



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association
Oct 2024

Welcome to Newsletter 150

Given this is OxPA newsletter number 150, we attach at the end, for your interest, newsletter no 50 from 21 years ago, 100 newsletters back. Has anything changed since then?

Now back to the present time, with...

A northern approach to Public Space



It was highly interesting to visit Aberdeen, in the north-east of Scotland, and see the active travel changes to the city there over the past 2 decades. The first thing to strike me was the lovely real stone – stone cobbled side roads, with cobbles cut to bricks so that surfaces are level and the stones laid neatly without gaps where cement invariably erodes.

Aberdeen city centre pavements are wide and paved with stone slabs, and the kerbs are granite, hard wearing and not liable to crack under pressure of cars or lorries parking on them. Parts of the city have been pedestrianised, and there are benches everywhere. Like in all British cities there are homeless people on the streets, but this has not been used as an excuse for strange benches with bars in the middle or designed like high sloping perches.

Space has been designed for public use, and in front of Marischal College in the city centre where there was once a dirty busy road, there are now 61 fountains laid out in a mathematical and artistic square on this wide pedestrianised area, each underlit and with programming that makes the water do various things – creating waves and other patterns, rhythmic clapping sounds, etc. all available to be run through or played in, or just watched and heard.

Crossings are plentiful and on desire lines, and side roads are crossed by a gradual slope, almost imperceptible, to road level, with iron studs creating tactile surfacing. All durable and expensive, built to last. The streets are clean, and the city has an air of pride. On the downside, although there are cycle advance boxes on the roads, there are no cycle lanes and cyclists ride on pavements – far from ideal, but luckily the pavements in Aberdeen city centre are 3-6m wide.

It is strange to think that Oxford could learn something about public realm improvements from a city so far north and without the reputation for wealth that Oxford has. Perhaps we can turn St Giles into something as spectacular and pedestrian-friendly after the traffic filters are in place?

Our problem with E scooters

E scooters should be part of the solution to Oxford's transport crisis. They are fast, quiet and non-polluting. OxPA would like to be able to welcome such innovations, but we cannot because of the impact on pedestrian space.



Like some cycle parking, all e scooter parking is on pavements, taking up huge chunks of space. In addition, due to the way people carelessly park the e scooters, even more space is taken up than the parking appears to allow. Setting vulnerable road users against one another by forcing them to share too little space is unacceptable, and again makes a mockery of the policy of placing pedestrians and wheelchair users at the top of the road users' hierarchy.

Traffic filters – notes from OxPA meeting, Sep 24

Traffic filters are needed in Oxford because there is too much private traffic on the streets, causing pollution, congestion, bus delays, and very poor conditions for pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists.

A traffic filter is a camera-enforced feature limiting private cars from driving through, but not into or out of, Oxford. It is like the bus gate on the High Street but will be to stop private cars only. It will not stop motorbikes, emergency vehicles, taxis, or any vehicle other than private cars. Permits are available for transport to and from hospitals and care facilities, and automatic exemptions are applied to buses, coaches, vans and lorries. Local residents will have 100 permits a year, so will be able to drive through the filters around twice a week. In response to this the Bus Companies have invested in new electric buses which will glide smoothly and without emitting fumes.

There were thousands of responses to the consultations on this, the majority in favour. However, due to Network Rail's delay in widening the Botley Road rail bridge, the start of the filters has been delayed and the timing of their starting is at this point unknown; it will be when Botley Road re-opens. Network Rail are finding their work under the bridge more complicated than they had planned for.

Some traffic will invariably be displaced, while some people will find they can switch to buses which will be much more efficient and faster with reduced cars on the roads. There will be no bollards, but cameras only on Hythe Bridge St, Thames St, St Clements, St Cross Road (all 7am-7pm), and Marston Ferry Road and Holloway (initially peak hours only). Pedestrian crossings will be made more responsive to pedestrians once the traffic is reduced.



The consultation on how it is going will start as soon as the filters are in and run for 6 months – however responses to the filters will be taken on for the whole initial period of up to 18 months – once the scheme has settled it will be seen how it will work longer term.

People in private cars driving through the filters without a permit will be initially issued with a warning, then fined £70.

View the Traffic Filters presentation by Craig Rossington, Senior Transport Planner, Oxfordshire County Council [here](#).

Read more about the proposals at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/trafficfilters

Celebrate International Walk to School Month and win!

October is International Walk to School Month, when we can encourage children to walk and wheel their way to school.

To celebrate Walk to School Month, Living Streets is encouraging schoolchildren to go on an Autumn Street Safari. By taking a few minutes on their walk to schoolchildren can collect special items and celebrate autumn with some fun activities.

The Safari checklist can be downloaded in English or Cymraeg/Welsh. By sharing discoveries children can enter a prize draw. Prizes on offer include 10 x £25 shoezone vouchers. To enter simply share your Autumn Street Safari discoveries with Living Streets. More information on the Living Streets website [here](#).

New OxPA website

You may have seen that OxPA has an attractive new website at <https://www.oxpa.org.uk/>

The new site went live at the start of September, designed by Dan Neal (not to be confused with our treasurer Don O'Neal who steered the project). It is intentionally plain and simple with an overview of our campaigns, information on our meetings, the Oxford Online Walking Map, and of course the OxPA shop for bags and books and stickers.

In particular, it should be equally readable on desktop or mobile - not that OxPA endorses looking at your phone while walking!

Please take a look, share with friends, and remember that you can also follow OxPA news on Facebook /OxfordPedestriansAssociation and Twitter @oxfdpedestrians.

