



Cheltenham Cyclist

Summer 2005

Cheltenham Cycle Challenge



Picture shows Cheltenham MP Martin Horwood with some of the riders

Cheltenham Cycle Campaign launched Bike week in Cheltenham by running an information stall in the High Street, near M&S, on Saturday 11th June. The following day the CCC ran The Cheltenham Cycle Challenge. This saw about 120 bike wheels spinning around some good town cycling routes. Setting out from the Pump Room, more than sixty riders aged from 3 to 70 cycled an 8 mile loop as far as Salisbury Avenue, taking in quiet roads, cycle lanes, new cycle ways through Pittville Park, Merestones Road and the Honeybourne line.

Many were delighted at how easy it was and discovered routes they never knew existed. The challenge was that the ride included a treasure trail of tricky questions. Cheltenham's new MP Martin Horwood, with three year old daughter Maya, took part in the ride and presented prizes for the best answers at the end. High scorer Helen Clarke, who borrowed a bike for the ride, was so impressed with the ease of cycling around town she now intends getting her own.

Like the others, Martin enjoyed the ride and praised provisions made by the council. However, he said more is needed and councils have to realise that cycling needs more than a few white lines painted on pavements, a view endorsed by the CCC, who expect complete and consistent routes between key destinations.

Prizes were donated by Bikes of Charlton Kings, Cheltenham Cycles, Kraft Foods, The Natural Grocery Store, New Rooms, Royslans Cycles, and Williams Cycles.

The Cheltenham Cycle Campaign were back on the High Street on the last Saturday of Bike Week with our stand, answering questions and handing out a cycle maps to those cyclists requesting them.

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The Sandford Park Debacle

The Charlton Kings to Town Centre cycle route has rightly been portrayed as a major cycling facility by the Borough Council. It was with some dismay therefore that when the work in Cox's Meadow started on the flood relief scheme, "Cyclist Dismount" signs appeared. How can it be that part of a primary cycle route was barred to cyclists? As you may imagine the Cheltenham Cycle Campaign put in an immediate protest, which was apparently ignored. We therefore started to do some digging into what had happened.


The first discovery was that the contractors Halcrow, engaged by the County Council, were responsible for acquiring the extra land needed to bypass the part of the footpath and cycle path which could not be used. In their wisdom they chose to ignore the fact that this is one of the most used off-road cycle paths in Cheltenham and duly acquired/rented sufficient adjacent land for a foot path and placed the dreaded Cyclist Dismount signs. Their answer to cycling and pedestrian safety! This is not the first time we have come across a blatant disregard for cyclists and cycling by Halcrow. In the past we know they have taken the attitude that any cycling provision, no matter how bad, is a good thing. They are also notoriously difficult when it comes to consultation; simply put it seems that they would rather not consult.

To make matters worse, it would appear that there were contractual commitments to the "Flood Relief Work" in Sandford Park before the council's

consultation period was finished. It would also appear that Halcrow were one of the consultants who prepared the case, used to justify the scheme, for the Environment Agency. It, therefore, seems likely that there was potential conflict of interest in more than one area, not just on the footpath/ cycle path.

To quote from an email to one of our members. "Cycle Campaign was consulted, a little late as it happened because the job was under the control of the County Council's contractor, Halcrow... (The) Borough Council was as upset as we were, and so we had a big meeting. We actually provided a better option than the three they had on the table for an alternative route for the cycleway. This will emerge onto Keynsham Road at the 'other' end of the green railing fence, which should be more convenient for the link to Cox's Meadow".

As usual, the real problem is that different organisations are responsible for different parts of our infrastructure. This in itself would not be a problem IF they TALKED to one another and consulted as they are supposed to. The reality is that they each operate in total isolation. Sadly, despite our efforts, the Cyclist Dismount signs stayed. However, I understand the work is now nearing completion and the cycle track should be reinstated shortly.

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Why I usually cycle

I actually like cycling. It is usually as fast as the car across town, often faster when the traffic is busy. It is easy to park, so makes local shopping trips for moderate loads quicker than by car.

It minimises pollution by not running a cold car engine for short journeys, it also saves on fuel costs.

