



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

September 2011

Welcome to Newsletter 99 of the Oxford Pedestrians Association

Pedestrian Liberation (PL) is a group set up in 2001 in Ipswich in response to pavements being taken over by parked cars, rather like the situation we have in east Oxford. PL cite legislation from 1930 onwards which appears to protect footways from vehicle parking, but they also show with photographic and other evidence that pavement parking is a widespread nuisance. Their campaigns are jolly and fun, and effective, and include imaginative solutions like planting flowers along the kerb side of pavements to deter drivers. Significantly, in a survey of 100 guide dog users, 81 found pavement parking a discouragement to getting about. As PL point out, the laws to protect footways are there, and have been for many decades, but they are generally ignored. So with legislation on our side, perhaps we can learn from Ipswich how to free up pavement space in Oxford. If you are a computer user follow the link from our website, or Google 'Pedestrian Liberation', to enjoy an inspiring read!

Shared space design increases footfall

New research undertaken on New Road, Brighton – one of the UK's flagship 'shared space' street schemes – has highlighted the street's transformation into a crucial economic and social hub for the city. The research revealed overwhelming support for the shared space scheme, with 93% of all respondents preferring New Road's new layout and 95% keen to see similar schemes elsewhere in the city. More people reported feeling relaxed (66%) and happy (44%) in the transformed New Road – now the fourth most popular place in Brighton to spend time – rather than the indifferent (37%) and unsafe (17%) feelings associated with the previous layout. Importantly, people were willing to express how much they valued this positive experience of the space in financial terms - almost half of those asked would have been willing to donate money towards a similar scheme, at an average of £34.49: if everyone in Brighton donated this much, £17.58 million would be raised for creating better streets. Meanwhile, 80% of businesses surveyed said the improvements had been good for their business, while 100% felt that schemes like New Road were a good thing. The Living Streets Local Group, said, "This research confirms what we've seen over the past few years: when pedestrian-friendly schemes like New Road are created, the public will vote with their feet and their wallets. It's amazing how even traders who initially resisted

the scheme became its biggest supporters, as they see that it's a win-win for everyone." Tony Armstrong, Chief Executive of Living Streets said: "Sometimes creating better streets can mean doing things which don't seem obvious, like removing road signs and railings that people assume make us safer. But these new reactions to New Road show that questioning these assumptions and looking to design streets as people want them to be, rather than assuming that they have to be the way they are, can make them safer, more sociable and more economically viable."

In Oxford, New Inn Hall Street, which is the nearest thing we have to shared space, works well for everyone, especially outside of vehicle loading hours when it gets a bit cramped. Find *Making the Case for Investment in the Walking Environment* on the Living Streets website for an evaluation of the multiple health, economic, social and environmental benefits of investment in walking-friendly public spaces.

Nature walks *continued*

Lye Valley: in July we enjoyed a very interesting evening walk through the Lye Valley and Warneford Meadow. Expertly led by Sietske Boeles, who has spent many years campaigning to protect the Warneford Meadow, we were made keenly aware of how important it is to preserve these parts of Oxford's green space - both for human wellbeing and our natural heritage.

Aston's Eyot: on a damp August evening a group of twenty of us met to explore one of the less-frequented parts of the Thames riverside. Downstream from Christchurch meadow, this wild area of 30 acres is being restored and documented by the Friends of Aston's Eyot. Guided by Ruth Ashcroft, we explored this complex river island and learnt about its history, its ecology and the plans for future management. We are grateful to Ruth for making this such a fascinating walk

Stalls Update

Some of us enjoyed another worthwhile day on the OxPA stall at the 25th anniversary Open Day at the Elder Stubbs Allotments in August. In spite of doubtful weather, the atmosphere was warm with wonderful East Oxford Community spirit and it was a good chance to meet old friends and make new ones. Our stylish new illustrated leaflet/membership form was much appreciated and will, we hope, encourage more people to join us. The next stall opportunity will be the One World Fair on 19th November and then the Green Fair on December 3rd, both held in the Town Hall. These are lively occasions with opportunities to share space with a wide variety of other organisations. Help from members is much appreciated by the stalls team. If you can offer an hour or two to support OxPA **please contact Felicity on 01865 251212**

Pedestrian accessibility issues:

1. It is discouraging to see that whilst the second phase of the Said Business School is being developed facilities for pedestrians have completely vanished. The pavement running alongside the west of the Business School has been turned into a car park for half its length, and the pavement which connected to the footway/cycle lane to north Oxford has been completely taken up with the huge new entrance to the new underground car park on the site. Meanwhile the footway/cycle lane itself has been narrowed to the width of a metre, and conflict between pedestrians and cyclists are ongoing, and expected to continue until the footway is restored in July 2012.

At the same time, if you come along that cycle lane/footway from north Oxford towards the railway station, it vanishes at its end into a major turning circle for buses and taxis. If you turn right to get to the railway station you have to cross an unmarked entrance/exit to the station car park. Are we really trying to encourage people to walk, cycle, and use public transport?
2) St Giles toilets are to be closed because the road is too busy to cross. We have already lost

several public toilets in Oxford city. But St Giles is potentially a beautiful street. Instead of six lanes of road and car parking, we could have a public square, with just 2 lanes of traffic (which is how it functions for much of its length anyhow) and benches, trees, stalls, and public toilets.

Marston/Banbury Road junction

Please contact us if you have views on the present junction/crossing. OxPA has been invited to a meeting with NAG on Summertown problems, including this junction and pavement cycling.

Sushila or Corinne would like to hear your views before September 23rd.

20 mph

Since our last Newsletter, the EU Committee on Transport has made a 20mph speed limit for residential areas its key recommendation. The aim is to halve EU road deaths and injuries by 2020. It is encouraging to learn that there are now over 5 million people in villages and towns throughout the UK enjoying the benefits of area wide 20mph.

View from Europe

Our German correspondent has drawn attention to an article in Der Spiegel (September 15) that reports growing conflict in some German cities between cyclists and car drivers. This is due primarily to bad road design but also to psychological factors. "People feel anonymous in traffic, much as they do on the Internet. This tempts them to engage in unrestrained behaviour...". Shared space needs shared values (and good manners) if it is to work.

Next meetings:

September 27th 7pm Town Hall. Open discussion: all welcome.

October 25th AGM. Our guest speaker will be Dr Andrew Chivers on "Walking our way to happiness".

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