

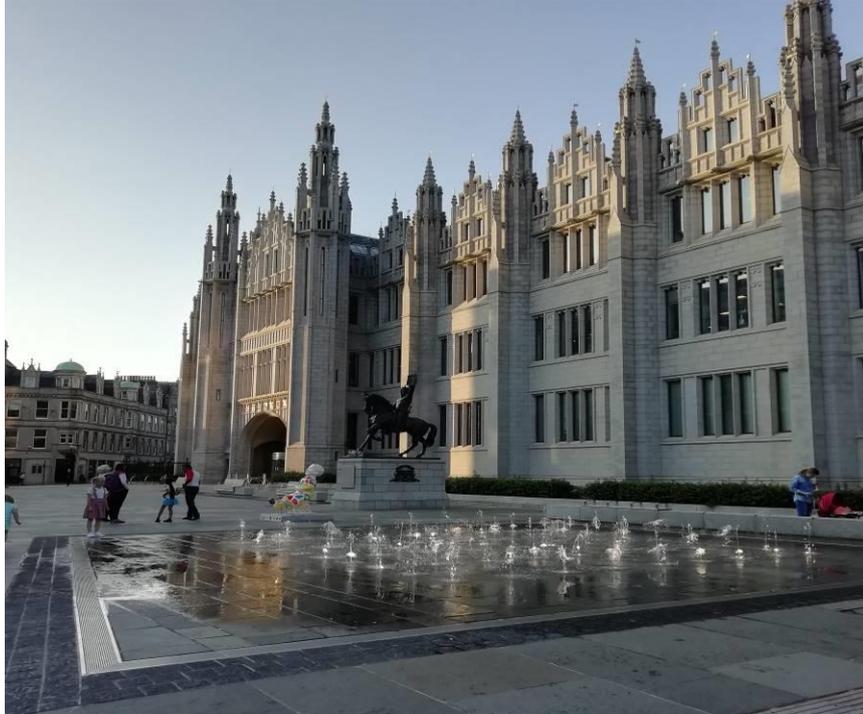


Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

October 2019

Welcome to Newsletter 131



Other cities can do it – why not Oxford?

We are used to hearing from our local authorities how forward-looking Oxford is in terms of numbers of cyclists and emphasis on walkers etc. but the reality is that over the 26 years of OxPA's lifetime little has changed in terms of the pedestrian experience in Oxford. We are still for the most part kept to narrow pavements blocked by parked cars and other things, breathing toxic traffic exhaust, with too little time to cross roads, and crossings blocked by huge puddles when it rains, and often not on desire lines. Pavements are not usually well-maintained, and although we have welcomed places where walking conditions have improved (eg. Frideswide Square) there is no joined up thinking in terms of getting to and from good walking patches. We assume it must be the same everywhere, so (Sushila, OxPA Chair, writes) I was surprised on visiting my old hometown in the north east of Scotland, Aberdeen, to find huge areas of new pedestrianisation and lots of new crossings on desire lines. In front of a newly-cleaned Marischal College (which was a dirty busy through road) there is now beautiful paving, several benches, and a most artistic fountain, or series of percussive fountains that children can play in and which are lit at night. Inspiration for Broad St perhaps, or St Giles?

(See a video at https://youtu.be/kc_1DwyM5LM.)



Also shown here is a typical residential area cross-roads in Providence, Rhode Island, USA. A former Oxford resident, now living there, reports that it is the most walkable city he has ever lived in – not something we might expect to hear from the USA.

‘Connecting Oxford’

Connecting Oxford is the County Council’s latest consultation document, and contains proposals for restricting traffic by introducing bus-only gates in the city centre and on Marston Ferry Road and Hollow Way, and bringing in a Workplace Parking Levy, a fee for businesses providing workplace parking, albeit only within the ‘Eastern Arc’. OxPA considered these proposals at our meeting on 15th October and has put in a response, broadly welcoming the proposals but stressing that pedestrians must not be forgotten.

Street audits

OxPA has carried out its biggest street audit ever, covering city centre streets, and Summertown and Headington Streets, for inclusion in the Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Strategy which Patrick Lingwood is writing for the County Council. If the radical current bus-gate proposals in ‘Connecting Oxford’ go ahead, and improvements are made based on OxPA’s surveys and recommendations, the walking experience in Oxford will be vastly improved, so much so that it will feel like a different city from our current traffic-dominated one.

In the course of our audits we applauded the recent remodelling of Headley Way between the London Road, Headington, and the entrance to the John Radcliffe Hospital: it would be wonderful if this standard could be achieved throughout the city.



OxPA’s website and our presence on social media

Members may have noticed that our website is out of date and contains some errors. The website is presently being redesigned so that it will be easier for us to edit and keep updated, e.g. with minutes of meetings.

OxPA’s Facebook page continues to attract a lot of interest. Recent discussions have included more on pavement parking, health benefits of more walking, and a reflection that as driving becomes safer, “cars are killing more people” (i.e. pedestrians). OxPA member Oly Shipp continues to do most of the hard work on this page, whilst our Treasurer Don keeps our Twitter feed going.

OxPA needs secretarial help

OxPA needs help with the following: preparing agendas, taking minutes, being point of contact for enquiries, sending out things to membership, booking rooms and stalls, renewing our insurance when due, working with Chair to plan meetings, book speakers, etc. We can afford to pay someone an honorarium equivalent to a reasonable hourly rate. If you are interested, or anyone you know might be, please contact Sushila (sushiladhall@gmail.com).

Oxford’s buses

OxPA member Keith Frayn has been putting on paper some thoughts about Oxford’s bus services. His booklet on this topic has been sent to City and County Councillors, other voluntary bodies and some council officers. A major theme is to reduce the overlap of services on any one route, thus removing some of the congestion seen especially in the city centre. These are Keith’s personal views and not OxPA policy. Any member who would like a copy may email Keith directly on keithfrayn@gmail.com.



Meetings (all 7 pm):

November 26th: OxPA’s AGM at the Town Hall. Proposals invited for the post of Secretary (see above), and other posts. Our AGM speaker is Scott Urban of Oxfordshire Liveable Streets, at 7.30pm after the conclusion of the AGM business.

NB No meeting in December but OxPA’s Winter Social will be held in January as usual.

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