

HRA Update Thursday 17 February 2022 our fiftieth Update

Save the Date: The news you have been waiting for! HRA will be taking part in the annual OxClean Litterpick on Saturday 19 March at 10 a.m. Details will follow.



Attention All who Use Warneford Lane: The County Council has launched a consultation re Warneford Lane parking. The proposal is to make a cycling 'Quickway', by removing parking between the junctions with Morrell Avenue and Gipsy Lane, replacing it with protected cycle lanes (cycle lanes with a physical barrier). For detailed plans and/or to make a comment (Deadline 11 March): https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxford_warnefordlane_parking2022

Royal Mail is ushering in a big change: After 31 January 2023 stamps bearing the Queen's head and saying '1st' or '2nd' class will no longer be valid; attempting to use them will incur an as yet unspecified surcharge. The only exception is special commemorative stamps; these are not being phased out, and can be used after 31 January 2023. Bar-coded stamps (with the additional bit at the side), are being phased in, and are said to be more 'secure'. We'll see!

This news will come as a shock to those who merrily bought stamps in advance, squirrelled them away, happy at thereby beating inflation. However, the semi-good news is that a swap-out scheme, opening on 31 March this year enables us to exchange current stamps for bar-coded ones until 31 March 2023. How? Go to the 'Swap Out' page (not yet live) on the Royal Mail website, or go to a delivery office (NOT a post office), and send off the stamps you want to exchange. NB Details such as how many stamps can be swapped are not yet specified.

Sending parcels to the EU: Have you had the embarrassing experience of sending a gift to the EU only to hear that the recipient of the gift has had to pay a fee before the carrier would release the item? This in no way means that you have been mean and used too few stamps! It is another post-Brexit disaster area. Gifts valued at under €45 are not subject to VAT or duties therefore there should be no extra fees. Royal Mail says that the 'Gift' tick box on the CN22 customs form is being misinterpreted by EU carriers. A redesigned form will remedy this.

If you value our green spaces and parks, now is the moment to say so: The Council is conducting a survey about our nature reserves, parks and green spaces (deadline 31/03/22). You can fill it in as many times as you like. The Council will count the number of responses for each nature reserve/ park/green space and those with few or no responses will be considered as 'under-used' and could be flagged for future development. NB There are some surprising omissions from the list; you might wish to comment on that.

Here are links to the Parks and Green Spaces Survey

https://consultation.oxford.gov.uk/community-services/parks-survey/consult_view/ and/or <https://consultation.oxford.gov.uk/community-services/parks-survey/consultation/intro>

Link to Countryside and Nature Reserves:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory/25/countryside_and_nature_reserves

Link to Parks: https://www.oxford.gov.uk/directory/9/parks_in_oxford

ZEZ Pilot Scheme: Oxford's Zero Emission Zone, the first in the country, designed to reduce pollution by promoting sustainable transport, making walking and cycling easier and more appealing, will be introduced on 28 February. The pilot will launch in a small number of city centre streets including: New Road between Bonn Sq. and its junction with Castle St.; Bonn Sq.; Queen St.; Cornmarket; New Inn Hall St.; Shoe Lane; Market St. from Cornmarket junction east for 40 metres; Ship St. and St Michael's St. All petrol and diesel vehicles, including hybrids, will incur a daily charge unless eligible for a discount or exemption. The zone will work in a similar way to the London Congestion Charge and Ultra-Low Emission zones, and if approved, will be extended to include St. Giles, St. Aldate's and Oxpens Rd.

Crime Prevention: Theft of Catalytic Converters: Being made of precious metals, namely rhodium, platinum and palladium, these are targeted by thieves who simply cut them from the exhaust pipes of parked cars and sell them on to scrap metal dealers. Taller vehicles are more vulnerable as the catalytic converters are easier to access. SUVs, 4x4s and vans are also attractive to thieves as the catalytic converters contain a higher concentration of precious metals and are generally less corroded. Stolen CATs can be identified within seconds by Police and Scrap Metal Dealers on their Property Checker.

Law Change and Re-cap for Mobile Phone Use in the Car: *Do you know what mobile phone usage is not permitted while driving?* Using a handheld device while driving is illegal, and that includes whether you are driving, or supervising a learner driver. You are not allowed to touch your mobile to answer it. Nor are you allowed to use a phone while waiting in queues or at traffic lights. Meanwhile, there is no law to prevent tapping your phone on a fixed mount, however police can still charge you for driving without due care and attention or for careless driving.

What mobile phone usage is permitted while driving? You are only legally allowed to answer calls if your mobile is already set up with hands-free. The only time you can use your mobile phone in your hands while driving is to call 999 or 112, if it is not safe to stop. You are permitted to use your mobile when safely parked and your engine is switched off.

What happens if you use your mobile phone while driving? The law is clear. If you are caught driving while using a handheld mobile phone, i.e. without a hands-free set up, you could lose your licence. NB The police can still stop you if they believe you are distracted by your mobile phone, even if it is fully hands-free.

How many penalty points might you get for using your mobile phone while driving? You will face a £200 fine and 6 points on your licence. Depending on the case, drivers can be taken to court and face a fine of £2,000 and disqualification. Drivers are only allowed to clock up 6 penalty points over two years, so anyone who has been driving for less than two years, could lose their licence immediately.

Oxfordshire County Council Interactive Covid-19 Dashboard: See the facts at:

https://phdashboard.oxfordshire.gov.uk/?utm_source=YourOxfordshire&utm_campaign=41e26f4a48-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2021_02_26_11_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_206c6fb447-41e26f4a48-408038548

Headington News website: <https://www.headington.org.uk/news/today.htm>

HRA Addresses:

HRA Admin: hracttee@gmail.com
HRA Chair: hrachair@gmail.com
HRA Planning: hra.oxford.planning@gmail.com
HRA Webmaster: hra.website@gmail.com
HRA Website: <https://highfieldresidents.weebly.com>
HRA Covid-19 Support Group: hra-covid19-support@googlegroups.com

Useful contacts for people seeking information or help outside the HRA area:

Local data on Covid-19 <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/coronavirus-covid-19/controlling-local-coronavirus-outbreaks/stopping-spread>

Oxford Hub: <https://www.oxfordhub.org/>

The City Council provides a single point of contact for people to ask for help they may need as a result of Covid-19: [oxford.gov.uk/CommunityAssistance](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/CommunityAssistance) or 01865 249 811 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Disclaimer: The information we give in each edition is, as far as we can tell, correct at the time of circulation but please be aware that it can change.

HRA's Update is being circulated on an occasional basis, according to the information thought to be of relevance to members.