



Welcome to the second issue of the SPOKES newsletter.

Cycling up 14%, then...

SPOKES Chairman Tony Vickers writes

The good news for West Berkshire cyclists is that, after only six months of existence, SPOKES has helped show that numbers commuting by bike are increasing – at least in the Newbury & Thatcham area. Between last September and June there was a 14% rise in people counted passing our 19 check-points. Details of the survey will be placed on our web-site.

The Cycle Census is also an excellent example of collaboration between Council and SPOKES: they need to prove to Government that they are tackling congestion and pollution and we need the funds that our volunteer traffic surveyors earn us by doing the counting. So thanks to all who helped on 17 June, especially William Pitt who organised it.

Not so good is the lack of meetings between SPOKES and West Berks Council on cycling policy matters. We were promised regular quarterly meetings, at their request, but none has been arranged. They are short-staffed and senior staff have to spend most of their time facing 'up' (to Government) rather than 'out' (to local people), which isn't their fault. Their bid for funds to help pay for a Cycling Officer failed – as did ours to pay for a cycling map to be produced. So progress is slower than we'd hoped.

I'm concerned that our Council's cycling policy is too 'engineer-led' and not focused on the 'big picture'. The chance to influence that picture was snapped up by SPOKES recently, when we produced a detailed comment on "Newbury Town Centre Vision 2025". That too should be on our web-site soon. We've asked for better routes through the town as well as to it, before bikes are banned from pedestrianised areas.

What SPOKES now needs most of all is more members. We have begun to make an impact on the local scene but we can do much more if we can say we truly represent hundreds rather than dozens of cyclists. We're grateful to the Local Education Authority, the Chamber of Commerce and the Primary Care NHS Trust for mailing their lists with "newsletter no. 1". Hundreds of 'tags' to advertise our existence have been tied to handle-bars.



Another cyclist 'tagged' by Graham Hunt!

Young Person's Perspective

Cycling is essential to me as it is to many young people. My bike is my main mode of transport. Considering the state of the local bus services, and the fact that I'm not yet old enough to drive, you may think that I only use my bike because it is the only transport easily available to me, but this is not the case. The truth is that I simply can't think of a better way of getting around than on my bike.

My bicycle gets me comfortably from A to B, quickly, free of charge, and of course enjoyably. As well as longer distance youth hostelling trips with friends, and despite the, sometimes, inadequate facilities, I ride into town, to my job, to leisure facilities, and to visit friends. I have even ridden along the tow-path to go to the cinema in Reading.

I hope to see cycling grow, and more people encouraged to take to their bikes. This green form of transport has only a tiny part of its potential used with the current facilities available, but through the work of SPOKES and similar organisations this could all change for the better.



James Cullen, ex-Chair Newbury Young Person's Council, on his bike in the Carnival Parade

Getting Into Shape

Summer is here and now is the time to dust off the bike and air the legs. You may be planning a regular ride to work, a cycling holiday, a ride to a pub on a nice summer evening, maybe even as part of a weight loss campaign. Or for the more adventurous a longer charity bike ride, such as London to Brighton or Newbury's own charity ride in August.

Whatever your ambition it is better to have some basic training in your legs as it will make life so much easier. The key is not to do too much too soon. Don't start by riding every day, start by getting your bike set up correctly for you, either by a cycling friend or the local bike shop.

And now for an overview of the technical stuff. The main inhibiting factor in cycling is lack of aerobic fitness. That's the ability of your body to extract oxygen from the air and use it to produce energy in the muscle, and for the muscle to use that energy. So training involves improving the ability of your lungs to extract oxygen from the air and transfer that oxygen into your bloodstream. This in turn requires you to improve the ability of your heart to pump the blood to the active muscles, and subsequently to improve the ability of the muscles to extract and use oxygen to produce energy.

Below is a schedule that will build up your aerobic fitness. **All rides should be done at a comfortable pace, which means you should be able to chat to a partner whilst riding.**

Day	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Monday	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
Tuesday	1/2 hour	3/4 hour	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	1 1/2 hours
Wednesday	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
Thursday	3/4 hour	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	1 1/2 hours	1 1/2 hours
Friday	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
Saturday	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
Sunday	1 hour	1 1/2 hours	1 1/2 hours	2 hours	2 hours	2 1/2 hours

The rides under 1 1/2 hours should be non-stop but for longer rides allow for a café stop about half way in addition to the scheduled duration. For the first couple of weeks choose a flat circuit to use and later, gradually introduce a few hills.

The days on the schedule may not suit everyone so whatever day you choose, try to have a rest day following the ride. For those of you who commute to work, you could extend your ride home, not forgetting to eat something about 4.30pm to keep your energy levels up.

