



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

January 2014

Welcome to Newsletter 110

Happy New Year!



....but watch your step

You may feel tempted to stride out in your Wellington boots but take care! The police have warned of the danger of stepping into submerged drains and manholes whose covers have been swept away! So until the waters subside even familiar territory could be hazardous.

Snow clearing

In the midst of the present floods, the usual winter afflictions of snow and ice may be far from everyone's thoughts. However, we know from past experience that the needs of pedestrians do not always receive the priority they deserve when severe weather strikes. Many of you will have read the letter from Sir Muir Gray in the *Oxford Times*, highlighting the problems for our most vulnerable citizens, and urging the Council to show leadership in enlisting the general public to help restore pavements for safe use as quickly as possible. (See the full text of his letter on our website). We have been in correspondence with the Council Streetscene officers and have been assured that they are ready to clear snow and ice from pavements, as well as roadways, as soon as the problem arises. Inevitably, with limited man- and machine-power, they will have to prioritise their activities. We suggest that you contact the relevant department to make sure they are aware if you find your pavements impassable because of snow or ice this winter. **Tel Ox 252957 or visit www.oxforddirectservices.co.uk**.

St Giles Campaign

With help from many members of OxPA and the Civic Society we have carried out several surveys to discover how St Giles is actually used, which we believe are the first such detailed surveys. The results are very interesting, showing amongst other things that pedestrians are the highest users of this space. Please come to our meeting on the 28th January to hear about the findings, and to join in the discussion about how this potentially beautiful space could best be used. *Note time and venue given below.*

A vision for a sustainable city

This was the topic of guest speaker, Peter Headicar, at our November meeting. In an inspiring presentation, he explained why it is so difficult for walking and cycling campaigns to succeed, in spite of the superficially supportive official rhetoric. The social and cultural dominance of the car in our society, working through the self-interest of politicians, thwarts any serious move towards sustainable modes of transport. A "peak oil" crisis

and dangerous pollution from vehicles may yet force a change in the "car culture" and transport habits, but he suggested a "sustainable coalition" between drivers and walkers/cyclists may be best way forward. Oxford is well placed to lead the way, with lower car-ownership (0.4 per head) and a 60% non-car commuting rate. The segregation of car traffic and pedestrians proposed by Buchanan (1960) assumed that the car would continue to dominate and that towns would have to adapt to the car. This is no longer the accepted view, and for a host of reasons, there is a growing determination to restore city centre streets to people on foot and bicycle. The Oxford Transport Strategy redistributed traffic by building Frideswide Square to hold queues going round what was designated an unofficial inner ring route (Hythe Bridge Street, Worcester Place, Beaumont Street, St Giles, the science area, Longwall Street). We still have long queues in Botley Road, and elsewhere, at an unknown commercial cost. The solution has to be an inner cordon congestion charge to discourage cross-city drives, with charges set to reflect the size and pollution of vehicles. Parking in residential areas takes up an unacceptable amount of road and pavement space which could be reduced if there were methods of reaching edge of town car parks or interchanges. Priority parking for car clubs, and differential charges for low-emission vehicles would help. Government needs to incentivise production of smaller less polluting types of cars.

Subscriptions now due

OxPA keeps its membership subscription very low in order to be as inclusive as possible, but we do need to cover our basic operation costs. Without your support we have no mandate to continue our valuable work on behalf of walkers in Oxford. Please bring your cheque books or cash (£5) to the next meeting, or send to the Secretary at the address below.

Cyclox campaign targets for 2014

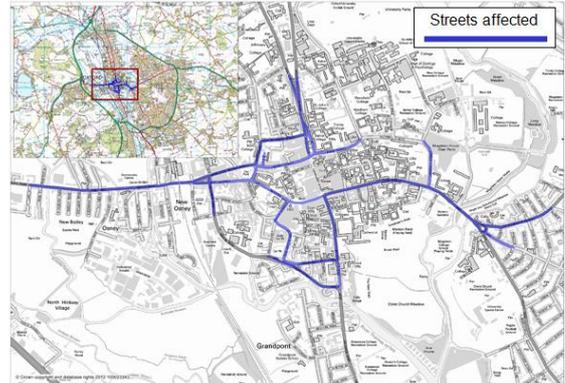
The cycling organisation Cyclox is drawing up a shortlist of "affordable" infrastructure improvements for cyclists, some of which will also benefit pedestrians. These include removal of illegal parking in cycle lanes and on pavements in Donnington Bridge Road and extending provision of raised side road crossings, like those recently installed in Iffley Road. Please let us know if you have your own shortlist of measures which could help people get about on foot more safely.

Air Quality in Oxford: Low Emission Zone

On January 1st, Oxford city centre became a Low Emission Zone (LEZ). This has taken many years in planning, and OxPA welcomes its implementation as the first step in a process that will eventually create a healthier atmosphere for

the people of Oxford. It is intended that the LEZ will result in excluding more polluting vehicles from the central area. However, initially the LEZ will only apply to local buses which operate within a defined area which will now have to meet Euro V emission standards for nitrogen oxides. It is essential that careful measurement of air quality continues so that other vehicles can be brought into the LEZ regulations if pollution levels continue to breach environmental health recommendations.

Map of streets affected by LEZ



"Give us time to cross"

This campaign, launched by *Living Streets*, seeks to lengthen the time allowed at signal-controlled crossings by 3 seconds. Research (see summary on our website) has revealed that many people over 65 years cannot comfortably cross at the speed of 1.2 metres per second required by the green man. This time setting has not been changed since the 1950s, but road conditions, traffic volume and the average age of the walking population are now very different. The average distances covered per second by elderly men and women are 0.9m and 0.8m respectively, so it is not surprising many feel anxious crossing roads with the current timing. There is to be a review of street crossings conditions by the government this year. OxPA will be responding to any consultation.

Next Meeting: Winter Party: St Giles update

Tuesday January 28th: 7.30pm at St Michael at the North Gate.

February meeting: Tuesday 25th, 7pm, Town Hall. Details later.

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National Pedestrians Association [Living Streets]

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