



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

October 2017

Welcome to Newsletter 123



Boulevard in Nîmes, bus routes either side of the traffic-free centre: a pattern for St Giles?

Air Quality and Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ)

On the same day that the launch of the city ZEZ consultation was announced, **ClientEarth** solicitor Alan Andrews was speaking in North Oxford. He described the 8-year legal battle with the government for effective Clean Air legislation, and how after several major defeats in London and a hearing in Luxembourg, **ClientEarth** was finally successful in court this July. Unfortunately, Oxford is not on the list of 28 Local Authorities whose air quality is deemed serious enough for Defra support. Our Councils will have to plan and implement improvements without financial and technical support from central government. **ClientEarth** is now considering its next move in forcing a reluctant government into compliance with EU standards to reduce the 55000 premature deaths attributable to UK's current poor air quality.

The consultation on Oxford's proposal for a city centre ZEZ is open until November 25: visit www.oxford.gov.uk/zez for details and to give your views.

Unseen Obstacles

Imagine that you are walking on a pavement in a leafy residential road in Summertown or elsewhere in Oxford on a beautifully sunny autumn day. Then you find that you are entangled in an overhanging bush. The next house has a tastefully placed blackberry

bush which has grown some way into the path ahead. Take out the branches from your clothes, making a note that you will need to mend the holes in the new wool jumper. On to another house which seems to have placed something metal and very large halfway across the pavement. Could it be a skip? No, it is a shiny new vehicle which is too big for the area once known as a garden. What to do? Walk in the road and risk more dangers or realise that one's white stick will have to encounter more and more obstacles in its way.

When I saw a gentleman in this position recently it certainly made me realise just how difficult things are for blind and partially sighted people. We should think very carefully about what we grow and park in front of our houses.

Oxford Half-Marathon

Recreational running became popular in the early 1980s, and Oxford started its own half-marathon race in 1988. This version of the race started outside University Parks (later, South Park) and used the pedestrian/cycle tracks beside Marston Ferry Road and the Northern Bypass. Discontinued in 1993, it was restarted in 2011, initially starting and finishing at the Kassam Stadium, not entering the city centre any closer than the Plain and Christ Church Meadows. Two years ago this race, then managed by Vitality, moved into the city centre, starting in St Giles, going up and down the Banbury Road, along Marston Ferry

Road and round Old Marston before returning to the city centre.

This year, the Oxford Half Marathon took place on Sunday 8th October, managed for the first time by Virgin Sport, with a start in Broad Street and finish in Parks Road, and with just under 9,000 runners. The city centre – Summertown – Marston route has been controversial. Roads are closed to traffic (including cyclists) from early in the morning until after mid-day. Local residents complain of being 'kettled' and not able to get out as they would like on a Sunday morning. On the other hand, it has been wonderful to see the city centre closed to traffic and thronging with people on foot, whether runners or spectators. At a time when we face a public health crisis because of increasing obesity and lack of physical activity, there is a lot to welcome in this use of Oxford's streets in a mass celebration of the joys of being on foot. (Not all joy for some of the runners; a banner held by a spectator in Summertown announced comfortingly 'Pain is only the French word for bread'!)

Botley Road

As reported in the July WalkTalk, we recently carried out an audit of conditions for pedestrians on the Botley Road. It has now been announced that the County has received £5m to carry out improvements to the section between Binsey Lane and Eynsham Road.



Could we learn a lesson in speed reduction from this ironic sign in a French village?

City Centre Movement and Public Realm Strategy

Oxford City Council has appointed Birmingham-based transport planning and urban design consultancy Phil Jones Associates and Nottingham-based sustainable transport experts ITP to develop a transport and public realm strategy for Oxford city centre. This study will inform the new Oxford City Council Local Plan for development up to 2036 and future updates of the County Council's Oxford Transport Strategy

A workshop was held on 4th October 2017 in Oxford Town Hall for organisations the council feel are key stakeholders. The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Inform stakeholders about the process and timescale for the study;
- Present the consultants' initial assessments of the current options for city centre movement;
- Invite stakeholder views of these options and further options for consideration;
- Invite views on the process by which options will be appraised.

OxPa members Deborah Glass-Woodin and Don O'Neal took part in the consultation.

The consultancy companies have done, and are continuing to do, surveys of movements of pedestrians, cyclists, and motorised vehicles in and around Oxford. They intend to interview people to find out about "near-misses" on the road in Oxford and find out how people feel when moving around the city centre as pedestrians, cyclists, or motorists; e.g. is it a good experience, is it too busy, are pavements too crowded, and much more. The focus is mostly on movement through and in the city centre. The consultants and Council officers talked about options that are being considered to reduce traffic, one of which is a congestion charge for motorised vehicles wanting to enter Oxford, similar to the congestion charge in London. Stakeholders were asked for their views on improving ease of movement around Oxford, and were assured that everything and anything would be taken into consideration. OxPA reps sat with representatives from the Oxford Bus Company, 'Pedal and Post' and the Oxford Preservation Trust. It was a positive and constructive exercise, with the rhetoric, and apparent wish, of putting pedestrians and cyclists at the top of the 'movement chain' above public transport, and then private motorised traffic. But it remains to be seen whether what we have been saying for years about danger hotspots, obstructions and pollution are really addressed this time.

Visioning Oxford

Following on from this consultation (above), our October meeting was a discussion, led by Don O'Neal, on visions of how Oxford could be improved for pedestrians. Visit *meetings* on our *website* to read the wide range of ideas discussed.

Green Fair Saturday 2nd December

Volunteers are needed for our stall at the Green Fair. If you would like to help, please phone Corinne 779663.

Meetings:

Tuesday Nov 28th: details to follow

No meeting in December

Tues 30th January OxPA / Cyclo Social event

AGM 27 February 2018

Please make a note of this date for our AGM.

Contacts:

Chair Sushila Dhall 790783

Secretary Corinne Grimley Evans 779663

Treasurer Christine Hamand 559856

Membership Michael Philbin 201541

Website <http://www.oxpa.org.uk>

Facebook Oxford Pedestrians Association - OxPA

Write OxPA, 431 Meadow Lane, Oxford OX4 4ED

National Pedestrians Association 0207 737 4900