-go area for pedestrians. By day it is full of traffic, and by night the area is lit with an orange glow and deserted, and can feel positively sinister. But will a huge US style shopping mall with a new multi-storey car park deliver the very best improvements residents and vulnerable road users could desire? Although there is an outline plan it has not been officially approved, and nothing in it is fixed or final. Capital Shopping have so far appeared very willing to listen to the input of interested parties and individuals. They have taken on board the desire to pedestrianise Queen Street, but have not made plans for this as detailed as their plans for the siting and size of the new car park. **You can contact them by writing to: Capital Shopping Planning Consultants, Nathaniel Lichfield Partners Ltd, 14 Regents Wharf, All Saints Street, London N1 9RL. Or telephone them on: 0207 837 4477. Or e-mail n.winch@mnassociates.co.uk.**
- 2) Is it safe to breath Oxford's air or not?** Local media reports are consistently confusing, some claiming there is a risk and some that there is none. In fact there are **two types of air pollution monitor readings, which record 'hourly mean' and 'annual mean'**. The hourly mean for Oxford is mostly within legal limits, so if you pop into the centre of Oxford for an hour or two occasionally there is no significant health risk. **However, annual mean readings show that for those people who live, work or study in Oxford centre all year round, the air is indeed toxic in many locations.** The legal 'safe' limit for the traffic-related air-pollutant nitrous oxide is **21 parts per billion (ppb)**. Nitrous oxides are linked to lung irritation and respiratory complaints. **The worst affected streets include; Station Junction (38ppb), Hythe Bridge St (24ppb), Worcester St (29ppb), St Giles (32ppb), George St (40ppb), Queen St (49ppb), St Aldates (31ppb), High St (39ppb), Magdalen St (35ppb) and Park End St (29ppb).**
- 3) The perennial issue of pavement parking goes on, and Oxfordshire has ceased to provide stickers to put on offending vehicles.** Mr Ian Harris, Safety Officer, said the expense is not justified as there is no statistical evidence showing that parked cars cause injuries or deaths. However, parked

cars on pavements do cause broken kerbs, loss of pedestrian space, inconvenience, danger (in that pedestrians may have to walk in the road to pass), and a sense of great disempowerment for walkers. Suggested solutions at our January meeting included; **buying OxPA's stickers from Ray for pavement parked cars, lobbying MPs to make Oxford a 'No Parking On Pavements' zone, and ringing the police with the car registration number and reporting it as an obstruction on the footway.** PC Al Muir is particularly concerned with issues of cars on East Oxford pavements and encourages people to write and complain. Meanwhile the County Council is looking again at proposals to charge Oxford's car owners for parking on public highways. This is a hot issue with many car owners very much against and many other people very much for it. However the motoring lobby is a powerful one, so if you are in favour of residents' parking charges, please speak up for yourself and others who will not, by writing to the Transport section of the County, at Speedwell St, and letting them know.

- 4) **Following urging by Cyclox Representative James Styring at the South, Central and West Area Committee, the City Council Executive Board are to consider the request for the City Council to support European Car Free Day in Oxford.** By the time of our April meeting we will know the outcome of this. **Please consider making representations to the Executive Board c/o Oxford Town Hall, urging them to agree to support European Car Free Day in Oxford on September 22nd.**

- 5) **Residents Car Parking charges again!** OxPA would like to hear members' views on this. The idea is to charge car-owning residents £50 per annum (less than £1 a week) for the privilege of using general public space to keep their cars in. The problem is that historically this has been free, so there would have to be a perceived positive reason for paying this charge. **The County was intending to use the money, should the scheme go ahead, to pay for parking improvements elsewhere in the County, but there are strong arguments in favour of the money going towards city centre improvements.**

Our next two meetings are on Tuesdays March 22nd and April 26th, at 7pm, in Oxford Town Hall. Please come, and feel free to bring a friend. Everybody is welcome!

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