I find it warmer on cold days to cycle to work, as my hands freeze on a cold steering wheel for the first couple of miles, yet I'm never cold when I arrive on my bike.

I can get right to the shops or places I want. It makes me feel smug when traffic jams can be by-passed, on foot if needs be. I like travelling by public transport with my bike where it is the best option - I can talk to new people, read a book, do some work, etc. I really don't mind getting wet occasionally.

I get a smug self-satisfaction from NOT using the car. It keeps me fairly fit without having to visit a gym. It gives me exercise when I'd otherwise be sitting still and it keeps me slimmer than I'd be otherwise, so I can eat more things I really shouldn't. It is significantly more likely to increase my life expectancy than reduce it.

I can hear the birds singing & smell the flowers, etc. I often see wildlife (deer, badgers, owls, etc) that I'd never see from the car.

I particularly like cycling in the dark with really good bike lights. I like the satisfaction of carrying all I need with me when I cycle camp and it forces me to plan routes efficiently.

It helps me escape the rat race each day (for a short while anyway). It allows me

to discover roads & other places I would never drive down. I can spend the car park charges on other things.

I don't find smoking very nice; most cyclists don't smoke. As a woodworker, I get a real satisfaction when I smooth off a piece of wood with a plane - is sort of hisses. Cycling a bike on a good road on a sunny day is similar, in a strange sort of way - I can't explain it. A bit like a nice glass of wine with a good meal, or listening to your favourite music.

Why I'm not enthused with cars:

They cause much more pollution & noise.

I hate traffic jams, but especially in the car, and I get bored when I'm driving.

When I'm driving (or cycling) I get cross with other drivers who speed & take unnecessary risks, when I endeavour to drive safely, legally & responsibly. I especially object to being driven by other drivers who do not drive safely, legally & responsibly.

I find cars quite stuffy at times, & my wife gets travel sick (but not on her bike or our tandem).

I find people's obsession with cars uninteresting if the car is an end in itself, rather than a tool to do a job. Beware the bicycle obsessives - they can have the same effect on non-cyclists, as with any extremists.

I hate the way my car depreciates and goes rusty, even if I don't drive it much.

I hate cars on hot days.

I dislike maintaining cars, but quite enjoy sorting out bikes.

I dislike cleaning cars (& bikes too).

CHELTENHAM CYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT 2005

The following is something of an abridged version of things we have under discussion, with a few brief notes on our proposed solutions and progress. Completed items have been removed from this list. Note that where progress indicates action this year, it does not mean it has been implemented. There are still six months of 2005 left and if previous years are anything to go by we shall still be pushing hard at the end of the year for action.

Albion St - North Street - Clarence Street

This is an issue which we have been pressing for some time. The problem is crossing the town centre from East to West. It can be done relatively easily in the opposite direction, but not East West.

Proposed solution

Traffic management measures to allow two way cycling in Albion St North Street and Clarence Street.

Progress

Ongoing discussions on the future town centre general traffic flow arrangements.

Charlton Kings Cycle Route junction with Moorend Road

The exit/entry point onto Moorend Road is very tricky, with poor visibility.

Proposed solution

Improve the entrance, measures to slow the traffic and improve visibility.

Progress

None

Back Montpelier Terrace

This is a very useful route for access to the hospital from the western side of Cheltenham. At present, not all of the route is two way, with sections one way to prevent

“rat running”. The route avoids the tricky junction at Montpellier Terrace and enables the crossing at Gordon’s Lamp to be used.

Proposed solution

Improve crossing of Suffolk Sq. and traffic management measures to enable cycling two way in Back Montpelier Terrace.

Progress

Two way cycling to be allowed in 2005.

Village Road - Princess Elizabeth Way

Next to the pelican crossing there is a lane which is heavily used by the pupils of Hesters Way Junior School and Kingsmead Comprehensive. Kingsmead is actively encouraging cycling and the number of pupils using bikes is rising. However, the surface is very uneven and there is no lighting.

Proposed solution

Surface lane and install lighting.

Progress

Some tarmac now laid, access at PE way end to be improved.

