



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association
February 2021

Welcome to Newsletter 137

Life in Germany – Oly Shipp reports



Oly Shipp, who managed OxPA's social media for many years, moved to Germany with his family, and reports here his experience of living in Oxford and Greifswald.

Having brought up a young family just off Iffley Road over the last 10 years, I am very conscious of what a lovely city Oxford is - but also how much better it should be for people to walk in. A key factor in our family moving to Germany last year was the promise of living in a safer, healthier, more walkable city. We now live in Greifswald, a medieval university town on the Baltic sea. We were immediately struck by the beautiful, car-free centre - twenty years ago, the market place was used to park cars. Nobody strolling peacefully through the centre now would contemplate going back to those days.

The general investment in infrastructure is better here. Pavements are usually well maintained, and were given equal priority with roads during the recent snow. Also, my impression is that whilst Germans are equally attached to their cars as Brits, they drive more carefully in towns. This may be in part due to the law around 'presumed liability', so if there is a crash between someone in a car and someone on foot or on a bike, the starting assumption is that the car driver is at fault. This seems to lead to a very welcome situation where people driving cars are very keen to avoid crashes! And, of course, people don't drive or park cars on pavements here - it's selfish, dangerous, and illegal: what kind of place would tolerate that?!

It's not perfect here: whilst pavements are generally wide and well-maintained, sometimes people walking share the space with people on bikes, which I don't like as a pedestrian or a cyclist. It is also widely accepted that people can cycle on pavements, which is really not great when mixing with small children. Also, the concept of low traffic neighbourhoods is only just starting to catch on here, so maybe we can learn from Oxford on that one!

My 6 year-old walks on her own to school every day, and it is safe and normal for her to do so. I think this 'school test' is a pretty good measure of a civilised society, and one where Oxford's political leaders would struggle to even get a "could do better" grade!

OxPA / Cyclox joint social January 26th

We held a pleasant, albeit on-line, joint social with Cyclox on January 26th, jointly chaired by Sushila Dhall (OxPA) and Alison Hill (Cyclox). Sushila Dhall and Patrick Lingwood, founder members of

OxPA, shared their early memories as did James Styring and Simon Hunt (Cyclox). Cinderella Lingwood helped us look to the future with an emphasis on involving younger members.

Electric scooters coming to Headington

Electric scooters (e-scooters) are familiar now in many cities. They can, in principle, provide clean transport for short journeys. At the end of 2020, OxPA responded to a County Council consultation on a proposal to bring rented e-scooters to Oxford. Our concern was that there would not be sufficient enforcement of the rule that these scooters may only be ridden on roads, cycle paths or shared-use paths, and not on pavements, where we feared they could cause risk to pedestrians. A trial of rented e-scooters has now begun in the Headington area, defined rather broadly and extending out to Thornhill Park and Ride. The hope is clearly that commuters into Oxford, and especially to the many employment sites in Headington, will be tempted to park at Thornhill and continue by e-scooter. Riders must be over 17 and hold a driving licence, and the scooters will be limited to 15 mph. Riding of privately-owned e-scooters will be illegal, as it is now. We will watch this trial carefully. If you see rule-breaking, please let us know, and we will report any concerns. The trial runs for 18 months but objections to its indefinite continuation must be made by 13th August 2021.

Move to ban pavement parking in Oxford



On 1st February, Oxford City Councillors across the political spectrum gave their backing to proposals to ban pavement parking. The ban would be enforced by traffic wardens who would hand out tickets to drivers who continue to park on pavements. In London the fine currently stands at £70. OxPA have long campaigned on this issue which has made life very difficult for pedestrians, particularly those with buggies and young children, and those in wheelchairs. However, no date for the implantation of the ban has yet been announced and there will be exceptions to the rule in areas where there are already half-on, half-off the pavement parking spaces within Controlled Parking Zones across the City.

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

The County Council cabinet member for transport, Yvonne Constance, on 21 January signed the experimental traffic regulation order (ETRO) to create three low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) in the Cowley area. The scheme will be launched on a trial basis with feedback being gathered

throughout. At the six-month mark, the county will reflect on the scheme and decide whether changes are needed, more trial time is needed, end the scheme or to make the scheme permanent. The council has a maximum of 18 months before it has to decide whether to keep the schemes or revert to the status-quo ante. The filters will start appearing in the next 4 weeks and should be completed in March. A map of the filters can be found here: <http://bit.ly/3ahYJ2K>.

Map of short-cuts for walkers

Scott Urban, who provided the information above, has also asked us to share Oxfordshire Liveable Streets' new map of walking short-cuts in Cowley: <http://bit.ly/3ajJ7f0>.

Headington Liveable Streets (HLS)

HLS is one of several local organisations that have been formed recently to promote the idea of local Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. Headington streets are prone to rat-running because of the many large employment sites in the area. Headington already has some LTNs: for instance, a traffic filter in Bateman Street stopping through vehicular traffic has been in place for many years without causing problems, whilst keeping out through traffic. HLS has proposed that Headington be divided into three areas, divided by the main roads (London Road and Windmill Road), each of which would become an LTN. This has been accepted by the County Council and development of these LTNs will follow once the Cowley Road area LTNs are established.

Meetings: Note that meetings are held via Zoom at present.

February 23rd: OxPA's AGM with speaker Cllr Yvonne Constance

March 23rd: Discussion of plans for 'direct action'

April 27th: Speaker: Patrick Lingwood

May 25th: OxAria air quality research study (t.b.c.)

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