

OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO. 60
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2004

Welcome to Issue number 60 of OxPA's Newsletter.
This Newsletter marks the completion of our tenth year!

Ten years of raising the profile of walkers in Oxford, of pointing out that we do not have to accept unsafe, obstructed indirect walkways, but have the right to expect and demand better. Ten years of commenting intelligently on plans and visions for Oxford city, putting in the pedestrian's view which before was never heard at all. Ten years of diligent committed work from a group which does not take on the unconsciously motorised-vehicle-centred view of most of those in power.

Thank you to all of our activists, members and supporters, and may we and our agenda go from strength to strength over the next decade!

1) European Car-free Day this year was celebrated in style on Broad Street, where a breakfast party was hosted by OxPA, Cyclox and Oxford Friends of the Earth. Oxfam provided free fairly traded tea and coffee, East Oxford Healthy Living Initiative provided free fruit, and Oxford University Press donated hundreds of fresh warm croissants to hungry walkers and cyclists. There were stalls, merry conversations and hearty appetites all round. The beautiful old street was alive with people! Car-Free Day in Oxford this September 22nd was a collective effort, collectively enjoyed.

2) There are three questions that need to be decided on by our whole membership. Could people please let OxPA have your views by Tuesday November 16th (which is the date of OxPA's next meeting):

(i) As we can no longer afford to hire a room at St Aldates Centre, we are changing our monthly meeting to take advantage of a free room at the Town Hall on a Tuesday or a Thursday. Please could you indicate whether you would attend meetings on either a Tuesday or a Thursday once a month (a) ALWAYS, (b) SOMETIMES, or (c) NEVER. Please could you also indicate whether you have any preference for certain weeks of the month i.e. have to avoid other fixed meetings on the second or third week.

(ii) Please say if you would like to receive your regular Newsletter on-line instead of in the post.

(iii) It has been suggested that we create a separate list of members who would like to be more involved, influence policy, make public statements etc. by entering into on-line discussions. Please let us know if you would like your name entered onto this 'active' list. It could be set up with Yahoo groups to keep individual addresses private. If we do not hear from you, your name will remain on the general list to receive information, as at present, about meetings, campaigns etc.

3) Report of what was said at Cornmarket Scrutiny meeting, attended by OxPA members Corinne and Christine:

'OxPA felt unqualified to comment on the administrative failings that led to such an apparent waste of public money, but we do feel decision-makers were insufficiently responsive to public concerns, which may have contributed to the disastrous outcome (for Cornmarket). The main criticism is the decision to pour such a huge amount of public money into one small street which has so little benefit to the city as a whole.

Shortage of funds is usually given as the reason for delays to much smaller, important pedestrian improvements in the centre! Even after it was clear that surfacing was going to cost far more than was originally budgeted for, the City Council still pushed ahead **with unbelievably expensive seats**, in spite of public concerns about the cost, appearance, and comfort (or lack of it) of the new benches. OxPA feels there **was insufficient consideration given to finding a less expensive surfacing material** which could have been used wall-to-wall, creating a more convincing pedestrianised appearance to a street which now still looks just like a road. It was argued that the high cost of the surfacing was due to the needs of heavy delivery and service vehicles. However, **limiting the weight of vehicles accessing Cornmarket was never considered**, although that might have been a cheaper option. **The installation of the unnecessary traffic lights at the George St junction has added to the cost** of the scheme overall, (and added to the road-like appearance of Cornmarket.) Again here insufficient consultation has meant unnecessary expense; we understand that bus companies are unhappy with the lights, and cyclists and pedestrians are certainly very critical. Finally, the **lack of trees** in Cornmarket is widely lamented and contributes to general dissatisfaction with the end product.'

4) Apparently the Councils are no longer providing stickers for cars parked on pavements, due to lack of funding. Fortunately for members of OxPA we can get our own stickers. **At 40p for a sheet of eight**, they are the perfect gift or pick-you-up; **affordable, empowering and effective**. Available on our stall or by contacting Ray (details at end of Newsletter).

5) List of crossings sent to David Mckibben, County Council Head of Transport, who promised to look into how they do not work for pedestrians:

(i) **Speedwell/Thames Street**; a staggered crossing with buttons at either side and in the middle of the road. (ii) **bottom of Headington Hill**; and (iii) the **puffin on High Street**. All of these are either too slow to respond, and/or do not give enough crossing time, and/or are not tuned to meet actual pedestrian needs.

6) OxPA has two stalls coming up soon. Both are in the Town Hall. The Oxfam Fair is on Saturday November 13th, from 10am-4.30pm. The Green Fair is on Saturday December 11th, 10.30am-4.30pm. If you can come and help on OxPA's stall please contact Michaela (details below). An hour or two on OxPA's stall is fun at an indoor fair. Alternatively if you would like to make cakes or fudge, or candles for us to sell, all such donations are welcome.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday November 16th, at 7pm, in Oxford Town Hall. Please note the change of day and of venue. Please come, and bring a friend. Everybody is welcome!

There will be no meeting in December.

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