

Sustainable Transport & Active Travel Summit-20231117_131548-Meeting Recording

November 17, 2023, 2PM

Improving the public realm & cycling provision in Oxford, Councillor Emily Kerr

So improving the public railways cycling provision in Oxford, we have Emily Kerr here. Emily.

EK

Councillor Emily Kerr:

Great.

Hi everyone.

Thanks for having me and apologies I can't attend in person.

I have small children before I kick off.

I just wanted to let you know that I've written some of these slides to be shared afterwards, so I won't go through all of the content on all of the slides, but if you want them, please ask the organizers.

So I'm gonna talk in the next 7 minutes about three things.

Firstly, to share what we're doing in Oxford, second to discuss how it's been received.

And thirdly, to give an overview or some insights on what we might do differently next time round, next slide.

So, umm, here's just some images of the last 70 years.

Uh, we have a long history of too much city centre traffic and this is causing economic issues for businesses around the city.

Successive administrations have really tried to look at this, but I mean it.

It feels obvious that the only way that we can address this is by reducing car traffic in the city.

They're simply isn't enough room in Oxford for all of the cars that that want to be here, and this has been a very systemic problem for a long period of time.

Next slide and this rather dense slide that the kind of the key message I just like people to take from this is that we are doing a lot of different things.

There are a lot of different levers, both at county who manage the roads and at city where I'm a councillor and we work jointly at very specifically on Oxford.

But there are a lot of different initiatives you may have heard about our low traffic

neighborhoods, which have been a flagship policy of many London Councils as well. But there are a lot a lot of different things that will wrap up into the same plan. There's an ambition to reduce 25% of car trips within the county by 2030 and that needs to be more a much greater reduction in the city.

And when you bear in mind that we're also adding a lot of population to Oxford because many people are moving here, we really do need to have a full integrated plan across a whole load of different areas.

So, given I'm quite short on time, I'm just going to touch on a couple of these next slide.

So how have these multiple sort of plans been received?

I'm gonna talk just quickly about two things sort of specifically next slide, one of which has been very successful.

This was Broad Street parking removal on the left hand side you can see Oxford Historic Centre, which historically was a car park and this had, you know, a number of cars here.

I think it was approximately 30 to 40 something like that, not really a huge number of cars, but as a consequence you would always have people coming in, circling around, waiting for car parking spaces.

And this was removed around about a year and a half ago and it's been transformed into a pedestrian area and it it's really been amazing.

We've kept some disabled spaces and a couple of loading bays, but it it's been a huge transformation.

It's been very positive for city centre businesses because particularly the restaurants and cafes and just generally, I would say this has been almost sort of universally, uh positively received with just a couple of complaints.

Next slide and how is this?

How have we sort of managed to do this?

Well, I've put on the left hand side as a cycling study from somewhere in Toronto and on the right hand side.

At how what data I've had from Oxford and essentially what this says this, this 4% figure keeps coming back.

It's that number of customers that arrive by car frequently in city centre locations where people are, you know, live, walkable or you have tourists.

So that won't necessarily be true, but for every street, obviously.

But in in the centre of a city like Oxford in in Oxford's important retail areas, it's a

really very low number of people that come by car.

It's much people tend to walk, people tend to bust in somewhere.

Like Oxford's, people tend to cycle.

Cycle and so I think you know you removing parking as we did in Broad Street, you know often causes businesses concern and I think that's for a number of reasons business owners are themselves much more likely to drive than customers.

And therefore, as a consequence, they overestimate how many of their customers come by car.

And as we've just seen, it's often really low.

I'm this could this can be helped if you don't completely remove parking.

You can have timed parking which will increase turns so you know you'd have one hour parking, which will be for the first hour.

You know you have an online parking app where people have to book it, and that relies less on enforcement.

And if you're removing some parking, but not all of it, this can be a very helpful way of working with businesses to I'm in ensure that their needs are met in the people can still come by car, but really stop the issue of people leaving cars for a for a substantial period of time and when they're not necessarily shopping or using those businesses, I think it's worth remembering that parking takes up a lot of space.

So three cars is the same as one minimum sized house and when you bear in mind that cars are only used 3 1/2% of the time, car parking fundamentally occupies a lot of space, which could be much better used for people sitting and eating or and you know cycle parking or just to make spaces and a much nicer and nicer place to be and.

