

# Oxford Pedestrians Association



OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO 52

JULY/AUGUST 2003

Welcome to issue no. 52 of OxPA's Newsletter! This being the time of year when lots of people walk, even those who would usually cycle or go by some other form of wheeled transport, it is the season when blocked pavements with no alternative route inconvenience and endanger the maximum numbers of pedestrians. Building alterations, holes in the pavements, workmen's vehicles and machinery, scaffolding, unfinished works, parked vehicles, and skips are a few of the huge things that regularly prevent walkers using pavements. Apparently it is the law that those responsible should provide an alternative, such as a fenced-in walk around the obstruction. However, the usual solution offered is a sign, appearing with no warning across the blocked footway, telling walkers to 'use the other footway'. This means stepping off a kerb if one can, often squeezing between parked vehicles, again if one can, crossing the highway in places where drivers do not expect it, stepping up onto the opposite pavement, and continuing ones trip off the direct route. Because pedestrians normally just accept their appalling lot this state of affairs continues largely unchecked. But if you are amongst those who finds it infuriating, contact Deborah Whelan (County Access Officer) on Oxford 815591, and let her know.

1) **Update on access across the Prison Site.** Commercial interests had sought to minimise public access, but following lobbying and pressure the concept of public access has been restored. **There are to be three public entrances onto the site; on Tidmarsh Lane, Paradise Street, and New Road. All three will link within the site. Both the Mound and St George's Tower will be publicly accessible.** Appropriate signing and maps of the walking routes will need to be available, but Oxford Preservation Trust is working on such issues.

2) **ROX wanting more car-parking places in the centre of Oxford.** OTS working group seemed to oppose increased parking in High Street, and on the cobbles of Merton Street and Oriol Square. In the interests of fairness, having been on site visits with RoX representatives, Samantha Tharme (OTS Transport Planning Officer for the County Council) took OxPA members on the same site visits. The resulting draft report appeared very favourable towards pedestrians. **But the new officers' report resulting from this advocates more car parking spaces everywhere, even on High Street. This report was passed by Councillors. Councillor Billy Hudson told OxPA that 'people's minds must have wandered during the debate'(!)** Corinne asked if the issue could go before the Scrutiny Committee. Cllr Hudson said 'send me a memo', which Corinne did, but has heard nothing back.

If you would like to help, please contact Councillor Hudson and/or Samantha Tharme urgently at Oxfordshire County Council, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND about the issue of unnecessarily reinstating parking in Oxford city centre. Request a reply (or you will not get one). Say we are deeply disturbed that OTS policy is being undermined. ROX are getting their way on grounds of 'commercial necessity' but they have never had to prove their case.



**3) Car Free Day.** Rebecca Carley (City Officer) is keen to help OxPA celebrate, but cannot without County backing. Susie Olenschlager (Oxfordshire County Agenda 21 Officer) tells OxPA that Councillor Anne Purse, as the 'greenest' member of the Executive, needs to take it forward. Tony Joyce, of Oxford Civic Society, says he will do what he can to help, but in the end it looks as if it is becoming like last year; tiring, negative and off-putting. **Politicians and Officers alike are on the whole not replying to letters, and do not seem inclined to support any marking of this year's European Car-Free Day.**

**4) Interesting summary of an article from a publication called 'Going Green', a report from the Environmental Transport Association.** It says that in zones where speeds are less than 20mph it is better not to have road signs as they distract drivers. If drivers are not told what to do by signs they slow down and think, and make human contact with pedestrians. The philosophy behind this is that we are not 'naturally' designed to think at high speeds; after all pedestrians on pavements do not collide with one another despite being higgledy-piggledy.

**5) The pedestrian route across Oxford's BMW site is currently an official bridleway. However, BMW want to close this path and send walkers and horse-riders round by the eastern bypass.** BMW have employed expensive consultants and publicised their desire to close the direct route. People from various groups are fighting this. BMW have not yet put into place the legal process to begin their plan. **If there is a Public Inquiry OxPA will be involved.**

**6) Samantha Tharme invited OxPA and Ramblers representatives to a meeting where she was very helpful, wanting OxPA to join in the consultation on Banbury/Woodstock Road and Cowley Road with particular reference to pedestrians and cyclists.** The main focus is 'to get the buses running more smoothly'. Asked about GTE, Ms Tharme said at the moment they are told to 'act as if it is happening'.

**7) New pedestrian facilities.** A pedestrian crossing is planned across Upper Fisher Row (off Hythe Bridge Street). This is badly needed, but unfortunately (and typically) has been planned off the direct walking line. OxPA commented that walkers should not have to turn out of their way but should be enabled to cross safely on the desire line. A new Headley Way crossing is supposed to go in on the opposite side of Woodlands Rd to where it is actually needed, which is the Headington school site side. OxPa's suggestion is to move this to the other side of the Woodlands Rd/Headley Way junction. Finally, a toucan crossing is to go in across London Road at Latimer Road. OxPA had no objection to this.

**Our next two meetings are on Tuesdays July 15<sup>th</sup> and August 19<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm in Oxford Town Hall. Please come, and bring a friend. Everyone is welcome!**

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