



### **Editor's Report**

Only a brief word from me as Ed has a lot to say in his report (below)... I just wanted to thank all those who contributed to the newsletter in the past year. And for those that did not... Why not submit an article or send in a letter... happy cycling for 2006.

Oh and sorry for lack of pictures in this newsletter...

### **AGM – Chairman's Report**

by Ed Cooper

West Berkshire SPOKES has had a successful year which is due entirely to the work of a few key volunteer officers on the committee. I would like to thank the following:

- Kevin Bushell for his tireless and thorough production of responses to Council consultations. Kevin has written over 50 formal responses over the last year, and these remain our main method of altering what happens on the ground for the benefit of cyclists.
- Graham Hunt for his frighteningly efficient administration of the membership and finances
- William Pitt for continuing support and the regular updating of web site and newsletter production
- Tony and Martha Vickers for their continued enthusiasm, organisation of the stand at Farmers Market, and for recent publicity successes despite the efforts of the leader of WBC to thwart them
- Angela McMahon for representing the east of the area and for travelling regularly to Newbury for SPOKES meetings
- All the volunteers and partner organisations who have helped man the farmers' market stand and who assisted with the cycle count.

This year we have consolidated and increased our membership which now stands at 97 members. We need to top the 100. This membership is crucial as it gives us our remit to apply what pressure we can to the Council SPOKES is a most active member of the Cycle Forum and has led on a number of initiatives. In particular we have led the consultation

process on the LTP and were successful in getting much of our draft wording accepted in the cycle strategy which will in the long term benefit cyclist across West Berkshire. The key elements here are the adoption by the Council of the principal of focussing on strategic routes and the change in wording of the vision "To make the use of a bicycle at least as easy as any other form of transport for journeys of 5km or less within West Berkshire."

### **Key successes:**

- The successful organisation of the cycle monitoring across the district
- Western Avenue / Oxford Rd cycle facility improvements, Newbury
- Cycle lanes and Advanced Stop Lanes at Newtown Rd (north) / Pound St junction, Newbury
- Bus gate and cycle bypasses, Calcot
- Lambourn river bridge at Walton Way, Shaw.

### **Key issues for [this] year are:**

- the 50% budget cut by the Council on cycling capital works (see our press release below for more details)
- the time taken on a voluntary basis to provide a cycling consultancy service for the council
- the need to build on successes with some key officers and spread this best practice across WBC
- the need to build some council member support for cycling at executive level
- SPOKES committee needs some additional help and input

### **Cycle Count**

The results showed a 5% overall difference between the count in June 2005 and October 2005. The difference possibly being accounted for due to October being an Autumnal month. However, the June count was from 7.00am until 9.00am and the October count was from 7.30am until 9.30am. We will need to wait for future counts before any conclusion can be reached.

The next cycle count will be later this month (February 2006), if you would like to help then please contact our chairman (details at the end of the newsletter)... Future counts will take place in June and October.

### **Meetings in 2006**

Spokes "Committee" meetings are open to all members (in a non-voting capacity). The proposed dates are:

- Monday 13 February 2006
- Tuesday 28 March 2006

- Wednesday 10 May 2006
- Thursday 22 June 2006
- Monday 7 August 2006
- Tuesday 19 September 2006
- Wednesday 1 November 2006
- Thursday 14 December 2006 (followed by Xmas meal?)

The venue for each is to be confirmed, and this year the intention is to hold some outside of Newbury (e.g. Hungerford, Theale, Pangbourne). Please check the website for up to date information on dates and locations.

### Cycle funding cut by 50% to £50,000 Press release...

Cycling groups are dismayed that the Council's budget for cycling projects has been slashed by half, just as the value-for-money of those projects is starting to show benefits. The West Berkshire Cycling Forum, set up just two years ago to bring cyclists together with council officers who are responsible for transport policy and highway scheme delivery, is in disarray following this announcement.

"For years the Council was spending money in a piecemeal way on so-called cycling facilities which cyclists found unusable, without consulting us," said the Chairman of SPOKES (the local cyclists' lobby group) Ed Cooper, after the Cycle Forum meeting on 17 January 2006. "We finally get a decent Cycling Strategy agreed, start to implement good schemes in our urban areas that will reduce congestion for everyone. And now councillors make this savage cut."

Overall the highways budget for next year is only cut by 5%. Cyclists point to the fact that well designed cycle schemes are proven to be a far more efficient way to reduce congestion than building more roads. They also fear that the Government's proposed Planning Gain Supplement will mean that the biggest source of money for cycling schemes – contributions from developers of new housing – will be completely cut in the Chancellor's next Budget.

