

Meeting Minutes of: West Berkshire Cycle Forum
held on: Tuesday 21st September 2021
(via Zoom conference call)

Chair: Cllr Stephen Ardagh-Walter (SAW) – Member for Thatcham, Colthrop & Crookham

Attendees: Cllr Andy Moore (AM) – Member for Newbury Central
Cllr Tony Vickers (TV) – Member for Wash Common
Rob Coles (RC) – Canal River Trust Area Operations Manager
Elaine Cox (EC) – WBC Rights Of Way Officer
Cheryl Evans (CE) - WBC Traffic & Road Safety Officer
Robert Hill (RH) - Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability Group
Angela McMahon (AMc) – SPOKES / SUSTRANS Ranger
Clive Tombs (CT) – WBC Highways Officer (minutes of meeting)

Apologies: Chris Boulton (CB) – Chief Executive, Greenham Common Trust
Gordon Oliver (GO) – SPOKES / WBC Policy Officer
Paul Hendry (PH) – WBC Countryside Manager
Josh Kerry – SPOKES

	<u>Action</u>
<p>1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies</p>	
<p>2. Notes of previous meeting & matters arising</p> <p>Notes of previous meeting held 23 June 2021 were agreed.</p> <p>Terms of reference were recirculated on 28 June by Deborah Vince.</p> <p>Dorking Way signs - site visit involving AMc and WBC Network Management undertaken and scheme has been drafted.</p> <p>Other matters covered under other items on this meeting's agenda.</p>	
<p>3. Kennet & Avon Canal – Towpath & related Improvements</p> <p>RC updated on the Canal River Trust (C&RT)'s activities within West Berkshire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aldermaston Wharf to Hissey's Bridge south of Calcot – path	

Action

improvements planned to create a path ranging from 1.5m to 3.5m wide. Issues with canal bank will be addressed as well. C&RT are providing a budget cost and outline scheme to Sustrans by mid-October, with detailed design now early 2022. WBC has provided detail to inform the initial design work by C&RT. SAW expressed interest in seeing scheme design from C&RT;

- Ham Bridge to Bull's Lock, east side of Hambridge Road – WBC has been advised a revised cost estimate of £390k by C&RT. WBC is considering scope to incorporate this scheme into a possible bid for external funding. RC is keen to see this scheme brought forwards. C&RT open to further discussion on costs. RC noted that it is a flood defence structure;
- Ham Bridge to Victoria Park, Newbury – final surface dressing applied last week, which was welcomed by group members. Arched metal bridge in this section: reportable incident occurred last week – member of public tripped up last week. Repaired and addressed but C&RT are going to look at an alternative type of surface;
- West of Newbury (West Mills to Guyers Lock) – C&RT are well underway repairing embayments and installing fishing platforms. TV commented that the two eastern-most embayments need repairs expedited – RC will ask if this can be done. CT referenced the previous offer from Spokes to potentially provide volunteer assistance, especially with path surface, subject to further discussion and agreement on risk management;
- Towpath adjoining Newbury Town Centre (Victoria Park to Northbrook Street section): EC advised a diving survey has been commissioned to assess issues with sheet piling and loss of material underpinning the path initially, to inform potential bid for funding to do remedial works;
- West Mills to Monkey Bridge – RC confirmed that it is not a C&RT stretch. EC has discussed possible surfacing with CT (level, bound surface is favoured) and indicative cost, and confirmed she is hoping to do a capital bid in October 2021. Group members welcomed this.

**SAW/
CT****RC****EC****4. Cycle Training Updates**

CE reported provision for Bikeability training has increased further. 300 places for which funding secured, of which 151 allocated;

Level 1 and 2 individual courses: 1227 allocated;

Level 3 courses: 160 places allocated;

Bikeability Balance courses: 200 places for which funding obtained;

Family courses: 200 places for which funding obtained, with 77 courses delivered over summer holiday. CE highlighted challenge with parents understanding what a roadworthy bike is;

October half term will see big push to take up Level 3 training courses – promotional material for this went out on 20 September;

Funding for 4 places for Bikeability instructors has been secured and CE is bidding for more;

CE is also exploring issues with who has had what in terms of training and seeking to even-out access to training across the District;

