



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

January – February 2010

Welcome to Newsletter 91 of the Oxford Pedestrians Association

A Happy New Year to everyone! Can we persuade the Councils to make a New Year's Resolution – to make Oxford the UK's most walkable city – a city in which it's a delight to walk? After all, the City Council wants Oxford to be the UK's first 'green city'. With the Climate Conference at Copenhagen behind us, it's time to think about the role of walking in delivering the commitments made there. It is the responsibility of the City and County Councils to enable us all to walk a little (or even a lot) more than we've been doing and that includes making sure that ever heavier rainfall - and snow - don't make our streets unusable for people on their way to work, school and the shops by bus and on foot.

Visit our website

If you have internet access but haven't looked yet, do take a look at OxPA's website – www.oxpa.org.uk It contains news on walking issues, campaign progress reports and more besides. You can download a copy of 'A More Walkable Oxford' and read OxPA's policy statements. You can read the latest WalkTalk, as well as back numbers. Take a look – and send us your thoughts and questions to info@oxpa.org.uk.

November the wettest ever

Those of us who get about on foot probably didn't need it to be said, but the Met Office has declared last November the wettest. An average of 217.4mm (8.6 inches) of rain fell across the UK that month, an increase of over 12% on the previous wettest month in 1951.

This has implications for the way our streets are managed. Street drains need to be able to carry away ever growing amounts of rainfall, and gullies have to be kept clear of debris – especially important in autumn months like November.

Local Transport Plan 3 – Thanks

Thanks to everyone who let us have their views on what schemes the County should deliver in its next Local Transport Plan for the period 2011 to 2016. Our submission asked for a number of specific schemes,

and for some broader principles to be applied city-wide.

We gave support to the proposals to develop a walking network across Oxford, as well as a cycling network. The existing practice of putting cycle paths on pavements delivers questionable benefits, and it is to be hoped cyclists can be given more respect than in the recent past. We asked for more measures to deliver the benefits of 20mph limits, and for good walking routes to/from local shops, bus stops, and schools.

We asked for a review of street crossings, and following members' comments we asked for specific improvements at many locations, including making the pavement and carriageway level at both ends of Cornmarket so as to make it easier to reach the Town Hall, Debenhams etc.

You can read the full submission to the County on our website – www.oxpa.org.uk

An analysis of urban transport

The Cabinet office has produced a report 'The wider costs of Transport in English Urban Areas in 2009' which gives strong encouragement to local authorities to deal with the challenges and opportunities for transport in urban areas. It finds that the impact of transport on the people that live and work in cities goes beyond the benefits of mobility and

the economic consequences of congestion. Poor air quality, ill health and injuries from transport in urban areas all impose significant additional costs on society. Transport also significantly contributes to the negative experiences of urban streets and public spaces.

The report suggests a growing need for government to define a long-term vision for urban transport which rebalances its competing demands. Such a potential vision could be cities that

- enable mobility by promoting a wider choice of journey;
- aim to reduce congestion and increase reliability, whilst promoting greater levels of walking and cycling; and
- assist streets and public spaces to become more enjoyable places to be, where exposure to harmful emissions is reduced, and quality of life is transformed.

One of the main findings of this report is that the costs of poor air quality, street casualties and physical inactivity in urban areas are broadly comparable with the costs of excess delays. See the report online at:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/urban-transport.aspx

Town Hall Fairs

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped make our OxPA stalls successful at the Green Fair and OneWorld Fair. We signed up some new members and publicised our campaigns, while enjoying the festive occasions. Over 100 people signed our petition against pavement parking.

20mph zones reduce injuries and deaths in London: medical research published in December BMJ found 41.9% reduction in road deaths and injuries as London's 20mph zones came in during 1986-2006. See our website for link to the Summary Report.

News from abroad

Help for slower walkers! In Chicago there are traffic lights on the broader avenues telling pedestrians how many seconds are

left before the lights turn red again. Stuttgart provides two pedestrian crossing buttons on wide and busy streets. The upper one is for the able bodied, the lower provides for a longer crossing time. In France the markings of pedestrian crossings start on the pavement where walkers can signal their intention to cross in safety. See report from our overseas correspondents from the "other news" link on our website.

Join WalkTalk's editorial team and help produce WalkTalk

Would you enjoy helping with WalkTalk? If you like bringing news items together (not difficult) and fancy a stab at developing your editorial skills in a supportive environment, why not join WalkTalk's editorial team? It's enjoyable, and as we have said before, you meet nice people. Call Paul (tel. 426805) or Corinne (tel. 779663) if you'd like to know what's involved.

Be an Area Committee attender

We are looking for people willing to attend their City Council Area Committee each month and report on any Agenda items affecting pedestrians and walkability in their part of Oxford. Contact Paul or Corinne if you have time to help OxPA in this way.

Next meetings: fourth Tuesday at 7pm in the Town Hall each month unless otherwise advised.

Tuesday 26th January: **Gordon Reid**, newly appointed **City Centre Manager**, on ways to enhance our City centre.

Tuesday 23rd February – to be announced

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