



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

November 2012

Welcome to Newsletter 105

Annual General Meeting 2012: *Air pollution and Transport in Oxford City*

Roger Pitman, Oxford's Air Quality Officer for the past 23 years, attended our October AGM, accompanied by Owen South of Oxfordshire County Council's transport department. We learned that although there has been some success in reducing dangerous diesel particulate emissions from bus engines in Oxford, there is still a long way to go. Air pollution still exceeds 'safe' levels on many city centre streets, on built-up parts of arterial routes, and at the peripheral shopping centres. Mr Pitman believes that without general traffic reduction it will not be possible to reach and maintain the levels required by European legislation. The City Council is working towards declaring a Low Emission Zone for central Oxford which will ensure that access is restricted to vehicles with low emission engines from 2013/4. We requested that the air quality monitors which formerly displayed daily readings at Ramsay House be re-installed at the Town Hall now that Ramsay House is closed. The talk was impressive and a full summary of it can be found on our website or is available on request. For more information on air quality visit Oxford AirWatch: www.oxford-airwatch.aeat.co.uk

Paul Cullen Memorial Seat

OxPA would like to donate a bench to Oxford's public realm in memory of our much-missed late Chairman, Paul Cullen. Thanks to Ros Weatherall, a place has been identified in Walton Street, by the bus stop outside Oxford University Press, where Paul apparently would have liked a bench. OxPA would prefer the bench to be maintained by Oxford City Council and we are hoping to work on this reasonably fast so that the bench could be installed in 2013.

St Giles

The Oxford Times has surveyed traffic speeds in St Giles and found many lorry and coaches are travelling well above the 20mph speed limit. Paradoxically, Cllr. Rodney Rose concludes from this finding that St Giles should not have had a 20 limit imposed. OxPA's view is that St Giles was included for a reason - four lanes of constant, fast-moving traffic had made it a very unpleasant place for pedestrians - and there should be more effective enforcement to bring speeds down further rather than abandon the cause. But it seems that the 20mph signs have already had some beneficial effect, because the survey found an average speed for all vehicles of 24mph. If you have strong views on traffic speeds in the city, you can write to your own county Councillor and Rodney Rose to make sure they know speed really does matter to people on foot.

How can we improve St Aldates?

Low Carbon South Oxford (Transport Group) has asked OxPA to join their campaign to make St Aldates a better place for pedestrians. The absence of pedestrian crossings between Carfax and Speedwell Street, and the high level of air pollution are two of their serious concerns, both of which OxPA has campaigned about for many years. The poor road surface throughout much of this road is also a hazard for cyclists. We hope a concerted approach will be more effective in achieving our aims.

Port Meadow

Many OxPA members will have enjoyed walks around Port Meadow, the 400 acres of common land which is a Scheduled National Monument (rated above an SSSI) and has been used by the people of Oxford for centuries. A place of outstanding beauty, Port Meadow is greatly valued by all residents of Oxford, and is particularly noted for its open aspect. Many people are very concerned that these open views are now at risk from high building. If you would like to find out more about this, google **port meadow damaged views** where you can find a petition and more information.

Safety of school children in Headington

We have started working with parents of school children in Headington to suggest ways of reducing the danger their children are exposed to as they walk to school. The absence of safe

crossing places, the speed of through traffic and the number of cars parked carelessly while children are unloaded, all contribute to denying them a safe and healthy walk to school. We are exploring pavement extensions, zebra crossings and central refuges. Even in these cash-strapped times we hope that our Highways Authority will give priority to making the journey to school by foot a realistic option, as recommended in Education and Health policies of both local and central government.

South Hinksey Rail Bridge

Network Rail plans to replace the footbridge between New Hinksey and South Hinksey village in the next few months. The line is to be electrified and so the bridge will be made higher, which seems an opportunity to make this bridge more accessible for pedestrians with pushchairs, wheelchair-users and cyclists. Along with many local residents, OxPA is requesting that the new bridge be built with ramps (as well as/rather than steps). This is an important route for local people travelling between South Hinksey and Abingdon Road; the alternative, for car-drivers, is a very long detour. An on-line petition is being prepared but if you want to write directly to Network Rail, here is the address:

*Patrick Hallgate, Network Rail,
Western House, 1 Holbrook Way,
Swindon SN1 1BD*

Pavement Parking on the Wirral

We have been contacted by the Wirral Pedestrians Association with advance news of their new strategy to combat illegal pavement parking, which they report as steadily worsening in their area. Their 10-point strategy will include: requests to Merseyside Police and Wirral Council that their officers should stop parking illegally on pavements; that Police and Council officers should stop giving wrong information concerning the legality of parking; and that a clear joint statement of what is legal and what is not should be agreed by Police and Council and websites should be accordingly updated. They also will request that areas around schools should be prioritised to be kept free of illegally parked vehicles by a combination of education and enforcement. An education programme (via posters, leaflets, windscreen stickers etc) should be started to advise drivers of the law and possible consequences, followed by enforcement action if necessary to ensure compliance. The Wirral PA has asked our permission to use material from our own campaign against pavement parking. We will be watching the progress of their campaign with interest.

Pembroke Street

The city will soon be starting talks with stakeholders on improving Pembroke Street. Although a busy and important pedestrian route between the Westgate Centre, the library and St Aldates bus routes, it is currently one of Oxford's most neglected and pedestrian-unfriendly streets. Consultation is at an early stage but please get in touch with us if you have views on how this space should be improved.

East Oxford CPZ update

While it is still too early to assess the full effects of this scheme, some residents have reported a marked decline in numbers of vehicles lining their roads and causing obstruction. However, we have noticed that some vehicles do not manage to park within their pavement bays, leaving too little pavement space for pedestrians pushing bikes or with buggies or prams. A few drivers are continuing to park on the pavement on the side of the road with carriageway-only bays. We have been assured that such breaches will in due course be discouraged with warning notices followed by fines. We understand the County will be monitoring the situation. We too will be working with residents to keep a record of any over-provision of pavement parking bays so that the space can be returned to solely pedestrian use. We welcome comments from East Oxford residents on their experience of the new system.

Green Fair

Join us at the Winter Green Fair on Saturday December 1st. This is an excellent opportunity to buy interesting Christmas presents and enjoy the festive atmosphere - while lending a hand at our stall! If you have an hour or so to spare and would like to help, **contact Felicity on 251212**

Next Meetings

November 27th at 7pm in the Town Hall, open discussion of issues arising from the AGM and the St Aldates campaign.

Contacts

Chair: Sushila Dhall 790783

Secretary: Corinne Grimley Evans, 779663

Treasurer: Christine Hamand 559856

Membership: Michael Philbin, 201541

Web-site: www.oxpa.org.uk

National Pedestrians Association

[Living Streets] 0207 737 4900

Write to: OxPA, c/o 431 Meadow Lane, Iffley, Oxford OX4 4ED