TV asked whether there is any correlation between availability of cycle routes to schools and take-up of training, also whether there are other determining factors that affect utility cycling. CE noted that analysis is ongoing but at a base level it seems to depend most on parental awareness, interest and willingness to engage;

RH asked how children can get on the course e.g. if they live in Pangbourne, can they access the training? CE noted that the Tilehurst schools that many students living in Pangbourne attend e.g. Denefield are well engaged and the best way of getting involved was via the schools;

CE advised efforts in October will focus on Level 3's, linking in with the installation of cycle storage. A query was raised about take-up of funding for cycle storage by secondary schools in Newbury; CE replied that St Barts and Park House have stated they have sufficient storage. Trinity School turned the funding (up to £38k) down, so that funding has been reallocated. CE commented in response to question from TV that Trinity is wary of taking responsibility as the identified area for cycle storage is off site

Community Club at Linear Park, Calcot is continuing, 4 to 6 riders 4pm-6pm on a Wednesday evening, run by Avanti. CE said this would be self-supporting.

Bikeability courses at Linear Park – CE is looking to run these every Friday from January 2022 onwards, 09:45-10:30 to support pre-schools. CE commented that WBC is also seeking to encouraging use of Linear Park for Park & Stride to Calcot Junior School, taking account of local feedback.

WBC is also engaging with Highwood Copse School, Newbury – starting with the initial cohort of 24 children, with the Balance concept.

CE is also looking to submit a funding bid (up to £75k, deadline 25

October) to widen participation in Bikeability, to engage SEND students. CE looking at providing cycle hubs at Brookfields and Castle Schools, if this bid goes forwards.

AMc asked about events at Linear Park. CE responded programme is continuing on. Financially supported for 1 instructor and 1 volunteer. Widely advertised via social media, web as well as hard copy publicity locally e.g. on Parish noticeboard.

5. Behavioural Change Initiatives

CE advised DfT has now awarded the Capability Funding following WBC's successful bid to deliver behavioural change and other 'soft' measures;

Focus is on studying why there is a difference between Home to School travel and on cycling for other journey purposes;

Linked in with engaging an older cohort, another Community Club is due to start in January 2022 with mountain bike sessions based out of Shaw House, with potential to continue with similar sessions further east in the District;

Group members again acknowledged how good it is to see an evidence-based approach being followed to try and understand the barriers to behavioural change and how these may be overcome.

6. LCWIP and major schemes update

CT advised that WBC's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is owned by the Principal Engineer in WBC's ITS & Sustainable Transport team. This team will be reviewing the Active Travel Heat Map and progressively reviewing the LCWIP;

The LCWIP is available via the Council's website. It is now augmented by a prioritised Active Travel Programme, identifying a pipeline of major schemes that WBC aspires to deliver over the next decade subject to availability of funding;

TV mentioned that, further to the feedback in the notes of the last meeting regarding Sandleford site, he had flagged to the Planning Inspector hearing the Sandleford developer's Appeal that the LCWIP had been adopted by the Council in June 2021;

- **A4 London Road/new Lidl, Newbury**

CT advised updated scheme is at detail design stage. CT showed current drawings. Will comprise segregated section from level with north-eastern boundary of Lidl store site through to immediately

east of Tesco access. This will be complemented by a shared section, intended to be widened out if feasible to the 3 metres recommended in LTN1/20 guidance, to the east to the point where the paths diverge. Trees are an issue (arboricultural study underway), and flood attenuation study for this specific section is being undertaken to inform drainage provision;

Some land and contractor issues encountered and being worked through;

Gas pipe temporary diversion was completed by SGN at the second attempt, on 8th September;

Pre-cast concrete culvert is being fabricated;

Aiming for scheme completion in January 2022.