Railway Station link to Honeybourne Line

The link under Queens Road is still missing and crossing Queens Road is not very easy. Also we believe plans have been drawn up to extend the track to Lansdown Road. This would improve links for walking and cycling to the station by reducing the distance from a number of destinations. There is already extreme pressure on car parking at the station and the rail operator is looking to extend the car park. Even a small switch from car to walking and cycling to the station would give major benefits.

Proposed solution

Remove the spoil under the Queens Road bridge and construct short length of track. Pursue the construction of the new route to Lansdown Road.

Progress

Discussions on-going, implementation possible in 2005. Link to Sherbourne Rd. still a longer term possibility.

Queens Hotel

Originally the road layout here was such that cyclists could proceed straight across from Fauconberg /Queens Circus to Imperial Sq. The road was altered to enable the former road train to turn, but entailed a new layout which meant cyclists have to perform a right turn without any protection in a central refuge. This was a layout we had objected to as this is an important route for cyclists.

Proposed solution

Re-design layout.

Progress

In discussion.

Post Office Lane

This was originally designated as the alternative route to the Promenade. It was accepted as a compromise despite the recommendations of the working party which agreed that the Promenade should be used for cycling.

The problem is that route is still poorly lit and it is frequently blocked by delivery vehicles. The surface is poor, it is not direct, security is an issue at night time and there are cycle/vehicle conflicts such as with reversing lorries.

Proposed solution

Reinstate cycling in Promenade.

Progress

Access planned for 2005.

Coronation Sq.

Gyratory systems are always a problem for cyclists and the Coronation Square is no exception. What makes matters

worse is that the largest housing estate is on one side of the square and the shops are on the other.

Proposed solution

Remove the gyratory system and make the main through route two way along one side of the square. Any cycle route would only have to make one crossing of the route. A solution which is solely based on the pavement route would not work because of the conflict with pedestrians on the south side.

Progress.

In this case the pavement route was installed. This, and further development near GCHQ has not in our view been very satisfactory.

Lansdown Road cycle track

Although there is still some debate within the cycling community about how useful this route really is, it is used by a large number of cyclists. However, there are still some serious problems along the route, particularly at the junctions.

Proposed solution

Improve junction with Lansdown Parade, and close road with Lansdown Walk.

Progress.

None.

Naunton Lane - Keynsham Road

Some years ago this was planned as a route. A cycle slip was built at the end of Keynsham Road. However, following objections from the fire brigade, contraflow cycling was never officially permitted. It does occur despite this. The whole route would provide a useful link to the hospital as well creating a longer cross town route, linking into the Sandford Park and Charlton Kings route.

Proposed solution

Pursue two way cycling in Naunton Lane and Keynsham Road with a new crossing of Thirlstaine Road. If this really is not possible there may be other solutions such as using Chirstowe Lane and Murvagh Close.

Progress

Initial planning is now under way.

Andover Road

For cyclists cycling east, having crossed at the Westal Green lights, the existing route peters out after a section of very substandard track.

Proposed solution

Unsure as to what the solution would be but some way of accessing Tivoli/ Bath Rd area without having to cross Andover Road twice.

Tewkesbury Road

The Tewkesbury Road is a very fast road with heavy traffic, but also provides a route for a number of cyclists and there is no real alternative for some journeys.

Proposed solution

A pavement route is not likely to provide a satisfactory solution. Removal of road space for cars and a reduction of the speed limit is likely to be more effective in positively promoting the bike. Making the near side lane wider, in the dual carriageway, would make it a lot more acceptable to cyclists

Charlton Kings Cycle Route

An additional access to the Charlton Kings route would be useful, in that it would extend the number of destinations which could be reached by it.

Proposed solution

Open a route from Chancel Way to the existing cycle route.

Park Place to Gordon's lamp

This area can be very congested with parking blocking

access to the crossing. The advisory lane peters out in Park Place.

Proposed solution

Widen existing advisory lane and extend to cul-de-sac.

Prestbury Rd roundabout and Albert Rd.

