



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

March 2015

Welcome to Newsletter 114



The Westgate Centre Redevelopment

After many years in planning, the Westgate project is now underway with a new developer, Westgate Oxford Alliance. The construction company is eager to cooperate with walking and cycling groups and is inviting our advice on how to minimise danger and inconvenience during construction. Representatives from OxPA, Cyclox, and Sustrans have now had two meetings with the Westgate Centre Manager and the companies involved to discuss best ways of alerting the public to intermittent changes in cycle and pedestrian routes through and around the site during demolitions and deliveries in the early stages. They intend to provide signs for any re-routing, positioned to enable people to avoid time-wasting detours. They will post a bulletin on their website to give advance notice, and also provide a direct phone number to construction managers for us to report problems or suggest improvements (www.westgateoxford.co.uk/our-plans).

Footpath Wardens

Footpaths are an important part of our pedestrian infrastructure, and even in urban areas they provide routes for recreational walking as well as for getting from place to place. Unfortunately they are not always as well kept up as we might hope. The Ramblers in Oxfordshire have now organised a system of Footpath Wardens, by parish or, in Oxford, by area. Footpath Wardens are asked to walk the footpaths in their area twice a year. They may do some simple maintenance work themselves, typically cutting back overgrowing vegetation. They report any problems twice a year: serious problems are reported directly to the County Council (although maintenance work may be done by City Council), less urgent to the Coordinator who, for Oxford, is Tony Dale of the

Ramblers. Keith Frayn, an OxPA member, covers broadly the north-east area (greater Headington) excluding paths within the Parishes of Old Marston or Risinghurst and Sandhills, each of which has its own Warden. As an illustration of the richness of the footpath network in Oxford, Keith looks after 50 individual paths. Oxford City as a whole (including its parishes) had 154 footpaths when the last Definitive Statement was created in 2006, and several more have been added since then. The Definitive Map and Definitive Statement are the legal record of footpaths and other rights of way, and can be found on the County Council's website: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/definitive-map-and-statement-online.

Local Transport Plan and Oxford Transport Strategy

Members are probably aware that the County Council is consulting on the proposed Local Transport Plan (LTP4) and Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS). The closing date for comments is 2nd April. The documents can be seen at: https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/CO_LTP4/consultationHome. There is a lot to read, but most of what concerns Oxford itself is in the document "Vol 2 section i: Oxford Transport Strategy". These are high-level strategic documents and provide very little detail, but they show the County Council's vision of how transport, including walking, will develop up to the year 2031. We will be discussing the plans with Daniel Round and Martin Kraftl from Oxfordshire County Council at our meeting on 24th March and will finalise OxPA's response to the consultation shortly afterwards.

Winter Party

Our winter party, shared with Cyclox and Oxford Civic Society, is becoming a regular fixture. This year we started with a debate on how to close the "Cornmarket Gap", which current bus routes have failed to do. The Chair of each society presented their view before general discussion and serving of refreshments. The wide range of solutions which emerged led to the conclusion that we should invite the bus company senior management to a dedicated meeting to explain their future plans and to listen to our ideas.

Pedestrian map of Oxford

As mentioned in WalkTalk 113, OxPA would like to create a map of walking routes in Oxford, similar to the map of cycle routes produced by Cyclox. The aim would be to make it easier to plan walking routes for commuting, shopping or recreation. We have now met with Graham Wood and Ben Spencer in the Department of Planning at Oxford Brookes University to take this forward. At some point we will be asking for volunteers to walk around their areas noting, or checking, pedestrian routes, especially alleyways that may not appear on other maps. Oxford Ramblers are also involved and have offered to help in a similar way. The intention is to create the map by building on www.openstreetmap.org. We hope eventually to make the map available both on-line, perhaps accessible via a smart phone, and in printed form.

Road works around Frideswide Square

Frideswide Square Boulevard creation is underway, with all traffic signals removed and roundabouts in place to enable traffic to move freely through the junction. The result for drivers is continuous movement but, so far, pedestrians find it far less easy to negotiate as drivers tend to shoot forward into traffic when they get a chance. However once the road layout is finalised and coloured to give a sense of pedestrian priority we trust it will be an improvement on what it has been during the 15 years since the

creation of the complex "queuing system". Sadly, the junction nearby (George St/Worcester St/Hythe Bridge St crossroads) has been made worse for walkers by recent changes, with long waiting periods to cross, short crossing times, and a wider road. Pedestrians have to look at the red/green man on their right instead of ahead across the road which increases a sense of powerlessness and danger. If you can run you can manage the junction, if you are slow or disabled, it is terrifying and inconvenient. There is room for improvement, as OxPA will tell the County highways department.

A More Walkable Oxford

At our February meeting a group of us went through OxPA's policy document aimed at the local Councils, "A More Walkable Oxford", editing and updating policy. The result will be a brand new document, incorporating much of what is still relevant from the original, and adding newer policy. Thanks to everybody who was at the meeting and contributed.

Pavement parking update

MP Martin Horwood's Bill to ban pavement parking throughout the UK failed to receive a second reading in January and now will not complete its Parliamentary passage. While claiming sympathy for the aims of the Bill, the minister responsible for pavements, Robert Goodwill, said that Local Authorities already had sufficient powers to ban pavement parking, and enforce the ban, and he had doubts about imposing such a burden upon them as envisaged in this Bill. So until Martin Horwood wins the ballot again, it is up to us to try to persuade Oxfordshire County Council to use its powers for the benefit of people on pavements. Apparently Baroness Kramer wrote to all English Traffic Authorities last year to remind them of their powers to prevent pavement parking, so LAs cannot claim to be unaware of the issue.

Meetings:

March 24th 7pm Town Hall. Guest speakers Daniel Round and Martin Kraftl from Oxfordshire County Council will give a presentation about the new Local Transport Plan and answer questions.

April 28 St Giles planning meeting

May 26 (date to be confirmed) How can we improve Oxford's bus services? With guest speakers.

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