

**OXFORD PEDESTRIANS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO. 64
JULY/AUGUST 2005**

Welcome to Issue number 64 of OxPA's Newsletter!

Now the weather is hot and dry, many people will want to be walking the rural city route between Port Meadow and the Pick-Your-Own Farm/The Perch pub. It is a beautiful riverside walk, not too long, and pleasantly unpolluted for city centre-dwellers on a warm summer's day. However, it is also a bit of an anxious walk now that a large chunk of the towpath is being eaten away from underneath by the river, and is full of dangerous gaping trenches and holes, which are eroding more and more as the weeks go by. The City Council keep saying they will fill it in, but have not done so. It is not entirely their responsibility to do so; they say the Environment Agency and British Waterways are responsible for shoring up the sides of the river, but it is a costly business. The County Council is responsible for highways which includes footways, but not local riverside footways. What does this tell us about the official status of pedestrians? If a road was in such a dangerous and rapidly-deteriorating state it would have been repaired months ago.

- 1) Our Annual General Meeting is on Tuesday September 27th at our usual time of 7pm in the Town Hall. Mr Bill McArdle, OX1, will be our guest speaker at 7.30pm, after the business of the AGM. OxPA needs more active people; please come along and think about volunteering to be an officer for a year.**
- 2) Cornmarket has been resurfaced for the last time in its saga of becoming a pedestrianised street.** The surfacing is what is technically called 'a buff-dyed surface of well-graded aggregate, with a grit-blasted exposed aggregate finish'. It looks like brown tarmac. It is said to have chewing gum-repellent properties. As pedestrians walk down the middle of Cornmarket illegal vehicles motor down the middle, especially from St Michael's Street, and pedestrians hurry out of their way on to the 'pavements' so the vehicles can get to the traffic lights at the end of what looks terribly like an ordinary road.
- 3) OxPA has been invited to participate in a 'virtual steering group' for the County's statutory Local Transport Plan (LTP), which is currently in draft form. The draft LTP focuses on 'reducing motor congestion' by speeding up traffic through junctions throughout Oxfordshire.** This is the County Council's main practical answer to high city air pollution levels as well. Walking is mentioned vaguely, with a few paragraphs about it being healthy and to be encouraged. Air pollution is also given space, but the solutions are about newer engines and buses rather than traffic reduction. There are also a few paragraphs on cycling, which they hope to stop the decline of, but no practical measures for encouraging or increasing either. So there is a lot of room for improvement, and for the formation of a proper Walking Strategy, which OxPA will be happy to help with. (Apologies to those who hate prepositions at the end of sentences.)

The LTP is in keeping with Conservative plans for Oxford City. To the ruling group, who all hail from out in the County, our City is a retail and cultural centre, which should give priority to the motor car. So they are ‘piloting’ free parking in Oxford in evenings and at weekends from October this year. **Anybody wishing to comment or register disapproval please contact Cllr Keith Mitchell, Leader, Oxfordshire County Council, and copy to Peter Clarke, Solicitor to the Council, asap.**

- 4) **Health Walks. There are now two up and running regularly, one in East Oxford and one in West Oxford.** The one in East Oxford meets every Tuesday morning outside the Magic Café in Magdalen Road at 10.30am. Contact Liz Hodgson on 07769 687359. The West Oxford one meets every Wednesday at 11.30am at West Oxford Community Centre Café on Botley Road. Contact Susanna Pressel on 554001. The walks take about an hour and are adapted to suit the pace of whoever turns up. Everyone is welcome. These walks are said to be particularly good for people who could do with a gentle way of improving health and vitality.
- 5) **An application has been made to the County to have the traffic lights at the end of Cornmarket and the top of George St removed.** Both OxPA and Cyclox are supporting this, as, it is said, are the bus companies. If individuals would like to support this, please contact Cllr Alan Armitage, Oxfordshire County Council.
- 6) **Car Free Day, September 22nd. Plans are afoot to make this the best Car Free Day ever in Oxford.** The City is working with the County to try to get Broad St closed for the day. The County are not keen on the phrase ‘car free’ so everybody is thinking of positive ways to help them see how actually non-threatening this is!
- 7) **Please send digital photos of broken kerbs/footways to sushila@ecosse.net, and they will be forwarded to the relevant officer to deal with.**
- 8) **OxPA has cards for sale!** At 60p each they are less than half today’s commercial cost of cards. They are beautiful local pictures of the Bridge of Sighs and Catte St and can be used for any occasion, as they are blank inside.
- 9) **Pavement Parking stickers.** OxPA has been following this up since the County Council, the City Council and the Police apparently stopped issuing these free stickers, which go on cars which have been left parked on pavements. Now they are being re-issued, with 10,000 being printed. OxPA is going to be given 1000 for members and the stall, but people will also be able to pick them up from the Council offices and other public places, such as libraries.

To buy our beautiful cards, get some stickers, and discuss vital aspects of being a walker in Oxford, please come to our next two meetings, on Tuesdays July 26th, and August 23rd, at 7pm in Oxford Town Hall. Please come, and please invite a friend. Everybody is welcome!

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