

Oxford Pedestrians Association



OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER MAY/JUNE 1996

9

Dear Member,

SUCCESS! To a degree, of course!

After only eighteen months in existence the Oxford branch of the **Pedestrians Association** has definitely made its mark in the corridors of power in Oxford City and County. If nothing else 'they' know that we exist and that pedestrian issues are important, relevant, topical and have for too long been neglected. 'Neglect' is perhaps not the right word. It is the ignorance and lack of understanding of walking as a mode of transport by the councils' officers and councillors that has surprised us.

As Sushila Dhall (now a County Councillor) reports from her first encounters in the decision-making process "Walkers are seen as a single file minority. When 'most people' are invoked in transport discussions it is car drivers that are meant."

But OXPA has:

a) Caused a report of the situation regarding pedestrians and how they are dealt with in the Traffic and Transport Documents to be written, presented to and accepted by Oxfordshire County Council. This is important because, even though the report shows a serious lack of any *real* pedestrian care and provision, (a lot of 'fine words', in fact) everything is now down in writing in an official document which can be used as a starting point for any future reference or activity by any interested or involved party.

b) Initiated the process within Oxford City Council which has led to the setting up of an official **Pedestrians Forum**. This should get off the ground in October but, as yet, we have no information about its remit or constitution. OXPA would have much preferred a council sub-committee, the same as the cyclists have, or at least an OXPA representative on a full committee but this was refused us. But, it's a start! We will keep you informed of developments through this newsletter.

STATION SITE PLANS

Plans to redevelop the station site and the surrounding highways are now available. At first glance it does not look good for pedestrians, who are once again to be marginalised in underpasses, behind fences and without bee-lines etc. Yet another hydra-head rearing up for the benighted pedestrian to investigate, confront and tackle. Not to be too pessimistic, but past experience tells us that a great deal of effort can be put in for precious little reward. To be honest, the process of re-opening the issues once again, pointing out the lack of consultation before plans are made, standing like David in front of a large and insensitive Goliath, is *tedious*! But the more Davids, and Davidas, there are the better. It is possible that OXPA will hold a public meeting about the station site plans. This, hopefully, will put the pedestrians point of view on the agenda and also gather support.

NOT VERY GOOD NEWS

The Ombudsman did not uphold OXPA's complaint concerning the County Council not fulfilling its promises of pedestrian facilities and improvements in the Botley Road changes. But the Council officers did have to comment and did see the issues that were brought up, by OXPA and PROWOX (a West Oxford group). So they may take more heed in the future.

BETTER NEWS

After eight weeks of bearding Alan Cockbill in the City Environmental Department (his job is to oversee the safety and convenience of pavement works, obstructions etc.) OXPA has succeeded in getting a FLOWER POT moved! It is a very large Oxford-in-Bloom flower pot that had been strategically placed right in the middle of the pedestrian crossing ramp at the end of Hythe Bridge Street. After the first OXPA representation and six weeks it was moved about three feet - right into the middle of the pedestrian traffic way between the two ramps! Two weeks and a meeting



with photographic evidence later, it has been moved out of the way but not to where OXPA suggested, where there is little walking traffic, but to where Mr. Cockbill asserts that there should *not* be pedestrian movement. He gets a little bit upset, but still very polite, when told that maybe things *should not* be happening in the City but they *are* because pedestrians just do not have adequate space and facilities. However, it wouldn't be politic to upset the officers too much, so we'll just say 'thankyou' next time we see him and let the flower pot stay where it is. It's a blooming nuisance though!

Patrick Lingwood and Jenny Linsdell attended a meeting of National and Branch members of the Pedestrians Association in London in May. Apparently this was the first such meeting! But better late than never, it was very useful and has generated the National Association to re-think its ways of working. According to the organiser of the meeting some of the longer term officers were somewhat taken aback to discover the commitment and expertise lurking in the provincial sticks! We should be able to look forward to closer ties, conferences and more public awareness raising outside London in the future. It could be quite exciting, especially given the whole transport debate at the moment.

Before the City Council elections we sent a questionnaire to all candidates. 24 replies were received, 7 coming from candidates who were subsequently elected. All replies expressed support for our aims of putting pedestrians at the forefront of traffic planning, and giving them more voice in decision making. It is especially encouraging that favourable replies came from members of all political parties represented in the Council. We have issued a Press Release about this response, and are writing to all new Councillors. Now that the Council has several members whom we know support our aims, we will be looking for more positive action in favour of pedestrians.

STALLS

OXPA had a successful stall at the Greenpeace Fair in April. Very many thanks to Margaret Hodson for her hard work. We would like to have a stall at the Green Fair on Saturday 15th June but really do need help with it. Just an hour or two would be most useful and there are some very interesting people to meet and conversations to be had. Please ring Margaret or Jenny if you can help. (Telephone numbers at end of newsletter)

Those of us who go regularly to the monthly meetings in the Town Hall always wish that more members would come along. If you are frightened of getting dragged in to do some work, you can always say 'no' but it would be useful to meet members and to share experiences and ideas.

Monday June 17th and Monday July 15th - 7.30p.m. in the Town Hall

Jenny Linsdell: Acting Co-ordinator.....246079

11

[illegible]