

## Chairman's report..... from William Pitt

Hello fellow cyclists.

Let me begin with the obvious - St John's Road Roundabout. Firstly Newbury Weekly News wrongly attributed a quote from Tony Vickers as one from Spokes. Secondly we were supportive of the council's scheme which also includes Newtown Road North, but not to the extent that has been stated elsewhere. We certainly fully support the council in its attempts to increase the number of trips made by bicycle by implementing appropriate and useful cycle facilities. In the case of St John's Road Roundabout we were consulted and whilst some of our comments and suggestions could be accommodated, others could not. The plans for implementation were quite advanced when we were consulted. The scheme is based on the "Magic Roundabout" in York, which is considerably smaller and has four exits. We do have our reservations over the safety of the scheme and hope to influence any changes if they are considered.

West Berkshire Council received a cycling award since they had the largest increase in "Bell Score" in England this year.

*Jenny Noble & the cycling award with Martha Vickers & William Pitt*

Spokes recognises the problems cyclists encounter daily such as intimidation from motorists or general uneasiness sharing the road with motorised vehicles (often by the lesser experienced cyclist). This is especially true in West Berkshire where we are only starting to see the benefits from a more cycling pro council. Hence whilst we can understand why people cycle on the pavement, we cannot condone it; it is contrary to the Road Traffic Act 1988 & 1991. See our article later on in the newsletter. If you do feel apprehensive about using the road then there is training available that can help, so please contact us, or the council, if this is the case.

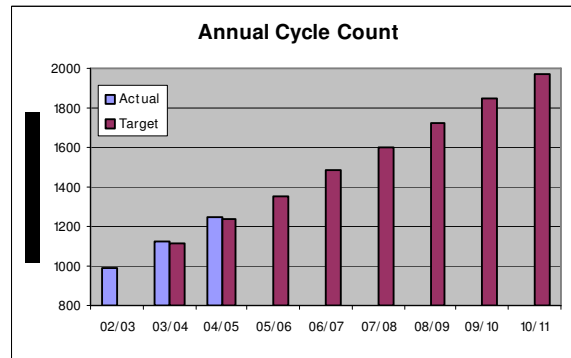
We are holding our third AGM on 24<sup>th</sup> January. Whilst I will be standing down as chairman, I will remain an active member. Please come along and show your support for Spokes. The more active members we have (and that may just mean helping occasionally at the farmers market, on the annual cycle count or sending an article to include in a future newsletter) the greater the voice we will have and the more cycle facilities we are likely to have implemented in the manner we would like them implemented.

I hope you will continue to use your non-motorised transport during the cooler months, and please be seen at night with good, working, lights (front and rear) and a reflective top. Happy pedalling....

## “From the Council” by Tony Vickers

A year after handing over as Spokes' Chairman and 18 months into being a councillor, I'm reflecting on how the attitude of the Council has changed since Spokes formed and I became 'one of them'.

Something good must be happening for West Berks to have won the 'most improved English local authority' from the Government's team of experts in cycling. It could be we began from such a low score that the only way was up, but we have beaten the targets set in the last 2 years and that definitely proves we doing something right!



All credit must go to Jenny Noble, who has been the 'main woman' for cycling policy matters in the WBC Transport Policy team; she was key to steering the map project through. Jenny deservedly went to Westminster to collect the prize from our MP, and Spokes President, David Rendel.

We are getting greater focus on cycling issues. In addition to Jenny we also have, her immediate boss, Frances Fernandez. Frances arrived at the start of 2004 and took over the chair of the Cycling Forum, which Head of Planning & Transport Policy Nicki Linihan-Mardon created a year ago. The latest recruit to the team is Coral Taylor, whose job is School Travel Plan Adviser. Coral, like Jenny and Frances, lives within cycling distance of Newbury.

Responsibility for transport matters lies with Cllr Sally Hannon on the Council's Executive. As well as being in charge of all transport matters, Sally chairs the 8-member Newbury Town Centre Task Group that reports to the Executive, which I'm also on.

A lot is happening that comes past this Task Group on its way to Executive decisions. The Newbury Movement Study report is awaited any day, and this will influence the detailed plans for Parkway, Market Street (station to Kennet Centre) and Wharf redevelopment projects that will transform central Newbury over the next 5-15 years.

The Task Group is taking their cue from the "Vision 2025" document, which Spokes contributed to. "Vision 2025" is being used as a 'master plan' for the town's future prosperity and the big question for us is:

Will the Transport Hierarchy (pedestrian, cyclist, public transport, then car) *really* be followed by the planners?

