



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association
March 2023

Welcome to Newsletter 145

School Streets



450 hours. That's how much time volunteers spent standing in the road outside one Oxford school.

School Streets have a simple aim: to give children priority over vehicles when they travel to school. And they have a simple implementation: volunteer stewards stand in the road with temporary barriers at school drop-off and pick-up times. Stewards can move the barriers to let through residents, school staff, and other permitted drivers.

Oxfordshire County Council introduced an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) to close the roads - or rather, to open them for safe walking, cycling, and scooting - outside nine schools across the county. Sustrans, the national active travel charity, gave training and support to get started in June 2021, and after that we were on our own.

It may not come as a surprise that we faced some hostility from residents used to driving without restriction, and some puzzlement from delivery drivers who hadn't heard about the scheme. But this passed quickly. Much more of a problem was retaining volunteers to stand outdoors in all seasons.

Personally, I found it affirming to greet more and more children enjoying their journey on foot or by bike. One parent estimated that School Streets, combined with Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, led to the proportion of children being driven to our school falling from 35% to 14% - better for children's health and better for traffic congestion.

After a year's trial, and a public consultation, the scheme was made permanent at four schools from September 2022. And in January this year, ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) cameras were installed to enforce School Streets, which means our volunteer stewards can finally stand down.

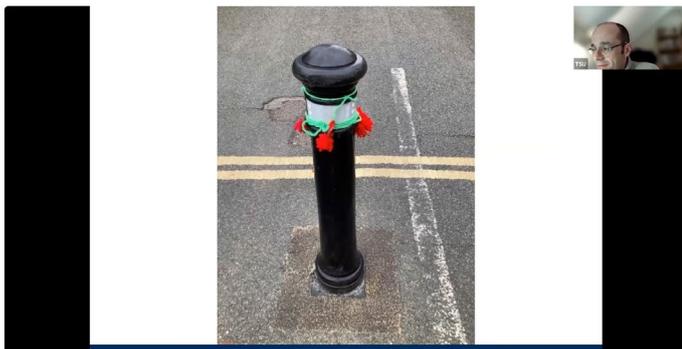
If you're interested in School Streets near you, please write to your county councillor and your headteacher to let them know.

Article written by Owen McKnight

OxPA AGM 2023 and Prof Tim Schwanen Talk

At our February AGM Don O'Neal was re-elected as Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Sushila Dhall as Chair, and Owen McKnight agreed to continue working as Social Media Coordinator.

Our excellent speaker was Professor Tim Schwanen, a professor of transport geography in the Transport Studies Unit, from Oxford University's School of Geography and the Environment, who spoke profoundly about change and how to achieve (and not to achieve) it.



He started from the point of the major LTN controversy in Oxford where angry people steal public bollards so they can drive along closed streets, and said the argument tends to be based on emotion not rationale. This has culminated recently in anti-LTN activists, climate change deniers and conspiracy theorists joining forces to protest against the concept of 15 minute cities - which are cities where everything is within walking and cycling distance. They have twisted this to get people roused up about the idea that they will be forbidden to move more than 15 minutes from their door, a mistaken and unenforceable idea. So how can we respond?

Tim said that LTNs were never intended to stand alone but should be placed alongside other measures like traffic filters and ZEZ's. On the back of the pandemic, people are frightened of what they see as restriction without gain. The evidence is that we should be doing what we are doing in Oxford, but that there need to be carrots and sticks used.

He suggested 3 responses: wait for the disagreement to disappear; aim for consensus with co-creation process (deliberative democracy); or see the current tension and disagreement as potentially creative, accepting it is there and that it cannot just be approached rationally - we need to allow emotion and respond to it. We can use story-telling, about the vulnerability of all people; cyclists, children, pedestrians, wheelchair users, and also drivers - linking this to deep forms of disadvantage. Bollards

can then be seen as something that reduces vulnerabilities for everyone.

He pointed out that there is much support and care of the schemes and that some people are not stealing and breaking bollards but decorating them with affection. This can be built on. Many comments followed. It was pointed out that drivers do not stop at crossings in Oxford the way they do in other countries in Europe, and that businesses blame LTNs for loss of business but do not realise it is because people have less money at this time. It was said that people in LTNs are frightened to say they are in favour of LTNs as the anti LTN people are so angry and aggressive, and also pointed out that we need more buses.

The talk can be accessed by clicking below, the passcode is Y*!l04bf (that's a lowercase L).

Click to view talk on transport controversy in Oxford

URL: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/oU-4DAPJXJb4LpSQnJzGENIKKh03xAUC3HhJcVVqY6_1M_gf0ievf_IK6jsth0_4xShrjH6J56TOS0h?startTime=1677612887000
Passcode:
Y*!l04bf

Road Crossings and Traffic Noise

We have agreed to focus on two things this year; road crossings and levels of traffic noise.



Please support our road crossings audit by telling us about road crossings near you, or that you use regularly. For crossings that you use:

- 1) Is the crossing on the 'desire line' or do you have to go out of your way to get to the crossing?
- 2) How long do you have to wait to cross (count in seconds)?
- 3) How much time (count seconds until pedestrian light starts flashing or goes off) do you get to cross?
- 4) Do pedestrians back up on the pavement whilst waiting?
- 5) If you cross at a place where there is no crossing; Where is a crossing needed?

Send us pictures of the crossing or where a crossing is needed.

Email us

on oxford.pedestrians.association@gmail.com

Or tweet us on

@OxfPedestrians and use

hashtag #OxfordCrossings

Volunteer vacancy: OxPA Secretary

OxPA is looking for a Secretary for 8-10 hours a month, to take minutes of general and committee meetings, check the OxPA account for messages, and send newsletters etc around the membership. This is a position paid by the hour, to be invoiced monthly.

Volunteer vacancy: OxPA Stalls Officer

Do you have space in your home and are looking for a worthy cause? You could be our Stalls Officer, which means keeping our stock safe in your home, joining our committee, and helping OxPA to attend events and festivals (around 4 a year). Please contact us at oxford.pedestrians.association@gmail.com if you are interested or would like to ask any questions about either of these roles.

Contacts

Facebook discussion group:

facebook.com/groups/oxfordpedestriansassociation

Facebook announcements:

facebook.com/oxfordpedestriansassociation

Sushila Dhall: Chair (tel 01865 790783)

Don O'Neal: Treasurer and Membership

Stalls: Vacant, volunteer needed

Owen McKnight: Social Media Co-ordinator

Secretary: Vacant, volunteer needed

Enquiries:

oxford.pedestrians.association@gmail.com