### Newsletter of the Quarter

You need not be a member of Spokes to write (or email). I have only received a few letters to date. To be eligible for a prize you need to write about anything that is associated with cycling in the West Berkshire area. The prize will be kindly donated by Banjo cycles.



When you submit a letter do not forget to include your contact information – just in case you win.



Letter Prize: Specialized Chamonix Helmet

### Letter from Rick Thomas (with his suggestions for cycle facilities)...

Hello Spokes,

A number of routes and improvements could be made to the Newbury cycle/road network as follows:

- A lighted cycle path to the Hambridge Road trading estate as the Route 4 canal route is not suited to commuting by bike during the winter/early spring seasons.
- Extend Route 4 from Marsh Benham to Bedwyn along the tow path.
- A peak time rail service to Newbury Racecourse 7am to 9.30 am and 4.30 pm to 6.30 pm. This should help all those who are forced to drive, walk or cycle as no alternative transport exists during the time most people begin and end the working day in what is a large commercial area.

### Bike Week 2006

Start now, and organise a cycling event for bike week... (extract from Cycling Plus)

Bike Week promoters are seeking more local event organisers in an attempt to get "more people cycling more often" Bike Week takes place between the 17th and 25th June in 2006 and the Bike2Work campaign will run for the whole week. At least 1,500 events are expected to attract more than 250,000 participants.

National co-ordinator Nick Harvey said: "Local events are the lifeblood of Bike Week. We are seeking more cycling enthusiasts to organise short rides that appeal to novices. Bike Week is a great opportunity to encourage people who are starting or returning to cycling to join an organised ride at an easy pace. All cycling events and rides can be promoted as part of BikeWeek and we particularly welcome enquiries from new volunteers."

BikeWeek provides £5 million public liability insurance for organisers plus free posters, stickers, balloons and prize-draw entry forms. All registered events get listed at [www.bikeweek.org.uk](http://www.bikeweek.org.uk) and will receive PR support. To request a free 2006 Event Organisers Guide 0845 612 0661, email [HQ@bikeweek.org.uk](mailto:HQ@bikeweek.org.uk) or write to Bike Week HQ 10 South Pallant, Chichester P0191 SU.

## Extracts from Cycling Plus

### Cycling keeps you happy

Cycling makes you less likely to suffer from depression, according to a new report. The information sheet from Sustrans claims that regular exercise is associated with a decreased risk of developing depression, as well as helping to reduce symptoms in people already diagnosed with the condition.

The findings, which only confirm what we at Cycling Plus already believe to be true, are part of Sustrans' work to encourage people to walk and cycle more often, and the information sheet has been aimed squarely at policy makers, health centre practitioners and researchers.

At least one in six people suffer from mental health problems at any one time, with over 91 million working days lost each year and treatment in England costing the NHS £3.8 billion annually. Depression is a common mental health condition, predicted to become the second most prevalent cause of disability worldwide by 2020.

Philip Insall, Director of Sustrans' Active Travel Programme, wants health, transport and planning specialists to work together to encourage people to walk and cycle more: "Sustrans' work shows that, given the choice, people will travel in ways that benefit their mental as well as physical health," he explained. "We must work with all parts of the government to make towns and cities more activity-friendly and thus more protective of mental well-being." You can find Sustrans' Active travel and mental well-being information sheet on their website at: [www.activetravel.org.uk](http://www.activetravel.org.uk)

### Mountain bikers get new rights off road

Following a nationwide campaign by CTC and cyclists across the UK, the first advancement in Rights of Way legislation for cyclists since 1968 has been achieved. This means that cyclists now look set to have their right to claim restricted byways guaranteed in law.

The CTC campaign focused on the Rights of Way provisions in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill (England and Wales), which sought to protect the countryside by removing the legal practice by which motorised vehicles can claim byways based on evidence of past use by carriages. CTC was fully supportive of these measures but argued that the bill ought to clarify cyclists' ability to claim Rights of Way.

During the campaign an estimated 3,000 cyclists sent messages to their MP via the CTC website, urging them to support an amendment tabled by Emily Thornbury MP, the chair of the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group. Ten MPs from across the political spectrum spoke in favour of CTC's amendments, with at least four more waiting in the wings.

Richard George, Off-Road Policy Campaigner at CTC was thrilled with the results, "This is just a taster of what we can achieve when we work together to get better rights for mountain bikers, and there will be plenty more to come!"

## Other Local Groups Have Their Say...

### From Spokes (Kent)

I am not a dreadlocked eco-warrior but a responsible citizen who prefers to ride his bike for pleasure, to keep healthy, get around town quickly and do my bit for the planet.

I'm also a pedestrian. These activities are not mutually exclusive. So why is there so much tension when these activities mix?

