



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

Number 86 – March-April 2009

Welcome to Newsletter number 86 of Oxford Pedestrians Association! In true modern style the Newsletter is now called 'Walk Talk.'

It would be good to hear more Council representatives [on both Councils] talk seriously about walking, rather than just lumping pedestrians together with cyclists and public transport users, as if all three were a politically correct solid block to be thought of as one thing after everything else has been sorted out.

In fact, apart from their vulnerability, pedestrians are very different from cyclists. Walkers do not go in straight lines, they group together, stop to look at things and chat. They do not march in single file. As such they generally need much more space than they are given.

You are in Oxford – Don't breathe!

Following a new report on Oxford's air pollution the following streets exceed the legal minimum for levels of nitrogen dioxide:

Barns Rd; Between Towns Rd; Oxford Rd; Abingdon Rd (all along); Botley Rd; Broad St; Folly Bridge; Pike Terrace; Thames St; Cornmarket; York Place; Keble / Banbury Rd; Parks Rd; Iffley Rd; Butterwyke Place; Blue Boar St; Gloucester St; Beckett St; and Green Rd roundabout and environs

These are in addition to the streets already designated, such as Beaumont St, St Giles, High St, St Aldates and the station area.

Because of the number of streets now exceeding the legal minimum, or 'safe levels' of nitrogen dioxide, the whole of Oxford city centre is now designated a zone of high pollution, as well as parts of Headington and Cowley. The only way to begin to tackle this issue is to make a serious attempt to reduce our dependency on methods of transport that rely on burning oil. Instead, the number of cars on the road throughout Oxfordshire continues to grow faster than in any other county in the UK! Moving traffic from one

street to another, which is the solution proposed by the County Council, cannot be the answer. More information on air pollution levels in Oxford from: www.oxford-airwatch.aeat.co.uk/

Improvements to Queen Street

OxPA has long supported the proposals to remove all buses from Queen Street, which is one of the most highly-polluted streets in the city. The county council now proposes to remove all the bus stops later this year, to New Road, Castle Street and St Aldate's, and at the same time to remove half the buses. The remaining buses will pass through Queen St without stopping. OxPA has responded to say that, whilst we would prefer to see all buses removed from this main shopping street altogether as a matter of urgency, we continue to support full pedestrianisation of Queen Street, and welcome this first step towards achieving that.

OxPA is concerned to ensure that people's walks to and from bus stops are kept to a minimum and that waiting facilities at stops are of a high standard, with local area maps displayed at stops. We have also expressed ongoing concerns about the lack of cross-city bus services arguing that their re-instatement should be part of the Transform Oxford proposals. Another concern for this 'intermediate' stage is that the buses moving along Queen Street should not create more danger.

We urge members to make their own responses to the proposals. **The closing date is 23rd March and the details can be seen at the county offices in Speedwell Street from 9am to 5pm, or online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk.** Click on 'Roads and Transport', then on 'Transform Oxford'.

The full text of OxPA's response can be seen on our website - www.oxpa.org.uk

Would you like to contribute news items for the Newsletter? We would especially like items from places like Summertown, Wolvercote, Headington, Rose Hill, and other non-city centre areas. Contact Sushila (details below) or email her at Sushila@greenoxford.com

Walk to School Week coming soon - order resources now

Walk to School Week 2009 will take place from 18th to 22nd May. See the Walk to School website - www.walktoschool.org.uk for full details, and from where you can order resources to support this year's campaign (by 27th March). This year's theme is 'Walk 'n' Talk', to highlight the social side of walking to school. If you've got good ideas about how to get the children walking to school, e-mail them to walktoschool@livingstreets.org.uk. And tell us too, how you think we can help more Oxford children to Walk to School. Good habits should be developed when we're young.

Transition Oxford - Transport Event - Thursday 23rd April

Help address the twin challenges of Climate Change and Peak Oil and contribute to the Transition Oxford Plan. Come to one or both the workshops planned for the afternoon, and evening. Some of the many questions to be addressed include:

- How will we reverse the current trend and encourage children in Oxford to make journeys independently and play outside the home?
- Is it possible for an Oxford family to travel on holiday without a car?
- How will we re-organise society in Oxford to reduce CO2 emissions from transport?
- What do you think the price of oil will be in 20 years time? How will this affect you, and local business?

Venue: Oxford University Centre for the Environment, University of Oxford, South Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3QY.

Time: 13.00 – 16.00 Social & Economic session
17.00 – 20.00 Environmental session

Contact: Zoë Falk on 01865 205230 or e-mail her at oxford@sustrans.org.uk.

Early booking is recommended. For further details see the Transition Oxford website: www.transitionoxford.org.uk

Successful launch of 'A More Walkable Oxford'

Our major lobbying document 'A More Walkable Oxford - Better for Everyone' was launched on 27th January in the Lord Mayor's parlour at the Town Hall, thanks to the generosity of Lord Mayor Susanna Pressel. Thanks are due to Graham Smith who talked after the event about 'shared spaces', very pertinent now that Transform Oxford is on the near horizon. Politicians from all parties on the City and County Councils were there, and we were pleased to hear Rachel Williams from the City's Planning Department describe how many of the suggestions in our document will appear in the City's forthcoming streetscape guidance.

Have you got your copy of 'A More Walkable Oxford' yet? Only £2 (£3 to include postage), it contains over thirty pages of analysis and proposals about how the walking environment in Oxford's suburbs and centre could and should be made better. **Order your copy from OxPA at 8 Richmond Road OX1 2JJ, or telephone 01865 426805.**

Our next meetings are on Tuesday 24th March (with a speaker from Oxford Community Car club) and 28th April at 7pm in the Town Hall. Please come – everybody (including non-members) welcome.

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