

OXFORD PEDESTRIANS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO. 80

MARCH/APRIL 2008

Welcome to Issue number 80 of OxPA's Newsletter! We seem to have got through the winter without the feared flooding, and with weather dry enough for lots of walking. However the cold, combined with what must be cheap materials, has meant the cement between stone paving slabs has cracked and vanished, so that the newly paved areas on Magdalen Bridge and St John's St [and I am sure there are many more places too] have become increasingly unstable and rocky. This is a problem if one is at all infirm, as it means trip hazards. In more enlightened times our planners will ensure that beautiful stone slabs are cemented in strongly; until then let your local Councillors know when you see work needing to be done, in order to get it addressed as quickly as possible. **[To find out who your local Councillors are, ring 249811 for City Councillors, and 792422 for County Councillors. All City residents are represented by two of each.]**

- 1) **We were happy to welcome to our January meeting, Adam Sawyer from the County who gave us an excellent description of the process the County is going through to create its Active Travel Plan.** Oxfordshire has in the past produced both Walking and Cycling Strategies but these have never been implemented as intended. Now, the Active Travel Plan is intended to be their replacement, and a supplement to the Local Transport Plan. Unfortunately, Adam has now left the County's employment; **we hope this will not mean that the Active Travel Plan, which is the only document proposed for current use to represent the needs and rights of pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists, is now 'on hold'.**
- 2) **In February, Tim Atkinson, the County's Traffic Signals Manager,** gave an excellent presentation in which he answered many intriguing questions such as; **'Why do we have to wait so long for the green man after pressing the button?'** The County is at present reviewing its standards for introducing new crossings, and these will 'tilt' yet further in the direction of helping people on foot to cross the road safely. **Members who would like a full copy of the notes of Tim's presentation can obtain them by phoning Paul on Oxford 426805.**
- 3) **Oxford has its very own cycle rickshaw business. There are five beautiful rickshaws, which feel luxurious to ride in, and are completely environmentally sound.** They are often cheaper than taxis because they can go where taxis cannot, eg. Turl St and Queens Lane. Unfortunately they have been prevented from plying for trade by a challenge from Oxford's licensed taxis, who feel they are unfair competition, and this has flagged up the fact that, despite how sound and attractive they are, there exists in the sometimes strangely out-moded laws of this country **no legal way in which cycle rickshaws can be licensed to ply for trade** eg. at the Gloucester Green markets. However, if you are walking back from the shops or market and find the shopping that bit heavy, or fancy a bit of unusually affordable luxury, you can **call Ted Maxwell on 07747 024600** and book a smooth quiet efficient cycle rickshaw ride home.

4) **Up with the stripes! Zebra Crossings** are the ideal way to cross a road, because they make pedestrians aware of their intrinsic right to use the public highway in the most efficient manner, and make the most dangerous road users give way to them. They do not stop traffic unnecessarily, and usually only temporarily slow it. Why, then, have they gone out of fashion with transport planners? Many reasons are given, most often the one that zebra crossings place pedestrians at risk. **However drivers who know their Highway Code will know that if someone is waiting at a zebra crossing they have priority.** Perhaps the new way of ‘decluttering’ streets of lights and signs will mean we will see zebras making a comeback. OxPA has long felt we could do with one across the middle of Beaumont Street, one of many such places in our beautiful city.

5) **George Street has still not got its pedestrian priority marking reinstated. The pedestrian priority brick-look surfacing was removed without democratic mandate by County Highways over three years ago,** and despite repeated calls from various members of the public has not been reinstated. This means traffic on this very busy pedestrian route outside the cinema goes consistently fast. To register your complaint about this, **please contact County Councillor David Robertson [Transport portfolio holder] at County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND, or leave him a message on 792422, or email david.robertson@oxfordshire.gov.uk.**

6) **Some very important dates for your diary are coming up this spring, for those travelling to work or school every day. Walk to School Week is 19-23 May 2008.** Why not check that your local primary school is getting involved? More information is on the website: www.walktoschool.com. **Walk to Work Day goes nationwide for the first time ever on Thursday 24th April.** Businesses, councils and individuals across England are being asked to ditch the car keys to walk all or some of the way to work. If you go to work on 24th April, why not do the same? It will be good for you, good for the community, and you’ll enjoy it! **More information is on the website www.walkingworks.org.uk.**

7) **A new protest group has sprung up, partly in response to the amount of traffic that will be generated should the controversial Westgate commercial expansion go ahead.** It is called ‘Stop Westgate Campaign’, and is doing various things such as lobbying John Lewis [who are the prime mover behind the part of the proposal that will increase traffic, since they are insisting on the current number of car parking spaces], and drawing attention to the future - should the expansion go ahead, increased air pollution issues in already illegally polluted residential areas on the local traffic routes, etc.

Our next meeting is on April 22nd, when Anthony Roberts, Countryside Officer will come as our guest speaker. It begins at 7pm. Please come, and bring a guest; everyone is welcome!

Contact Numbers

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| Corinne Grimley-Evans [Secretary] | 779 663 |
| Ray Jones [Membership Secretary & Treasurer] | 865 070 |
| Michaela Philbin [Stalls] | 201 541 |
| Jill Haas [Consultation Process Reviewer] | 766 368 |
| Sushila Dhall [Newsletter Editor] | 553 415 |
| Acting Chair [Paul Cullen] | 426 805 |
| National Pedestrians Association [Living Streets] | 0207 820 1010 |