Believe it or not a moderately fit rider will cover over 25 miles in two hours comfortably. Look out Hungerford, here we come!

And if you are looking for further advice or companions to ride with, why not join Newbury Road Club's Monday evening rides, which leave from Northcroft Leisure Centre at 6.30pm. The rides are aimed at introducing members of the public to cycling and the pace is that of the slowest rider, even uphill.

Tips To Make Cycling Faster

Maintenance

Bikes run better if the chain and gears are oiled regularly

Saddle Soreness

Women suffer particularly badly from this. There are now a range of female specific saddles but for first, try angling the front of the saddle very slightly downwards – this will put more pressure on the arms and relieve the crotch area.

Eye Protection

Advisable in the summer months with all the flies about

Energy

Always take a drink with you for anything over 30 minutes. For longer distances, take an energy bar or have a café stop. For a list of cafés around Newbury, see www.NewburyRC.co.uk.

Tyres

If you have knobbly mountain bike tyres, and are not planning to go off-road, change them for road tyres. The amount of energy saving is immense. Inflate tyres to the recommended pressures.

Clothing

To enjoy cycling at its best, use cycle specific clothing – the brighter the better so that you can be seen by motorists.

Shorts with chamois or synthetic insert, which are designed to be worn next to the skin (no knickers needed).

Gloves called track mitts (fingerless gloves) – useful protection if you fall off, and hands do get cold gripping the handlebars. They also help reduce road vibration to the arms.

Waterproofs; given the vagaries of our weather, always take a light waterproof with you - this will double up as a windproof, should it get cold.

Emergencies

Take a spare inner tube or puncture outfit and a few tools with you. Ideally, you should know how to use them.

Helmets

Everyone has different views of this – I always wear one as I have seen the results of not doing so.

Speed

Totally unimportant, but pedal rather than push the gears. Pushing too high a gear wears you out quickly.

Whether you ride 100 miles or 10,000 miles a year, remember:

THE MORE YOU DO IT, THE BETTER YOU GET.

Bob Lyle, British Cycling Club Coach,
Newbury Road Club

All Pedestrians Are Deaf!

It will soon be the law that bicycles must have a working means of making an audible sound of approach; a bell, to you and I. Now we all have had the experience of people stepping off the pavement in front of us without warning or looking, and very upsetting it is too.

We cyclists are to blame to a certain degree, in that we are largely silent in our approach and so no one hears us. Hence the legal obligation to carry that audible sound of approach, the dreaded bell. But wait a tick, we've had bells on our bikes for yonks, or at least I have. I ding my dinger and no one takes a blind bit of notice. Deaf bit of notice would describe it better. What I mean after all is that I am on the road, riding at a sane and safe speed (not like some) and a group of people come on to the pavement and without looking takes up to _ of the roadspace. Ding goes the bell. Nothing happens. Ding it goes again, and by this time I am on top of the mob, almost falling off trying to avoid a collision. "Watch out!" one of them calls, and not to one of their own number in danger of being run down, but to me the innocent cyclist. The only way of making oneself heard is to ring the bell at a progressively more furious pace as one approaches a potential danger source anticipating trouble, whereupon one is asked to keep one's hair on if indeed one has any.

Can the cyclist win? Yes I believe (s)he can. There is a little device on sale in the local cycle shop called an air horn with a little rubber bulb on one end which makes a disgusting noise: that is easy to hear, and makes you noticed; mission accomplished.

All pedestrians are blind too. I was waiting in front of the traffic waiting for the lights to go green when this pedestrian steps out against their red. I go but the cars do not and I get what for from the pedestrians. But that is another story.

Alan Crow

There is a 10% discount to SPOKES members for all goods bought from the Newbury Cycle Shop

Updates on Cycle Ways

Monkey to Rainbow – bikers' Newbury bypass?

An attractive, user-friendly crossing of the canal and river west of Newbury for pedestrians and cyclists came a step nearer in July. Supermarket chain Waitrose, whose new supermarket on Bath Road is due to open next May, paid for a Schools Design Workshop on 9th July at nearby Northcroft Leisure Centre, looking at replacing the so-called Monkey Bridge.

The national sustainable transport charity Sustrans, whose National Cycle Route from Bristol to Reading crosses the canal here, has agreed to sponsor a new design, which its hoped the Town Council will submit to planners for approval by the end of this year.

Basildon-based design firm Hankinson Duckett Associates, assisted by structural engineers Peter Brett Associates were chosen earlier in the year by The

Newbury Society to prepare a design for the new bridge. Design costs of £10,000 are funded by The Manifold Trust of Maidenhead, a charity that has already given over three quarters of a million pounds to the Kennet & Avon canal restoration. The Newbury Society has withdrawn as sponsor but SPOKES persuaded Sustrans to come to the rescue.

