



# Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association  
April 2024

Welcome to Newsletter 149

Update from the AGM



At our AGM this year, where officers were re-elected to their roles, we heard from members of Unlimited Oxfordshire, who talked about the challenges of getting around Oxford in a wheelchair. The overall issue is lack of everyday accessibility - people using wheelchairs cannot use pavements which are too bumpy due to tree roots or potholes or broken paving, but often cannot get onto the road due to a lack of dropped kerbs, or obstructions like parked cars. Bumpiness can cause pain and spasming for wheelchair users. The same is the case with cobbled pavement areas eg. on High St side streets, which need level paths laid over or through them. Whilst the city centre has improved in some ways (Frideswide Square, Bonn Square), residential streets were cited as degrading, in both senses of the word.

Divinity Road was flagged as one example where parking on one pavement has been regularised by the painting of lines, so wheelchair users cannot use that side, but the other side was cited as having no ways to get on and off the pavement. Bins, cars, bicycles, electric charging cables, and e-scooters obstruct pavements, and wheelchair users have then to turn and go back to where they can get off the pavement to go around the obstruction. This is discouraging and time-consuming, especially when it happens regularly. River towpaths have had improved surfacing, but often tilt the wheelchair users sideways towards the water - you have to hug the other side of the path, which can be tricky when two people in wheelchairs need to pass. In rain, this sliding towards the water can be very frightening. Pavement cambers (to facilitate driving into driveways etc. also tip wheelchair users sideways, and some cambers at crossing points are so steep that they cannot be used or the person will fall onto their face. Often they are full of deep puddles whose depth cannot be gauged.

All speakers had experienced falling due to pavement and footway issues whilst out and about. Due to the built-in disabling nature of the pedestrian environment, speakers said many of them could not go out without a carer to prevent them falling or sliding. The two positives mentioned were improved and increased crossing points for pedestrians, and improved accessibility of buses - both were welcomed. It was a moving, humbling, and also galvanising presentation.

## **New bridge across the river Thames**

Oxford Pedestrians Association (OxPA) wishes to add its voice as a group to those opposing the construction of the new bridge across the Thames, which was the cause of the City Council taking down trees in the Grandpont Nature reserve before planning permission was officially sought.

Our reasons are as follows:

- The Thames towpath and the Nature Reserve provide amenity value for walkers and has been to date alive with precious natural diversity, trees and birds - this will be severely compromised by the felling of the trees.
- There is a good cycle pedestrian bridge adjacent to this site already.
- This public funding could be far better spent elsewhere if the aim is to facilitate walking and cycling.

## **Letter published in Oxford Mail**

This is a reprint of Owen McKnight's letter, published in the Oxford Mail newspaper on 5th April.

*I was surprised to read a letter in the Oxford Mail blaming pedestrians for not looking out for cars.*

*The same day, you reported that a takeaway on Iffley Road reopened three months after a driver smashed into its front window. Earlier in the week, you reported that a driver in Abingdon crashed into a supermarket! Adding these incidents to the daily collisions between drivers on the A34, it is hard to see how pedestrians are at fault.*

*Every school and every family warns children of the danger from cars. But children are children. As adults, we have the greater responsibility for road safety. And as drivers operating dangerous machinery in a public space, we have the most responsibility.*

*That's not just common sense - it's Rule H1 of the Highway Code.*

## **View from the Pavement in the Oxford Mail**

Our recent articles published in the Oxford Mail can be viewed at these links:

- A view from the pavement, November 2023 <https://tinyurl.com/Pavement1>
- An accessible city? December 2023 <https://tinyurl.com/Pavement2>
- Pedestrians can slip on pavements in the cold weather, April 2024 <https://tinyurl.com/Pavement3>
- Making our city roads safer for all - a pedestrian's view, April 2024 <https://tinyurl.com/Pavement4>

## **Reopening of pavements at Botley Road Rail Station**

Oxford Pedestrians Association (OxPA) has expressed our support for the reopening of pavements on both sides of Botley Road Rail Station area bridge, as the current tunnel has been narrow and overcrowded. However we are sorry to see that both sides are planned as shared-use with cyclists without the stated requisite width (minimum 4m, ideally 6m) for this very busy route. We believe that if shared use the routes need to be wider than currently envisaged. We welcome the proposal to instal continuous footways across side streets in this and any other area.

We made the point in our consultation response that many cyclists will not want to detour or slow down onto a shared pavement/cycleway, as this is a key east west cycle corridor. We were concerned that if cycle lanes are not provided under the bridge, drivers may not respect the rights of cyclists to be in this steep and narrow stretch of road. Monitoring will not heal injuries which could therefore take place.

## **OxPA walks – Summer 2024**

Here are our walks this year, all at 7pm on the 4th Tuesday of the month:

- April 23rd - Iffley (looking at place where new development is planned)
- May 28th - Barton (as we have heard from people there that this area needs attention)
- June 25th - walk led by Mark Davies
- July 23rd - city centre walk and Anchor pub
- September – TBC

Details of where to meet will be sent nearer the time.

## **Voi Scooter pavement pens**

Voi Scooters have put ugly pens on the pavements of Oxford for electric scooters. They seriously reduce the pavement width. OxPA calls urgently for these pens to be removed and scooter parking to be moved into the road - one car parking space could be space for several scooters. We have long called for cycle-parking to be on roads.



**Volunteer vacancy: Newsletter Editor**

OxPA is seeking a Newsletter Editor for our quarterly newsletter. The work is not too onerous as we have a template - we need someone to collect input from members and put the newsletter together, working with the support of OxPA committee, to create a document to be sent to members electronically by our secretary. The Newsletter Editor would be a member of OxPA committee, a small but hard-working group.

Please contact us at [oxford.pedestrians.association@gmail.com](mailto:oxford.pedestrians.association@gmail.com) if you are interested or would like to ask any questions about this role.

**Contacts**

Sushila Dhall: Chair

Don O'Neal: Treasurer and Membership

Stalls: Vacant, volunteer needed

Owen McKnight: Social Media Co-ordinator

Jamie Blomfield: Secretary

**Enquiries**

Thanks to everyone who has been in touch about issues in their areas. Where we think we can help, we are following up on these. As a small organisation we are very reliant on our membership to highlight issues of concern, so please keep your emails coming, to:

[oxford.pedestrians.association@gmail.com](mailto:oxford.pedestrians.association@gmail.com)