



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

October 2013

Welcome to Newsletter 109

A walking map for Headington

Oxfordshire County Council was allocated £5M directly from Department for Transport under the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, to "encourage the use of high quality public transport, walking, cycling and car sharing, supported by targeted travel planning approaches". The main component of the project has been enlargement of the Thornhill Park and Ride site, but it also includes the new cycle hire scheme and improvements to pedestrian links to Thornhill. One output of particular interest to OxPA has been a map of walking routes in the wider Headington area in a simple A3 format. This map has just been released. It will be distributed via the County Council's Travel Hub, easitOXFORD network, community venues, hospitals, Headington library, and the University sites in the Headington area. The map is intended to encourage people to walk journeys that they might otherwise make by car, and also contains interesting information about the health benefits of walking (for instance, the claim that walking an extra 20 minutes each day could burn off 3 kg of fat in a year).

Pedestrian pound being ignored

Two recent reports on how to revive High Street shopping (Portas, Grimsey) agree that shopping streets should be communities, easily accessed, safe and attractive for people on foot. However both fail to discard the old myth that free parking is essential for retail health. As *Living Streets* points out, there is no such thing as free parking, it is just a question of what is being subsidised with taxpayers' money. The fact that pedestrians spend two to six times more in their local shops than people arriving by car should make planners think twice before encouraging more vehicles into shopping areas. Further research by *Living Streets* has found that people spend significantly more in an environment freed from dense traffic and pollution. A number of town centres and major high streets now run car-free or pedestrian priority days which show dramatic and positive results for retailers. So we must ensure that the value of the "pedestrian pound" is central to town centre planning in Oxford.

20mph Enforcement at last!

Thames Valley Police is "extremely likely" to adopt new ACPO guidelines on enforcement of 20mph speed limits. At present drivers have to be driving at more than 30mph to be ticketed in 20mph zones, which has made a nonsense of designating lower speed limits. Chief Inspector Henry Parsons believes stricter enforcement will help to change drivers' attitudes and make roads safer for all. Furthermore, the County Cabinet Member for

Transport, David Nimmo Smith, has indicated that if lower speed limits are properly enforced, the County would consider extending them elsewhere.

New Money for Walking Project

The County has been invited to bid for funding for a project to encourage walking. The aim is to encourage more people to walk as "a realistic, accessible and inclusive travel mode in order to benefit health", and to increase physical activity in those who fail to meet current recommendations, as defined in the *Start Active, Stay Active* report (2011). If funded, the project would focus on East Oxford and include an Area Based Walking Challenge, with Street Audits to identify potential minor improvements such as signage, production of innovative walking maps and promotion of new and existing health walks. It would also involve training GPs and other health staff to recruit patients for walking activities. OxPA has been assured that although, because of a tight deadline, we were not able to help formulate the bid, we will be invited to work with officers to ensure that the project successfully meets its objectives.

On Foot in Oxford

On Foot in Oxford is a joint initiative between OxPA, Oxford Civic Society (Streets for People), and the Ramblers' Association Oxford Group. One of the objectives of the initiative is to create a list of interesting walks in Oxford, with the aim of encouraging leisure walking by both residents and visitors. A group of representatives from the three

organisations has been meeting for just over a year to bring this to fruition. OxPA is represented by Ros Weatherall and Keith Frayn. The group discovered early on that something like 1000 walks have been described in Oxford, and so made the decision to compile a list of those that are readily available, either in book form or on-line, and those considered to be particularly interesting. The current database has 70 individual walks or sources of information. The group is now at the stage of looking at designs for a website as the main output for this resource. It will be accompanied by a paper 'flyer' that can be distributed via libraries and the Visitor Information Centre, to bring the resource to people's attention. Funding for this initial work has been generously provided by the Civic Society. If the resource is popular, a paper version may be considered in the future, although this would be considerably more expensive. The aim is to complete the work by the end of 2013, and with a launch event to bring interested parties together.

St Giles Campaign

We will be conducting further surveys of traffic in St Giles on Tuesday October 15th. If you would like to help for an hour (8-9am, 1-2pm or 4-5pm) please contact Sushila or Corinne (tel numbers below)

International Walk to School Month

October is International Walk to School Month. Each year, primary school pupils from across the UK join forces with children in more than 40 countries worldwide to celebrate the benefits of walking to school. Encourage your local school to take part and visit *Living Streets* for ideas and advice: www.livingstreets.org.uk

Local Transport Spending; Oxfordshire near bottom of league

A new report by the *Campaign for Better Transport* and *CPRE* has analysed funding bids by the 38 Local Transport Bodies (LTB) for 2015. Ranking in terms of sustainable transport and schemes to encourage cycling and walking puts Oxfordshire in the bottom three LTBs. Overall, an alarming 59% of the priority projects are for road building or widening, and only 26% prioritise public transport and sustainable travel. For the full report visit www.bettertransport.org.uk/ltbreport

Stalls

OxPA will have a stall at two forthcoming Fairs: Oneworld on November 16th and GreenFair on December 7th, both good occasions for meeting people and doing Christmas shopping - and for introducing more people to OxPA. If you have an

hour or two to spare, phone Felicity 251212 or Corinne 779663 to book a slot at the stall.

OxPA Committee

Are you a "people person", a document reader, a campaigner, someone who likes to get things done? OxPA needs more active members! It has been great to see so many people out doing our OxPA surveys. We wonder if any you would be willing to join our dynamic team and help to run OxPA. The work is not onerous but is greatly appreciated. We need a Press Officer, and it would be helpful to have someone to keep an eye out for consultations and issues on Oxford's streets which we can then take forward as a team. Please get in touch or come to our October AGM to express an interest.

Air Quality in Oxford

The Oxford City Council Air Quality Strategy for Oxford which we were recently consulted on was a mixed blessing. We applauded the fact that it was produced at all, and that there is official acceptance of the ongoing issue of traffic-related air pollution in Oxford. However we were disappointed that despite air pollution having been a known issue for over twenty years, there are still no practical targets set for lowering toxins in the air. Emphasis is, as always, placed on getting buses to install cleaner engines, and moving them around, but there is no attention paid to how air pollution is to be reduced on streets where cars and vans pose the greatest challenge. Current thinking is to take out traffic lights and keep traffic moving continuously; however, it is feared that this could pull more traffic into Oxford's already congested streets. OxPA's response to the consultation was largely a list of proactive and practical steps that could address the issues.

Next Meetings

Tuesday October 22: 7pm in Town Hall. AGM with Guest Speaker.

Tuesday November 26: 7pm in Town Hall. Details to follow.

Contacts

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