



# Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

July 2014

## Welcome to Newsletter 112



### Goodbye to all this?

During July the latest detailed design for the proposed improvements in Frideswide Square will be shown to stakeholders, ahead of a wider public consultation when everyone will have a chance to comment on the complete proposals. Meanwhile your OxPA representatives will keep members informed of developments. We have responded to the proposed traffic regulation orders (TROs) for junctions around Frideswide Square, which must be implemented for the scheme to work (*see below*).

#### Enforcement of 20mph

We are pleased that voters in the Oxford Times poll are in favour of more enforcement of 20mph speed limits. Thames Valley Police are now fining drivers who break the limit by 4mph, with three points on their licence or a £95 speed awareness course. Previously there had been only a verbal caution even up to 31mph.

#### Congestion Charge for Oxford?

The County wants to investigate a congestion charge for Oxford to raise funds for vital transport projects, but our City council leader has already rejected the idea - perhaps unaware that this would be a popular measure as shown in the Oxford Times on-line poll (June 26).

#### OxPA meeting on 24 June

Our June meeting took the form of an evening walk, which poor weather had denied us the previous

month. A dozen of us met to follow the Heritage Walk through the old Jewish Quarter of Oxford, based around and on St Aldates, a rich and fascinating part of Oxford's history, as well as a pleasant opportunity to meet friends. Visit our website for photos of the OxPA group enjoying their summer's walk.

#### Local Transport Plan 4

Consultations have begun on the next LTP. Atkins, the transport planners, have been commissioned by the County to take soundings from local groups, including OxPA, on all aspects of current transport problems - and our suggested solutions. There will be opportunities during the coming months for everybody to have a say in this important process.

#### Proposed changes to junctions adjacent to Frideswide Square

Worcester Street, Hythe Bridge and George Street

We are disappointed that Hythe Bridge Street is not to be included in the Frideswide Square improvement

scheme. Wider pavements and narrowing of traffic lanes are urgently needed for the very high footfall carried on this main route between the railway station and city centre. We are further disappointed that the proposals for the Worcester Street/Hythe Bridge Street/George Street junction show little sign of giving priority to cycling and walking, and just open up this junction into a four way road. It appears that movement of vehicular traffic is the primary consideration, with cyclists and pedestrians to be fitted in around the edges.

Among the concerns we raised were:

If all lights change simultaneously to allow diagonal crossings at the Hythe Bridge Street/George Street crossing, will walkers have too long a wait between lights? This could be important for people with luggage or hurrying to catch a train.

Need for effective enforcement of the ban on turning east up George Street. Drivers continue illegal use of the High despite of camera surveillance.

Shared-use corners could lead to conflict between cyclists and pedestrians, whether traffic is stationary or moving. The narrow pavement at the NW corner, where most pedestrians will wait to cross, will be very congested even without cycles sharing the pavement space. Crowds waiting to cross will impede pedestrians walking past, especially if waiting times are longer.

Air quality in Hythe Bridge Street, already very poor, could deteriorate further with more traffic lights in place and stationary car engines idling.

#### Beckett Street and/ Osney Lane

Displacing more traffic through small residential streets will lead to unacceptable congestion and pollution for residents and pedestrians. Beckett Street is already difficult for pedestrians, with one pavement wholly given over to cycle lanes (and overhung by foliage), and the hazard from several car park entrances. To add two lanes of what will surely be almost continual traffic will make this a very unsatisfactory place for walkers.

In summary, we feel that to make the Frideswide Square scheme and adjacent junctions work successfully, there needs to be a reduction, not just displacement, of traffic flow, especially in view of increasing volumes of traffic associated with the Westgate development and City and County recognition of the need to reduce car-dependency.

#### **Oxford Health Walks**

The Oxford Health Walks are part of the government-led Walking for Health initiative, run by Macmillan Cancer Support and The Ramblers Association. Health Walks get people out into open air, to take some exercise and meet new people. The health benefits of walking are widely recognised. In just a short time, a small amount of regular exercise can

significantly improve a person's health, life expectancy, mood and confidence. The walks usually consist of a one mile route suitable for people new to or returning to exercise and are taken at a pace suitable for all involved. Social interaction is an important feature and most walks end with a visit to a local café for a hot drink and a chat. All walks are free and led by trained volunteers.

Health walks available in Oxford:

Summertown Tuesdays 10.00am. *Meet at NOA Community Centre.*

Hinksey Park Wednesdays 10.00am. *Meet car park.*

Bury Knowle Park Fridays 10.00am. *Meet outside Headington Library*

Countryside 'n Cobbles Tuesdays 10.00am. *Meet at the Town Hall.*

A longer walk, up to 3.5 miles, takes place on the first Thursday of the month 10.00am. *Meet at the bottom of Headington Hill Park.*

Further information from Vicki Galvin, Go Active Coordinator. 01865 252720, [galvin@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:galvin@oxford.gov.uk)

#### **Oxford University Vice-Chancellor questions**

OxPA was among community groups invited to participate in the Vice-Chancellor's recent question session. We took this opportunity to ask if the University would support our campaign for redesign of St Giles, at the heart of university properties and an important thoroughfare for university students and staff. The answer was not discouraging and we intend to invite an appropriate the University representative to future meetings.

#### **Vivien Crew**

We have to report the sad news of the death of Vivien Crew, a longstanding member of OxPA, who many of you will remember at stalls and on our evening walks.

#### **Stalls**

Our next stall will be at Elder Stubbs Festival on Saturday August 16 from 12-6pm. This is a good opportunity to meet people, publicise our organisation and gain new members. Please help by spending an hour or two at the stall while enjoying the festival.

*Contact Felicity on 01865 251212.*

#### **Next Meetings:**

**July 22nd** 7pm Town Hall, jointly with Cyclox.

Guest speaker the new City Centre Manager

**August 26th** An evening walk

#### **Contacts:**

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