Volunteers for Green Fair in December

The Green Fair will be in Oxford Town Hall on December 1st and OxPA would be glad of volunteers to help on our stall between 10.30am and 4pm. Always a vibrant event, this is a chance to spend an hour or two supporting OxPA, and meeting people who come to the Fair.

Member's Meeting – Voi talk

For our members meeting at 7pm on October 22nd, we will have talk by Chris Benton from Pedal and Post about the Voi e-bikes and e-scooters. Pedal and Post manage the Voi services in Oxford and Chris will talk about what this entails.

Remembering Mike Hamand

OxPA has been sad to hear of the death of Mike Hamand, who illustrated our book 'Oxford on Foot' and whose drawings remain a testament to his talent and generosity to OxPA.

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 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

OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO 50

MARCH/APRIL 2003

Welcome to Issue no. 50 of OxPA's Newsletter! Important practical change is afoot; from April 2003 OxPA will be meeting on the third Tuesday (rather than the third Monday) of each month. The venue and time remain the same; at the Town Hall at 7pm. Therefore the dates of meetings after our March one are: Tuesdays April 15th, May 20th, and June 17th. OxPA has booked the Judges Room in the Town Hall for these meetings. The reason for this change is that Oxford City Council will no longer be allowing use of rooms free on any days but Tuesdays and Thursdays. Had we stayed with our Monday meeting we would have had to pay £27.50 per hour, which would have been at least £50 per meeting! Sadly there are some active members who won't be able to attend on a Tuesday. OxPA hopes that other members who may not have been able to attend on a Monday, will be encouraged to come on a Tuesday instead.

1) **Information on the GTE, now otherwise named 'Expressway Oxford'.** The plan is to lay tracks at least 6 metres wide alongside Oxford canal and railway running from the outskirts of Oxford to Oxford centre and the railway station. **The southern section would run south of Pembroke and along the virtual quarry sidings, with a 6 metre embankment over Grandpont Nature Reserve 'as far away from houses as possible', down to a new junction with the A34. Peartree to Redbridge would be the 'core' track.** Apparently there will be 'prioritised junctions' in places but these are 'a detail' which will be looked at later. The trap-grounds would also be used, but we are assured that 'as this is a democracy all bodies must say how they feel.' An Environmental Impact Assessment will cover all flora and fauna in the areas where the track could be laid. In the future perhaps the guided bus might run from Witney and Woodstock to Oxford centre, but initially it will be an alternative park and ride route. When asked why the existing arterial routes could not be used Mr Laphorn said that as there is no room (because of current traffic levels) the Highway Authority would not sanction it. **For further information on Expressway Oxford, contact: GTE for Oxford Ltd, P O Box 1362, Oxford OX4 2ZB, or log on to www.expresswayoxford.com.**

2) **News from the National Pedestrian Association ('Living Streets'). This body is focussing on the linked issues of traffic speeds and pavement cyclists as two major deterrents to walking.** In their Policy Briefing, Living Streets suggests we campaign for slower speeds on roads at the same time as campaigning for cycle-free pavements. The relevant policy briefing is included with this Newsletter; however should members want to access more information on this and other issues pertinent to walkers please look up our website on <http://www.oxpa.org.uk/index.htm>. We have learned that as of August 1st 1999 **'the relevant statutory instruments have been put in place and the police have the power to issue fixed penalty notices to pavement cyclists'**. But since they are often unwilling or too busy to focus on this, or apparently unaware of this legal ruling, it helps to have ways of encouraging pavement cyclists back onto roads oneself. Usually walkers find pavement cyclists angry and defensive when tackled; however an effective method is **to comment loudly and in a tone of polite surprise, "Goodness! Aren't you old enough to cycle on the road?"** Especially useful when dealing with young adults!

3) On Thursday March 20th, at the High Court on The Strand, London, three groups (Road Peace, the Slower Speeds Initiative, and Transport 2000) are challenging the Government on the issue of speed cameras. In a pilot scheme eight Police Authorities were allowed to keep fines raised by local speed camera initiatives. More Authorities wanted to join, then the motorists' lobby attacked, saying cameras should only be put in if they were coloured yellow **and only in places where four or more fatalities or serious injuries had been caused in three years.** The Government gave in to this, and is now under challenge. **Please attend the High Court in London and give your support to the challengers.** Details available on our website or contact Corinne.

4) ROX have demanded more parking places for private traffic in Oxford's centre. This has largely been turned down by the County, but ROX representative Mr Jones persuaded the Council to do another survey and site visits to places such as Oriel Square, where he hopes there will be room made for new parking places in the face of his insistence. **However, on-the-ball OxPA reps are going on the same route with the same County Officer (Samantha Tharme) so the pressure not to reinstate parking will be equal to the pressure applied by ROX.**

5) Beyond fed-up with increased obstructions on footpaths and pavements? Some members are finding taking photos with a digital camera useful in discouraging the offenders. To put pictures on our web-site please send them to Corinne. **Perhaps some people can be shamed into thinking of walkers!**

6) Following up the issue of slippery pavements and footpaths during the coldest time of year when roads were sanded and salted. Clearly vehicles are still officially considered more important than pavement users. We are informed that pavements were not sanded/salted because of staff shortages. This is doubtless the case, but extra staff would have been required at Accident and Emergency to cope with increased numbers of broken bones and severe bruises. For some a broken bone can mean months of lost mobility. **A saving in one place means more spending in another.**

Our next two meetings are on Monday March 17th and Tuesday April 15th, at 7pm in Oxford Town Hall. Please note the change of day as from April this year. Please come, and bring a friend. Everyone is welcome!

Contact numbers

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