The answer must be yes, if the latest scheme, to enhance Newton Road North, is anything to go by. We may have criticisms about the detail but there's no doubt that the highway engineers whose job it is to implement transport policy have got the message.

The biggest problem is still communication. Far too often a highway scheme appears almost complete off the drawing board before a single councillor – let alone Spokes – gets to see it. Consultation is still extremely patchy, and doesn't seem to be part of the design process at all. There is a statutory minimum, which doesn't involve consulting anyone until this late stage, by when our comments are often quite fundamental and come as a blow to the project team.

As Chairman of the soon-to-be-abolished Newbury Area Planning Sub-Committee, I've made it my duty to monitor progress of all major planning applications in that area. Often I've been able to go direct to the planning department to check if Spokes has seen the plans – on many occasions where clearly there is a cycling interest, consultation hasn't happened. When applications come to my committee, I make sure that cycling gets a mention: this month, I tried to get a developer to fund one-way contra-flow in West Street. I failed but the message got through to Highways that we need it somehow.

As it is, if we were consulted every time we should have been I'm not sure our small group of volunteer 'scrutinisers' in Spokes could have coped in the tight timeframe allowed for consultation on planning.

Often approval of developers' plans comes with conditions that funds for off-site cycling facilities are provided 'drawings to be approved'. It can be years before any development actually happens and more years before those off-site cycling facilities appear. There doesn't seem to be a procedure that ensures these developer-funded schemes always come in front of councillors or Spokes for comment before work starts. A recent example was the development off Queens Road, which led to the Greenham Road subways being ruled unsafe for cyclists.

Perhaps my most influential position on the Council is as Vice Chair of the Planning & Transport Policy Task Group, which will steer the next District-wide review of all spatial planning policies over the next three years.

Government now requires much more 'community involvement' in this process than before and I see this as a way of getting the message across that giving a higher priority to cycling is not 'anti car'. Beyond the Planning & Transport Policy Team, there are still far too many of my colleagues on the Council who take the view that cyclists are a nuisance and cycling has no part in the modern world except as recreation. That's what has to change, at least in our urban areas.

## Report from CCN Autumn Conference - Cycling and Transport Integration William Pitt writes;

I attended the CCN's Autumn conference in Wolverhampton (on 13th November). There were ten speakers, it started roughly on time and finished on time - a miracle I think!

Three out of the six recent Millennium Commissions awards were related to cycling, with Sustrans being one of the recipients. It would seem these have been the most successful use of the Lotto's good causes. With an ever-increasing number of miles of the National Cycle Network it is not difficult to see why.

There are a number of cycle bus schemes that have started. One very successful scheme is in the New Forest. A clever design means the driver does not have to load the bikes, but the cyclist loads the bike instead. Typically more cyclists use it in the evening, after, one presumes, a hard day at work. If you live in a rural part of Berkshire, have a local bus service with a destination that you would like to take your bike to or from then please let Spokes know.

Late breaking news (at the conference) the BMA changed its position on the wearing of helmets. They have published a report just before the Government's white paper on Health. In summary, the report recommends that all cyclists should wear helmets by law, not just children. Spokes' position is that everyone has the right to choose whether or not to wear a helmet and it should not be enforced in law. Personally, I wear a helmet. However, evidence does indicate that such a law leads to a decrease in cycling - which means more car usage, more pollution, more obesity, etc.

You might like to know that we're awaiting the "Newbury Movement Study" by consultants WS Atkins for West Berks Council. Atkins gave a presentation at Newbury Racecourse on 1 November, copies of their slides are expected any day now. I noted down one key quote: "61% of residents of Newbury & Thatcham live less than 5 km from their workplace. Most of those have less than a 10m height gain between home and work and therefore we'd expect them to be able to bike to work." Also "A third of the households in Victoria Ward [central Newbury] have no access to a car" (from the 2001 census).

As soon as we've received the draft Atkins report, SPOKES will get to work on detailed studies of cycling routes that we'd like WBC to make their priority, especially those to and through Newbury town centre.

## Cyclists & Pedestrians

Edited by F Steele

What are your thoughts on cycling on pavements? Many cyclists may not be aware that cycling on the pavement is illegal; indeed judging from the number of cyclists you see on pavements, you could be forgiven for being confused about this issue. Add the fact that there are tracks shared by pedestrians and cyclists and the issue is even more blurred.

The Road Traffic Act 1988 & 1991, Rule 54 states the law in simple terms.

