

OXFORD PEDESTRIANS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO. 84
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2008

Welcome to Newsletter number 84 of Oxford Pedestrians' Association! This is being written only a few days since the County Council's 'Transform Oxford' vision was released, which can be seen as an initial triumph for pedestrians and all vulnerable road users, in that it gives priority to walkers over a reasonably wide area of the city centre; something which has been sorely needed and worked for over a very long time. However a great deal of work is still to be done to ensure that it happens, and that it is about reducing traffic and air pollution in Oxford, and not just pushing it elsewhere in our city centre. [See paragraph 3 below.]

- 1) The inspector running the Public Inquiry into whether Jericho Boatyard could be developed by Spring Residences came out in favour of the City Council and local residents' groups, and against the unsuitable development** which would have affected Oxford's walkers by ruining views of Jericho and St Barnabas Church from the popular canal towpath in the city centre. This result is a huge triumph in favour of local communities and democracy. Now the City Council is working to find out if Spring Residences intend to resubmit a better proposal, or indeed whether they wish to sell the land to somebody who could develop it in a more appropriate way.
- 2) The Department for Transport has published a new paper 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System,'** which purports to set out the carbon-reducing way forward for transport in Britain. However it falls at the first hurdle, because it assumes we need to continue accommodating a growth in car use [and aviation]. The paper says lots of sensible things like we can't afford to ignore climate change, but its practical recommendations include letting traffic use hard shoulders on motorways, widening tight junctions so the traffic 'flows' more smoothly, and offsetting increased carbon outputs by paying someone else to reduce their carbon output elsewhere. **So it is not really sustainable, more a desperate and depressing use of loopholes to continue a policy of not changing anything really for as long as possible.**
- 3) 'Transform Oxford', the County Conservatives' proposal for Oxford City could be wonderful** if it was about reducing through-traffic in order to release much-needed safe space for walkers and other vulnerable road users. But when one looks at the detail there are worrying aspects of it, such as St Giles being kept as wide as a motorway, traffic lights being removed from Frideswide Square [which may improve traffic flows but will impede and imperil pedestrians], and using The Plain as a kind of bus loop, when it is congested and dangerous enough to walkers already. The brains behind the scheme are **Councillors Keith Mitchell [Leader of the County Council] and Ian Hudspeth [Transport Tsar on the County Council]. They can be contacted on keith.mitchell@oxfordshire.gov.uk & ian.hudspeth@oxfordshire.gov.uk. Or write to them c/o County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND with your thoughts or questions.**

- 4) **Following the County Council’s consultation on a 20mph scheme for ‘most parts of Oxford’, which received overwhelming support, Life Begins @ 20 was delighted to see their campaign for a truly city-wide 20mph scheme supported in the Oxford Times poll: 58% voted for all the main roads to be included** [rather than just the residential roads and a few parts of two main roads]. The County has so far only reported on the response received in the short questionnaire, which left no space to comment on a wider scheme; we are awaiting the outcome of a full analysis of all the written responses.
- 5) **There are still over 3000 deaths each year on UK roads, which means eight families each day are suddenly bereaved by a death on the road. RoadPeace hopes that the new charge of Causing Death by Careless Driving will affect drivers’ attitudes and reduce the death toll further.** One promising initiative is American car insurers’ Progressive Corporation use of a black box to monitor how people drive; fast accelerations, sudden braking etc. From these readings an “aggression level” can be used to fix insurance premiums; **careful drivers can save up to 60% on their premiums.**
- 6) **At our AGM we welcomed guest speaker Sir Muir Gray, who gave a stimulating talk on the ‘10,000 steps’ campaign to increase national walking levels.** During the following discussion it was proposed that OxPA and Sir Muir should cooperate to organise a conference next year on urban design for walking.
- 7) **Local Transport Plan 3 [LTP3], which is the blueprint for transport changes in Oxford over the coming 4 years, is about to be formulated by a cross-party working group on the County Council.** It will be consulted on before being finally published. LTP2 was a sad disappointment, giving nothing to pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users except a promise to speed up traffic through junctions; **we hope LTP3 will be more genuinely sustainable in tone.**
- 8) **We have now sold more than 550 copies of Oxpa’s book, ‘Oxford on Foot,’ and our many outlets are still asking for more!** If you haven’t bought one yet, or want to buy one for a Christmas present, get in touch with **Corinne [779663]** or come to our stall at the Green Fair on Saturday December 13th in the Town Hall, or the Cowley Green Fair on Saturday December 20th. **Still only £6, it makes a useful and attractive locally-sourced Christmas gift.**

Our next meeting is on Tuesday November 25th, at 7pm, in the Town Hall. Come along to discuss plans for the coming year. Everybody is welcome! Please note that there will be no meeting on December 23rd, as it is thought to be too near Christmas. Enjoy the peace of Oxford’s streets over the festive season!

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