Traffic speeds are too high in Albert Rd, traffic uses Albert Rd as rat run and the roundabout is tricky to negotiate and intimidating.

Proposed solution.

Investigate ways of closing Albert Rd at some point for through traffic, traffic calming in Albert Rd.

Wymans Brook to Evesham Rd and Pittville school

There is a muddy track across open space. This is an important school route.

Proposed solution

The existing access across the old railway line and open space from Wymans brook to Albrmarle Gate needs formalising. A cycle crossing on Evesham Rd is needed.

Kingsmead Rd. to Arle Rd.

The approaches to the toucan crossing are at ninety degrees on both sides of the road; fine for pedestrians but bad for cyclists.

Proposed solution

Widen access paths to cut corners off, and improve access onto Arle Rd.

Junction of Swindon Rd, Kingsditch Lane and Runnings Road.

Very tricky complex of mini-roundabouts with multiple lane entries

Proposed solution

Redesign entire area





CCC Secretary Graham Ricketts, right with some of the CCN delegates.

Godalming Cycle Campaign hosted the spring 2005 CTC/ Cycle Campaign Confer-

ence. By chance Godalming also happens to be the place where CTC Headquarters is based. Like all previous conferences there was much to cover in the time available, so the day was hectic to say the least.

The mayor of Godalming welcomed us to the town, describing with fond memories some cycling adventures of his own. He was closely followed by the keynote speaker, Meyer Hillman, who went on to stun us all with the subject of which he is a true world class expert - climate change. His forecasts and message are chilling - that climate change is the most serious challenge we face in the 21st century, and that carbon rationing is the only solution. Meyer is not impressed by public transport - his conclusion is that it is only about 20% more efficient than the private car, and that walking and cycling are the only sustainable options. In particular, flying will have to be seriously curtailed, as it is such a major generator of greenhouse gases. Cycling England's chair Philip Darnton told us of his plans for cycling here in the UK. Depressingly, having estimated he'd need £70 million from the government to achieve meaningful results for

cycling, he has only been awarded £5 million, so is somewhat restricted in scope. He needs to concentrate carefully on a few key high quality schemes such as cycling demonstration towns.

Alex Sully, again from Cycling England, introduced "Cycle -Friendly Infrastructure 2". This new document brings some important new concepts into design for cycling such as the dynamic comfort zone - the space cyclists need in cycle lanes to be and feel safe. It is hoped that this, together with other measures, will help fill the "Skills gap" so many traffic engineers seem to exhibit.

Simon Pratt from Sustrans overviewed projects he is involved with in the south-east. Many of these are high quality railway path projects.

During lunch a very rushed AGM of the Cycle Campaign Network took place. This was a momentous occasion: CCN has decided to become a Company Limited by Guarantee, which gives legal protection to members of the Board. The meeting therefore dissolved the current organisation, and John Franklin stepped down as Chair. The new structure now needs to be formalised.

After lunch, John Franklin presented the National Awards for Cycling. These went to amongst others, a bike hire company in the north-west and a Cycling for Women project in London.

Sue Sharp from the Dept for Transport followed with a presentation on the Disability Discrimination Act. Requirements for cyclists and the disabled have much in common - and the DDA gives us an opportunity to work with disabled groups to our mutual benefit.

Alix Stredwick told us about the award winning "Cycling for Women" project in Tower Hamlets.

Alec McCalden, (a real rocket scientist no less) presented Godalming Cycle Campaign's A3 Hindhead closure objection campaign. Briefly, the Highways Agency is proposing to build a tunnel under the Devil's Punchbowl, currently a pinch-point in the A3 route from London to Portsmouth. Ignoring common sense, The National Trust then decided that they would like the current road to disappear completely, relegating cyclists to the older unsurfaced bridleway route, shared with horse riders and walkers. The Campaign is putting pressure on the Highways Agency to change their ridiculous plans. The inquiry was complex legally and Alex feels that this put a huge burden of responsibility on volunteers. To date Alex has done a fantastic job in working with other groups to present the cyclist's case, and we hope that he is successful. A judgement is expected soon.