Rule 54. You **MUST NOT** cycle on a pavement. Do not leave your cycle where it would endanger or obstruct road users or pedestrians, for example, lying on the pavement. Use cycle parking facilities where provided.

*Laws HA 1835 sect 72 & R(S)A sect 129*

If you fancy refreshing yourself on other rules of the road here is the link

The Highway Code can be found here:

<http://www.highwaycode.gov.uk/00.shtml>

Many think that as long as there is inadequate provision for cyclists, cyclists will continue to do what is logical for them to do - in their eyes, whether it is legal or not. This may mean cycling the wrong way down a one-way street - or on the pavement, or making illegal right turns.

This problem can partly be attributed to poor traffic management.

- Decades of traffic management leave us with a legacy of road layouts conducive only to travel by motor vehicle. These layouts can reduce the perception of safety for any road user not in a motor vehicle. Consequently, less confident cyclists (probably wrongly) feel the safer place to be is illegally on the footway.
- The past few years of uncoordinated and ill-advised conversions of footways to sub-standard shared-use leaves us with a district in which it is difficult for a cyclist to tell which footways allow, and which do not allow, cycling.

Cyclists will not stop using pavements illegally but Spokes mustn't condone it. Spokes will use examples of cyclists using pavements illegally to show a real need for a provision for cyclists that is legal, usable and useful.

And, when cyclists do these illegal things it is essential that they act in a way that is considerate to others, recognising that what they are doing is illegal.

Non-cyclists bring up this issue regularly, and it is something that Spokes must have a stand on. At the last Transport Action Group, Mick Hutchins of the West Berkshire Disability Alliance asked what could be done about cyclists on the pavement - who are a great danger to those with disabilities using the pavement. He has offered one of his group to attend the next Cycling Forum to explain what a danger it is.

Illegal pavement cycling is damaging for Spokes and cyclists in many ways.

1. Some people think that cycling campaign groups support such behaviour, and attribute blame accordingly.
2. It means fewer cyclists are on the carriageways, reinforcing the views of drivers that the carriageway is their property. So, it sends the wrong message about cycling as a pleasurable and sustainable transport mode.
3. It not only annoys pedestrians, but it puts cyclists in danger of collisions with them.
4. It puts cyclists in danger of collision at driveways, junctions and entrances.

So in conclusion Spokes does not condone cycling on pavements and will continue to campaign for better cycle ways so that cyclists are safer and better able to co-exist with pedestrians and cars.

## Spokes Projects

Ever wondered what kind of things Spokes is campaigning for? Well here's a list of some of the projects that Spokes have prioritised with the local council. We're happy to hear your feedback on this as we are your cycling representatives to the council.

Victoria Park	Both tree-lined avenues are recorded as cycle routes but are not signed
Park House and St Bart's Schools	Create cycle routes leading to schools
Kings Road West and underpass from Police Station to Bear Lane	Remove cycling restrictions Spokes really needs to resolve the lack of routes East – West and West – East for cyclists.
Sainsburys to Library	Sign "Library & Wharf" from outside Sainsburys across to Mill Lane, under A339 and across car parks to library (paint cycle way across car park)
London Road to Victoria Park	Sign "Town Centre" route from B&Q in London Road via Faraday Road to Victoria Park (along towpath), removing 'end of cycle way' sign by Parkway Bridge.
Ham Bridge	Create cycle crossing at Ham Bridge for NCN4: dropped kerbs, signs, road marking
Monkey Bridge	Replacement to Monkey Bridge at Northcroft / Westfields, including signs and heighten river bridge to prevent flooding
Turnpike to Greenham	Provide cycle route from Turnpike to Greenham avoiding A339
Cycle Parking	Covered public cycle racks: Cromwell Place; Northcroft Lane (behind LSB pub); Marsh Lane (behind M&S); Waterside Centre; Wharf Street (behind museum); Kings Road West (outside cycle shop)  Spokes would like to help in ascertaining if these are the best sites for new covered cycle racks.
Advanced Stop Lines	Create ASLs at strategic road junctions in and around Newbury

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## Membership Details

Families can join SPOKES for only £5 a year; individual subscription is £3; £1 unwaged. You get a regular newsletter and a discount with The Cycle Shop, Newbury. Send your name, address, phone number and e-mail address to Graham Hunt, SPOKES Membership Secretary.

**Events.** If you would like any events to be advertised here, please contact the Events Co-ordinator, contact details at the end of the Newsletter.

**Adverts.** Please contact the Editor if you would like to place an advertisement in this newsletter.

**Articles.** If you would like to contribute or have any ideas you would like to suggest please contact the Editor.