And so I suppose sort of my advice on parking removal is that business owners can also be worried about their own parking.

But often they'll think this they'll present it as a customer issue.

So you need to talk to businesses and find out whether they're worried about themselves not being able to part, or whether they're genuinely worried about customers not being able to pass and park and what solutions they think could sort of ameliorate the these issues.

And I really think it's worth doing a survey here so that that sort of my high level thoughts on one of our very successful initiatives which was removing parking in Broad Street, next slide.

So I'm I am gonna give you an overview of what I think we might do differently.

And as I say, and this is a lot of different parking and car restriction and traffic restriction concept all rolled into one.

So I've given here some examples of one of the big problems that we faced, which is around low traffic neighbourhoods and they attract an awful lot of debate and an awful lot of misinformation.



EK

Emily Kerr 29:17

So I just wanted to emphasize that with low traffic neighbourhoods specifically and you find that the same type of people tend to be either pro LTN or anti LTN.

And this I know, low traffic neighbourhoods better than I know anything else, but I think this this generally applies across all sort of traffic restriction measures.

So you tend to find people that are in favour of traffic restriction measures.

Are those with small children and public health experts.

Often, cafes and restaurants, those kind of businesses because they see the benefit of decreasing space for cars and increasing space for people and obviously people who you know already walking cycle a lot, you tend to find people that are opposed to these kind of measures are people who drive for work.

Often retail businesses can be very concerned because they, you know, think that people and indeed are correct about this.

In many cases, people need to have their cars close to the business in order to attract business to the retail business.

Obviously, people with limited mobility who rely on cars, etcetera, but I think it's worth one of the key lessons I'd like you to take on this on the right hand side is to actually lots of people are sort of neutral or unaware on ohh traffic restriction measures and nationally I think it's around 15 to 20% of people don't own cars, don't of households don't own cars in Oxford, it's much higher than that, 30 to 40% of people don't own cars and they tend to be more neutral on traffic restriction measures or slightly positive but much less informed.

So I suppose the key learning is that it comes across as a very polarized debate online.

Any form of traffic reduction measure.

Having said that, it's a lot more nuanced and there's a lot more people that sit in the middle and then you might think if you were to follow online debate, I'm already running overtime.

So I'm gonna just try and quickly.

Next slide, I'm this.

This supports the previous slide, so next slide.

And actually next slide again.

So I suppose here are my three pieces of advice.

The first piece is that you won't make everyone happy, so there's not necessarily a good it's not necessary to spend years on planning and traffic reduction measured to some degrees.

You just have to come out and do a trial, whatever that traffic measure is.

Next slide.

For the big things, if you're looking at doing big changes, please do representative polling surveys, because if you have an online consultation with support or oppose, you will inevitably get people from outside gaming the system and you will get people.

Only those people on either side, or those with very strong opinions bothering to complete the survey and it will not give you a representative idea of how people in your area actually feel about it.

Next slide.

And yeah, citizen involvement.

Where you can get citizens involved, it's extremely helpful to do so, and this is something that I'm very interested in, technology called tell Rams.

There are traffic counting device that individuals can have all residents associations, but there's lots of ways of getting local feedback.

Local people actually involved in understanding more about traffic.

Next slide.

So yeah, so this is my summary just to do a best traffic with pressed practice traffic reduction scheme, you sort of need to do the three things below.

You need to make sure you explain it properly.

It, you know, involve citizens.

It talk to businesses, understand the rationale, and make sure you've got decent data collection.

You've done surveys that you really bring people on board.

The second point you need to coproduce and give voice.

Ensure that everyone's been heard.

Ensure that people have a chance to really make their feelings available to you, and I

think the third one you know is kind of obvious, right?

But treat people with respect, as we've seen, there are groups who are likely to be more hostile, and it's really important to involve them in the design process and, you know, try and come up with code, come up with solutions.

Thank you.

Think I'm a bit over.

Jim Murray: Thank you.

I feel a visit to Oxford coming on.

 **Emily Kerr** 33:15

See.

Please come and come and see.

Jim Murray: So thank you very much, Emily.