Will Ward, a Surrey highway engineer, talked about LTP2 and gave us some hints for working with highway engineers. A short question and answer session followed, and the conference was rounded off with an address from Kevin Mayne, CTC director.

Together with the Friday night pub social, the Saturday evening meal and the Sunday rides of various types, Godalming Cycle Campaign can be rightly proud of their organisation of this excellent week-end conference. I urge anyone who wishes to gain an overview of cycle campaigning efforts across the UK to attend the next conference. It is a pleasurable mix of work and play, and a great way to boost the morale that gets such a battering in everyday campaigning work.

Publications



Review of procedures associated with the development and delivery of measures designed to improve safety and convenience for cyclists.

This review was commissioned by Transport for London (TfL) and was carried out by consultants The Transport Research Laboratory following the death of cyclist Vicky McCreery on Blackfriars Bridge last April. The review devotes a chapter to facilities on Thames crossings in central London (it recommends consideration of a 20mph limit). It also looks at facilities and the underlying design and consultation processes more widely and makes useful recommendations. TfL have also published a plan of action identifying a series of tasks that will implement their response to the Review.

View at www.tfl.gov.uk/streets/cycling/cycling-reportlibrary.shtml

Take a Stand:

How to set up a community cycling project
Life Cycle UK

Produced with the support of the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund, this guide is designed to help local authorities and voluntary sector groups set up, fund, administer, publicise and monitor community cycle parking schemes modelled on the successful, theft-combating 'Take a Stand' initiative in Bristol. Also offers technical information on purchasing bike stands and installing them correctly. £10 www.lifecycleuk.org.uk or tel. 0117 929 0440.

Courtesy CTC Digest.

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Proposals have been put forward for an off-road cycle path alongside the Bishops Cleeve to Gotherington road. The plans show it crossing the road in up to three locations. Cyclists using this facility would not have priority and thus there would be a number of stops and starts along this route for the cyclist. This is a route already used by many cyclists and it is thought that only the inexperienced would wish to use such a facility. Certainly experienced cyclists we have contacted who use this route take the view that the proposed cycle track would be of no use to them. The view of the CCC is that improving the road itself would be much more advantageous. The surface in places is breaking up and is a real hazard to any two wheeled road user. There is also the secondary effect of putting in sub-standard pedestrian/cycle ways. That is: Some motorists seem to think the cyclist must use the track and shouldn't be on the road and will make the point by deliberately driving too close to the cyclist, (*I have personal experience of this ED*). The cyclist of course is perfectly entitled to use the road, in the same way that a motorist can choose to use the M5 to get to Birmingham rather than the A38. Whilst all or nearly all cyclists should be taken into account when putting in cycle facilities, there are many other areas which are more deserving of attention. A safer route going west from Cheltenham to Uckington springs to mind as just one

candidate.

CCC do have one good thing to say about this scheme: We have been consulted in good time, which is a big improvement over what has happened in the past and is definitely a step in the right direction.

Regent Street

Cheltenham Borough Council, working in partnership and with funding from the Everyman theatre, Gloucestershire Environment Trust and Gloucestershire County Council, is launching a new project to improve Regent Street for theatre goers, disabled people and pedestrians. This is to be a phased development which initially will result in fewer parking places on Regent street, though a number of disabled parking places will remain. In later phases pedestrianisation will be extended, from its present location right up to the Everyman Theatre.

A Very Topical Debate

Shab Hill Lane, a quiet lane, leading off the A417 Birdlip Bypass has become subject to a proposed closure order from GCC. CCC & many others have objected strongly against this as it is the ONLY quiet route heading south, to Birdlip, at this point. CCC have notified other organisations including CTC & CC-CC, and many of their members too have written to complain.

The initial hearing on the proposal has delayed after the objections started to pour in. We haven't won on this yet but the hearing so far has been sympathetic.

Cheltenham Cycles

OPEN : TUESDAY- SATURDAY 9am-6pm
61, Winchcombe Street, Cheltenham, GL52 2NE
TEL: 01242 255414

Cheltenham Cycle Campaign Meetings

The venue for our monthly meeting has been changed. From July 2005 Meetings will be held at Cheltenham Centre for Change, 30 St George's Place, Cheltenham GL50 3JZ . Check dates for your diary, but unless otherwise notified, meetings will still take place on the first Wednesday of the month starting at 7.30 p.m. except August, when there is no meeting.