The Transport Research Laboratory has published its findings (Report TRL583) on cycling in vehicle restricted areas in the three cities of Cambridge, Hull and Salisbury. It found the majority of cyclists tended to slow down or dismount when pedestrian flows were high although a minority -mostly young males- continued to cycle quite fast.

Most pedestrians said they were not bothered by cyclists using the area, although some were in favour of exclusion for part of the day. They were least concerned when flows of cyclists were lowest. The conclusion was that although sharing was not an ideal solution for either pedestrians or cyclists it may be the appropriate compromise in terms of maintaining sustainable transport objectives. The rest of Europe is comfortable with shared facilities so why not here?

### CCN News

#### Research questions value of cycle lanes

Warrington Cycle Campaign has published on its web site the results of local research into how much personal space cyclists receive in traffic with and without cycle lanes.

A cyclist rode several times along two otherwise similar sections of the same road, one with and the other without cycle lanes. A camera was used to record how much space other traffic gave to the cyclist at each location. The research concludes that the effect of the cycle lane is to reduce the amount of road space available to cyclists and thus to make conditions significantly worse for cycling. Possible reasons for this are: drivers assume that the cycle lane represents adequate space for cyclists so they position their vehicles according to the lane markings rather than relative to the cyclist; drivers see less need to take care when overtaking in a separate lane; the presence of the cycle lane on the other side of the road makes oncoming vehicles drive nearer to the centre line, reducing the space for overtaking vehicles to move right.

<http://www.17beechroad.freeserve.co.uk/WarringtonCycleCampaign/reportcycle-lanes.pdf>

## Casualty costs

The Department for Transport has revised its estimates for the value of preventing road casualties. A fatality is now valued at £1.38m, a serious injury at £155,563 and a slight injury at £11,991.

The valuation includes loss of economic output due to injury; health service costs; and human costs based on 'willingness to pay' values representing pain, grief and suffering to the casualties, relatives and friends and, for fatal injuries, the intrinsic loss of enjoyment of life over and above the consumption of goods and services.

The total value of all road injuries in 2004 is estimated at £12.9bn.

Source: Highways Economic Note No 1: 2004.

[http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft\\_rdsafety/document/page/dft\\_rdsafety\\_610642.hcsp](http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_rdsafety/document/page/dft_rdsafety_610642.hcsp)

## End the body counts!

The Slower Speeds Initiative (SSI) has launched a new campaign to persuade the Government that it is no longer acceptable to wait until several deaths and injuries have already occurred before speed cameras can be installed. The Government is shortly to review the criteria for the way speed cameras can be used.

SSI's 'End the body counts' campaign has three main objectives:

- Prevent avoidable death and injury
- Enable safety camera partnerships to respond properly to community requests for protection from speeding drivers
- Demonstrate support for speed cameras and speed limit enforcement

See SSI's website at [www.slower-speeds.org.uk/endthebodycounts](http://www.slower-speeds.org.uk/endthebodycounts) for information about the campaign's rationale and to see how you might help by writing to your MP and local newspapers.

SSI says that it is time to show that it is road death and injury that are socially unacceptable, not speed limit enforcement.

## Membership Details

Families can join SPOKES for only £5 a year; individual subscription is £3; £1 unwaged. 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.

## 10% Discount

Show your Spokes Membership card at the following local stores and receive a 10% discount:

**Banjo Cycles**, 109, Bartholomew St, Newbury  
Tel: 01635 43186

**The Cycle Shop**, 55, Cheap St, Newbury  
Tel: 01635 582100

## Contact details for Spokes

Chairman	Ed Cooper	<a href="mailto:chairman@westberkshirespokes.org">chairman@westberkshirespokes.org</a>
Secretary		<a href="mailto:secretary@westberkshirespokes.org">secretary@westberkshirespokes.org</a>
Highways	Kevin Bushell	<a href="mailto:highways@westberkshirespokes.org">highways@westberkshirespokes.org</a>
Newsletter Editor		<a href="mailto:newsletter@westberkshirespokes.org">newsletter@westberkshirespokes.org</a>
Treasurer/ Membership	Graham Hunt	77 Enborne Road Newbury RG14 6AP 01635 45036 <a href="mailto:Graham.Hunt1@virgin.net">Graham.Hunt1@virgin.net</a>
Events Co-ordinator		<a href="mailto:events@westberkshirespokes.org">events@westberkshirespokes.org</a>

General contact address: West Berkshire SPOKES, 14 Wansey Gardens, Newbury, RG14 2SJ. Tel: 0845 408 5973

**Next Newsletter: Closing Date for articles is 24<sup>th</sup> March 2006, publishing date 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2006**