Seven Year 12 Design & Technology students from St Barts and Trinity schools participated in the workshop. They were given an introduction to design principles and procedures, a site visit and a chance to quiz experts from a range of organisations. The students split into groups to work up outline designs, before sharing their ideas and presenting the best to take forward.

New Toucan Crossings.

Three new cycle-friendly road crossings will have been built this year in Newbury from developers' contributions obtained by West Berkshire Council. Two are already open for use.

The pedestrian crossing linking Sainsbury's to the town provides an alternative to the existing subways and offers a safe route to and from the superstore for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Pat Tanner of Kings Road, a keen cyclist, said: "I am very pleased to see the crossing in place. It is a much needed safe access to the supermarket and the rest of the town centre."

The crossing links to environmental improvement of Kings Road West, including better cycling facilities.

The main residential areas of Speen and north-west Newbury now have a new safe crossing of the busy A4 near Robert Sandilands School, with improvements to cycleways in Old Bath Road. This links nicely to the route across Goldwell and Northcroft Parks to the town centre and will also help Waitrose's Green Travel Plans.

Work has begun on the crossing near the new Newbury College site, to take cyclists safely across from Monks Lane to the A339 to Pinchington Lane and Greenham. And a new cycle route is planned for Newtown Road, linking The Oaks development and the College to the town centre.

Meanwhile the final bit of cycleway in Lower Way Thatcham has almost been finished as we go to print. And a report by Greenham Common Trust is being prepared to look at linking both Thatcham and Greenham to the Common, via Chamberhouse Lane (with a new bridge over the railway) and the Racecourse and New Road respectively.

If you know of other new cycle ways that have been built recently – or are needed – let us know. The Editor would also like articles about your least and best favourite local cycle routes! SPOKES can pass your comments to the authorities, for praise or action as appropriate.

Useful Websites

Going forward the newsletter will review a web site, however this issues is just collecting useful cycling web sites;

www.newburyroadclub.com

www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

www.readingctc.co.uk

www.newburyrc.co.uk

www.westberkshirespokes.org

SPOKES has its own website, currently it is still being added to, but it does have a diary of events coming up and a copy of the application form to join as well as back issues of the SPOKES newsletter.

www.camcycle.org.uk

The Cambridge Cycle Campaign web site was written as much for local authorities as for cyclists. We especially like the bit "cyclists should be able to go anywhere".

www.youngtransnet.org.uk

Using the internet to give young people a say on transport issues. This web site is free to schools to use - they need to register first so the site can check they are who they claim to be, and issue them with a school user number and password. The site also builds local authority 'portals' (at a cost) through which they can analyse data from their schools, and with which they can offer their schools various resources including safe routes to school and school travel plan 'wizards'.

There are just over 600 schools that have registered, with some 250 having completed surveys (40,000+ pupils in all).

Diary of Events

The next SPOKES meeting is on Monday 29th September 2003 at Northcroft Leisure Centre at 7.00pm. All are welcome. We usually meet on the last Monday of the month.

Newbury's Farmers' Market is on the first Sunday of every month will normally have a SPOKES stall. It is great fun to visit to see the local produce.

BBQ at Graham Hunt's house; 77 Enborne Road, Newbury. To be held on Sunday 7th September, 3pm, please bring food and drink. Everyone welcome to come and meet fellow SPOKES members.

Bike ride from Hungerford to Theale on Sunday 14th September, with lunch at Woolhampton. Please look on the SPOKES website for more details.

Cycle-IT has regular cycle rides welcome to everyone. If you are interested in joining any of these rides, please contact Laurie Lockwood, 01635 871182 (3-6pm). These are casual rides along countryside roads. Cycle-IT has no membership fee.

C59 10.00am Sun 31 Aug Source of River Test 56m

*C60 09.30am Sun 28 Sep Day in London 25 m

* please book two months in advance

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Future articles

Ideas for future articles are;

Letters
Reviews of cycle routes
Safety news

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

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

If anyone would like to make a private sale, you are welcome to send in your advert; of no more than 20 words, to the Editor or to the address given at the end of the Newsletter.

If a business would like to place an advert with the SPOKES Newsletter, please contact the Editor.

Families can join SPOKES for only £5 a year, individual subscription is £3. You will get a regular newsletter and a discount with The Cycle Shop, further benefits will be advertised in subsequent newsletters. Please fill in the details below and send it to Alan Crow Membership Secretary, 91 Queens Road, Newbury, RG14 7PA with a cheque made payable to West Berkshire SPOKES.

Name
Address
Phone
E-mail