



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

Number 85 – January 2009

Welcome to Issue number 85 of OxPA's Newsletter. This is written in the freezing days of early January, when the ground is slippery and water is frozen. Whilst roads get sanded and made safe, and indeed the ice melts on them faster than on pavements, footways tend to be left slippery and dangerous, with a parallel rise in fall injuries seen by casualty departments. Despite the fact that all of us are walkers at some points, walkers are still almost invisible when it comes to funding for ways to improve day-to-day accessibility.

Come to the launch of 'A More Walkable Oxford'

All OxPA members are warmly invited to attend the launch party for 'A More Walkable Oxford', which will take place in the Lord Mayor's parlour on Tuesday January 27th from 6-7pm. Members attending the launch will be offered a free copy of 'A More Walkable Oxford'. The launch will be followed by a talk on Streets as Shared Spaces by urban designer Graham Paul Smith, a topical subject, especially given the current 'Transform Oxford' proposals. Please contact Paul Cullen on (01865) 426805 if you plan to attend the launch

Transform Oxford response

OxPA will be submitting a position statement on Transform Oxford after January 27th. Please contact Paul Cullen if you would like to contribute. The draft submission is available by contacting Paul Cullen or Sushila Dhall (numbers at bottom of newsletter), please read it and comment/or make additions.

Walking Works campaign

With the holiday season just over and the weather so cold that people stay indoors, some will be feeling that their clothing is a little (or a lot!) tighter than it should be. Luckily the campaign 'Walking Works', run by national charity Living Streets, is on hand to help. Walking Works highlights the role that that walking can have in getting some fresh air into our daily lives as well as helping us to burn off those seasonal indulgences. The Walking Works website – walkingworks.org.uk – invites commuters to pledge to walk more during their daily lives, and offers all the help and encouragement you need to power on through those cold January days.

Shared Space

Step out boldly; you have priority! Ashford, Kent, is embracing the concept of Shared Space, which was developed in the Netherlands and is based on the principle that creating uncertainty on the roads makes them safer. It sounds contrary, but what seems to happen is that in the absence of signs and lights, all road users interact more, make eye contact, and behave more courteously!. In Ashford, tarmac road surfaces have been replaced by bricks, and pedestrians can step out wherever they need to without waiting for traffic to stop or walking to a light-controlled crossing. Speed limits have been reduced to 20mph, and roads narrowed to the width of two vehicles, but made level with widened pavements. It will be interesting to watch how this experiment works. Narrowed roads can be great for slowing traffic but hard for cyclists trying to pass queuing traffic or stuck behind polluting buses, which means they either suffer where they are, or risk conflict

with pedestrians by moving onto footway space. Relying on eye contact places blind and partially-sighted people, who already struggle at junctions, at an added disadvantage. But perhaps if everybody was more courteous conditions would be better for these groups too. At the top of New Inn Hall Street in central Oxford, this is the type of scheme envisaged, so we will eventually be able to assess it in a small way in Oxford. This newsletter will report in 6 months time on the early outcomes of the Ashford scheme as it settles down and members of the public get used to it.

Osney railway footbridge

This is the programme for re-installing the footbridge over the railway south of Oxford station. [The start of the work has been moved from December 2008 to March 2009]

30th March-1st May: Brickwork repairs and construction of crane bases

2nd-6th May: Spans of new footbridge to be erected

6th May-1st June: Various ancillary works

1st June 2009: Footbridge to be reopened, with a ramp on the steps for bicycles added.

20 mph limits in London

In April 2008, Hackney Council became the first London borough to take a decision to make 20mph the standard speed limit on all borough roads, drawing instant acclaim from local walking and cycling groups. Tony Armstrong, Hackney resident and chief executive of Living Streets, said: "By adopting 20mph as the standard speed limit for Hackney, the local council has taken a stand that will have a direct, and very positive, impact on the lives of local people. At 20mph, over 9 out of 10 people will survive a collision with a car. When Hull implemented a 20mph limit in residential areas, there was a 90% overall reduction in serious and fatal injuries -- thanks to this decision, Hackney can now look forward to streets

that are safer too. More than that, the fear of traffic that causes vulnerable pedestrians to stay indoors, and parents to reach for the car keys, will now start to fade. Hackney Living Streets has done a great job of pushing this issue up the agenda, and we now urge Hackney Council's executive to put these plans into action as soon as possible." To find out more about Hackney's campaign, which pre-dates Oxford's similar campaign, click on: www.hackney-cyclists.org.uk. In October 2008 the London Assembly launched an investigation into the feasibility of introducing 20mph zones in all residential areas across London.

And finally, two quotes for the New Year:

'I have two doctors, my left leg and my right', G M Trevelyan

'If you are seeking creative ideas, go out walking. Angels whisper to one who goes for a walk,' Raymond Inmon.

Next meetings

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 27th January at 7pm in the Town Hall when urban designer Graham Smith will discuss Streets as Shared Spaces. This follows the launch of 'A More Walkable Oxford')

On Tuesday 24th February (same time and place) we hope to have a speaker from the County Council to describe 'Transform Oxford'. ALL WELCOME

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