



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

July 2013

Welcome to Newsletter 108

St Giles project: Ben Hamilton-Baillie at Town Hall meeting.

Our campaign to transform St Giles and increase space for pedestrians gained new impetus at our July meeting with the inspiring presence of Ben Hamilton-Baillie. Representatives from Oxford Civic Society, Cyclox, Sustrans, together with City and County Councillors and officers, joined with many others interested in creating a more beautiful place for people in the heart of our city. Ben's general thesis is that the attractiveness and safety of a city's public realm, the space between and around its buildings, will determine economic survival in the age of on-line and out-of-town shopping. City-centre shopping, cultural, and tourist attractions are important economic and social activities but will not survive well without a revolution in assumptions about traffic in city streets. In particular, the relationship between vehicles and other users - and uses - of city streets has to be re-examined. Removal of unnecessary lights and signs, reduction of traffic speeds, and more sharing and reallocation of space are among ways of enhancing the experience of residents and visitors in our city streets. For Ben, the real work of transforming a space must take place before any changes on the ground are decided on, by minutely surveying the way the space is used - and could be better used. Through observation, surveys and questionnaires, we can discover ways in which St Giles can be beautifully redesigned for the benefit of everyone and without impeding essential traffic.



August evening walk

In August we will not be holding our usual meeting on the fourth Tuesday as many people are away. Instead we will have a walk on Tuesday August 13th. Starting at Paul Cullen's bench on Walton Street, we will walk along the canal to Walton Well Road, and across Port Meadow to the Perch pub where we can have a cooling social drink together. Meet at Paul's bench at 6pm to join our walk in memory of Paul Cullen, our much-missed Chairman. All welcome - bring friends and family. If in doubt about the weather, phone Sushila or Corinne (numbers below)

Westgate - Your Views Needed

Although Land Securities, which runs the current Westgate Centre, has held a limited consultation aimed at current users of the Westgate Shopping Centre, an official consultation run by Oxford City Council is imminent. The idea behind the much enlarged new Westgate Centre is that Oxford should be regionally competitive in terms of drawing in shoppers who may otherwise go to Reading or Milton Keynes etc. It is vital that as many local residents as possible respond to this. It is very easy just to respond to the idea of bigger better shops without thinking of the impact on the surrounding areas. Aspects of the development to bear in mind when responding are: the impact of

the chain stores and multi-screen cinema on existing services and facilities in Oxford; commercial versus housing development on publicly-owned land; traffic levels and their impacts; air quality; flooding issues; access; and buses.

Car Free is Carefree

September 22nd is International Car Free day, or *In Town without your Car* and this year falls on a Sunday. We have not planned anything as a group for this day, but members may wish to think of ways to contribute. Please let us know.

Walking Map of Oxford

Following Richard Mann's stimulating meeting with us in June, we have been asked to think more about what we consider essential features of a walking map and who should be the targeted audience. The discussion prompted Richard "to think about how the bus map could be improved to make it more of a bus/walking map - things like showing the patches of trees that make certain walking routes more appealing (eg the canal), and more 'destinations' (perhaps employers or viewpoints). Including things like stiles/steps/hills, and a walker's comment on rough ground might also be good". Most members of OxPA will have a copy of the excellent Cyclox Oxford Bus and Cycle Maps and they are available electronically at: (www.transportparadise.co.uk/maps). Richard has invited us to contact him directly (richard.mann.westoxford@gmail.com) about things helpful to pedestrians that are missing. Paths, stiles, and benches, or destinations might need including or labelling, as might schools, important buildings, or notable viewpoints. If you prefer, bring suggestions the next meeting and we will compile a dossier.

City Centre Pollution: a Councillor's View

From Cllr John Tanner, Board Member for a Cleaner, Greener Oxford:

"Pollution in Oxford is steadily reducing overall but there are still problems, especially in St Aldates, where levels have actually risen because of all the buses. Harmful nitrogen dioxide (NO2) across central Oxford has fallen by 13% in the last ten years. The City and County Councils, with the bus companies, are working to clean up the air in our city. From January 2014 nearly all buses will need the highest Euro 5 standard for exhausts to operate in Oxford. Many buses already have those cleaner exhausts. The European maximum for NOX pollution is 40 parts per million. In most of Oxford pollution levels are about 20. But in St Aldates and the High Street NO2 levels are often well above the maximum. In central London pollution is roughly twice the legal minimum. Everyone has the right to breathe clean air. Oxford City Council will continue to measure pollution especially in the city centre.

We will continue to follow the science and do whatever it takes to bring down pollution levels. I am determined to reduce NOX pollution below 40 parts per million everywhere".

You can find out more about pollution levels and the City's action plan for cleaner air on the Council website. In the space available John has had to focus on bus-related air pollution. Councillors are aware that many city streets are polluted most by cars and vans, and that this also needs action.

Stalls

The next stall will be at Elder Stubbs allotments on Saturday August 17 from 12-5pm. This is a really enjoyable event in a lovely garden setting, and is also a good opportunity to gain new members. Please get in touch with Felicity (251212) or Corinne (779663) if you can spare an hour or so to help spread our message.

Master Plan for Oxford Station

We have been invited, as a relevant stakeholder group, to respond to the proposed Station Master Plan consultation. Questions included what OxPA sees as the main problems with Oxford Station at the moment, which parts currently work well, and our key aspirations for a better station. We have included:- lack of connectivity - especially inadequate bus connections, poor access to city for people on foot, dangerous approach for pedestrians and cyclists, overcrowded platforms and foyer, inadequate cycle parking, lack of safe crossing for pedestrians at short-stay carpark entrance, poorly maintained toilets, long queues at ticket offices and for toilets. Our aspirations included an efficient transport hub for all transport modes, a safe and attractive route into city centre, more room for people on platforms and foyer and remodelling of Frideswide Square into a public space worthy of Oxford. There will be an opportunity for individuals to comment soon, to be announced on www.oxfordwestend.co.uk

Next Meetings:

August 13th 6pm Evening walk.

Meet in Walton Street outside OUP at Paul's bench at 6pm: see article above for details

Tuesday 24 September at 7pm in Town Hall.

Details to follow

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