



OXFORD PEDESTRIANS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER ISSUE NO 28 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1999

Welcome to Issue number 28 of our Newsletter! It has been fairly quiet recently due to the high numbers of people on holiday. Whilst reports of traffic clogged motorways abound, the residential streets of Oxford have been nice and peaceful due to the reduced traffic. However, fewer traffic movements draws ones attention to the number of parked vehicles on our streets. It is difficult to find a place to cross sometimes, and certainly ones view is impeded. This is worse for people who are short or in wheelchairs. After all these years we still lack a person on the Councils to represent the unique needs of walkers; nobody looking at a map can imagine all the obstacles to free movement inherent in the design of the pavements.

1) Your Newsletter Editor graduated from a wheelchair to crutches and thence to a simple limp as her broken leg healed. This gave me a chance to experience the problems most of all of crossfalls, which is where the pavements slope to allow cars access to garages, or wheelchairs and prams a place to cross. However, the crossfalls can be a major impediment to those trying to go straight on, as wheelchairs tilt dangerously sideways, and unsteady walkers lose their balance. Virtually no pavement is flat and smooth, which is something one has to experience to believe. **Nobody puts broken paving stones or steep crossfalls on maps and plans. Councillors and Officers see a straight line on a piece of paper and think that is a nice pavement.** It is up to all of us to let them know where this is not the case!

2) In its wisdom the Highways Committee on the City Council voted for the removal of the shallow but effective speed bumps on Kingston Road, Walton Manor, and their replacement by street narrowing. Residents now have traffic speeding along the road again, and complain that it has become dangerous to cross. In this age of enlightenment in terms of what is said about reducing traffic impacts, it is sad to see the opposite happening on the ground.

3) A motion went before the County Council Highways and Road Safety Sub-Committee requiring members to debate whether to continue with the endless attempt to 'educate' parents to teach their young children yet more road safety. Britain has one of the worst child fatality rates as a result of road accident in Europe. It was argued that children under the age of eight years do not yet have the developmental capacity to stop being impulsive, and that therefore drivers need to be educated to slow down in residential areas, and that the Council should look at 20mph speed limits and 'Home Zones', where streets are made pedestrian and residents' priority. Some amusing statements were made; Cllr Hook said in his day there was discipline but nowadays children have 'free expression' instead, which is why more of them are killed on roads now. It was pointed out to him that in his day there were far fewer vehicles on the roads, and they went more slowly. The outcome was that the Sub-Committee voted to look at the idea of Home Zones and 20mph speed limits throughout Oxfordshire. This was a triumph for forward thinking, and reflects a change in general thinking, as a couple of years ago such ideas would have been mocked and laughed out of the meeting.

4) Oxford post-OTS. Cornmarket is cleaner, and there is less traffic on High Street, Broad Street, and generally in the central areas of the city. This is great, but problems have emerged for pedestrians elsewhere, around the central area. The station site is still dangerous, ugly and inconvenient. The road running round central Oxford is often clogged with polluting traffic, and many of the new traffic lights are timed to allow maximum time to traffic and as little as possible to walkers crossing. This means that many people just run across impatiently before the time allocated to them, and increases the chance of accidents. So, still lots of work to be done before Oxford can be called a really pedestrian-friendly city.



5) A triumph for OxPA! In the past three years the issue of a crossing in front of Worcester College across the 'inner ring route' (dubbed 'Death Row Crossing') has been debated on the County Environmental agenda three times. At each occasion there has been a very good speaker from OxPA. Now at last we have our crossing there. What shall we campaign for next? Ideas to your Newsletter Editor for inclusion on the following OxPA meeting agenda please.

6) After five years of hard work and constant letter-writing and representing us at national meetings, Jenny would like to retire from the role as OxPA Chair. At a meeting of regular OxPA attenders it was decided that Jenny will continue to accept mail that comes to OxPA, and will distribute it as appropriate to various members. Jenny will continue to do our stalls. Corinne will go on doing the main letter-writing and attending council meetings. Jill Haas will be her very active back-up and our press officer. Ray will continue to be involved in the Local Transport Plan and the City Local Plan. Mike Hammond will collect photo-data for Corinne and Jill. Christina will take minutes of meetings and book the room each month. Instead of Jenny chairing meetings we will have a rotating chair.

All this and more will be discussed at our next meeting on Monday September 20th at 7.30pm in Oxford Town Hall. Please come to this, and our October meeting (same time same place but October 18th). Bring friends, relations, and neighbours. Everybody is welcome!

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