Web Sites Worth Visiting

www.cyclecheltenham.org.uk The web site of the Cheltenham Cycle Campaign.

www.weirdcycleanes.co.uk/ The address gives away the content of this site.

www.thebikezone.org.uk/thebikezone/confessions/coaco.html This is a site well worth browsing as it gives the story of road planning from the inside.

www.cycleweb.co.uk/ Links and contact numbers for just about everything cycling.

www.bikeforall.net/ Another and different portal to cycling information

www.nationalcyclingstrategy.org.uk/ Promoting the increased use of bicycles

www.carbusters.org tools for the grassroots global car free movement

www.itnarchive.com/britishpathe search for armchair cycling. Requires windows media player 8 or later.

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cyclingsurvey Results of a survey of cyclists in Oxford and Cambridge. See article opposite.

Dates for Your Diary



Cheltenham Cycle Campaign meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month (except August). They are held at The Cheltenham Centre for Change, 30 St.Georges Place, Cheltenham, starting promptly at 19.30Hrs.



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Oxford and Cambridge bicycle User Survey

This very informative survey carried out by Bath University and published by Oxfordshire County Council looks at a number of aspects affecting cyclists.

The survey, responded to by over 5000 participants covered:

- people's general experiences of cycling
- information about the bicycles people use
- how they maintain their bikes
- bicycle handling skills
- traffic skills
- accident statistics
- frequency of and reasons for illegal cycling behaviours
- demographic information.

Of particular interest to CCC was a section on "Types of Accident", as the survey results appear to back what we have been saying for some time. The survey found that the most common accident was slipping or skidding due to a hazard such as a pothole, metal cover, ice, loose gravel, a greasy road or a low kerb at a shallow angle to the direction of approach.

In Cheltenham such hazards are the new type of road studs which are more prominent than the older style and have a ridged surface. This is more likely to throw a cyclist's wheel than provide the extra grip which was presumably intended. We also have many non-flush dropped kerbs.

Cyclists in the survey indicated the importance of riding at least a metre out from the kerb and parked cars. It tended to be these cyclists who seem to cycle for many years without incident or collision. This adds weight to our view that the standard width for a cycle lane, where they are implemented should be increased to 2 metres.

The full report can be viewed at:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cyclingsurvey

Cycle Network For Tewkesbury?

The CCC were recently invited to attend a workshop on the proposed extensions to the cycle routes in Tewkesbury. It remains to be seen whether this is a genuine consultation, or whether it is another of Halcrow's consultations where the detail has already been decided and what they are looking for is public praise and a rubber stamp. The outcome of the consultation is awaited with interest.

From the Bath Cycle Campaign



Cycle campaigners in Bath have proposed a revolt over the meagre amount spent on cycling provision by Bath and North East Somerset Council.

The Council is proposing to spend £48M on the A46/A36 relief road. Yet they spend only £23,000 a year on cycling - less than half the cost of one pelican crossing!!

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Join Cheltenham Cycle Campaign

You can make a difference by joining Cheltenham Cycle Campaign. We aim to improve conditions for cyclists, and to make the Cycle Campaign a more effective organisation. The more supporters we have the better. Individuals and families can join and local organisations are welcome to affiliate as associate members.

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Annual Membership £3 Individual £5 Family
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I hereby give permission to the Cheltenham Cycle Campaign to hold the above details in its records.

signed _____

Date _____

* Delete as appropriate

If Joining as a family please list other family members.

Town Centre Cycle Count

In a count of cyclists in the town centre recently it was observed, from initial findings, that the split between riders/pushers within the pedestrianised areas varies substantially, with the most riders being in the Prom, then Strand/Cambray and least outside M&S. This would appear to be consistent with the conclusions of research by the DfT of cycling in other town centres; in other words the majority of cyclists adapt their behaviour according to the pedestrian density - dismounting in crowded areas.

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The federation of cycle campaign groups