- **A4 Western Avenue (Brummell Road to Waitrose roundabout), Newbury/Speen**

CT confirmed scheme has been revised and showed current drawing. Proposals have been put to consultees including Ward Members, Town, and Parish for their comments. Current intention is to post for information on Commonplace portal shortly. Trying to take account of prior feedback, revised scheme now comprises:

- 2-way, 3.0m width kerb-segregated cycleway on north side of road, between signalled crossing immediately east of A4/Old Bath Road junction and existing signalled crossing immediately west of Waitrose roundabout, with separation strip of 1.0m where feasible to carriageway;
- 1.5m width footway to rear of the above cycleway between the same points;
- Revised and relocated splitter island in carriageway opposite Microfocus car park access;
- On north side between signalled crossing immediately east of A4/Old Bath Road and extending parallel to Brummell Road on its east side as far as the pedestrian entrance to Robert Sandilands School: shared unsegregated foot- and cycleway up to 5.0m wide;
- On south side of A4 between existing signalled crossing immediately west of Waitrose roundabout and signalled crossing immediately east of A4/Old Bath Road junction, upgrading of existing footway to 3.0m width shared unsegregated foot- and cycleway, carrying on across the long-disused former Microfocus/SSE exit lane;
- Conversion of the signalled crossing immediately east of A4/Old Bath Road junction to single stage Toucan, and

incorporating 3.0m centre islands;

- On south side of A4 west of Old Bath Road: upgrading to provide shared-use unsegregated facility, between mouth of Old Bath Road and crossing to Co-op
- Improved crossing points with tactile paving;
- Upgrade of existing footway alongside stub of Old Bath Road to achieve 2.0m width;
- Resurfacing at exit from Speen Hill Close.

7. Active Travel Fund schemes

CT and CE updated on the schemes under the Active Travel Fund heading:

- **A4/Crown Mead, Thatcham**

CT showed the proposals on screen and advised this scheme (extending from western junction of A4 with St Johns Road, past the Crown Mead parade of shops to the A4/Park Lane junction) has been subject to a design review. Objective was to try and take account of some of the adverse comments received while keeping the substance of the scheme. Contraversial right-turn from A4 Bath Road eastbound into High Street and contraflow on High Street has been removed from the revised scheme, and other alterations made further to the west; Ward and Town were invited to comment and detailed comments received from Thatcham Town Council. Requires further discussion but currently looking to post the scheme on the Commonplace portal shortly;

- **Andover Road (Wendan Road to St Johns Post Office), Newbury**

CT showed the proposals on screen; again, Ward Members, Town Council and other stakeholders have been invited to comment, Broad support but there are issues with land ownership (needs to be addressed if layby on south side of Andover Road is to be extended to accommodate parking), ability to cater for parking including TRO adjustments, bus stopping arrangements and scope to tie-in with re-surfacing. CT intends to adjust design further with a view to posting on Commonplace portal shortly;

TV commented on possibility of exploring 'land exchange' NTC/WBC, given NTC's desire to progress their Greenham Gardens scheme.

- **Lawrences Lane, Thatcham**

CT advised this involves a point closure to create a quiet lane and is being progressed by WBC Traffic team – planned for this

financial year;

- **Deadmans Lane, Theale**

Point closures to create a quiet lane being progressed by WBC Traffic team – planned for this financial year;

- **School Streets**

CE reported Schools Streets scheme at Calcot Junior School is in place as of 01 September and will remain unchanged for next 6 months. Feedback received up to end March 2022 will be considered. If we do make adjustments at that stage, scheme will then need to run for an extra 6 months, with more data being gathered. Has created 'silence' outside school. Some issues around surrounding roads – WBC Traffic & Road Safety are aware and working in partnership with TV Police. TV Police are keeping close eye to enforce restrictions. Some parents allegedly ignoring the restriction. Potential for fines. Speed monitoring and pedestrian & cycle counts being done in next couple of weeks. Drone surveys being done also, linked to concerns over A4 traffic. There is evidence of illegal parking.

'Control' school is Westwood Farm School, to see if School Streets road closure funding (~£30k) might instead be deployed to other measures.

RH commented that again, the focus on research was refreshing.

Reading Borough are running **Play Streets** - CE is being asked to investigate similar for West Berks.

8. AOB

- **Pangbourne & Whitchurch Sustainability Group (PAWS)**

update: RH noted CT had provided comments to PAWS' Barbara Singleton-Crisp on PAWS' 'Action Plan' document. PAWS are following up.

RH noted area in front of Costa Coffee shop would be ideal for bike parking, but this is private land. PAWS are also looking at good practice in Oxfordshire, given PAWS' cross-river backdrop.

- Discussion ensued regarding area to front of **Wash Common shops**. CT will ask senior colleagues the position/view regarding funding for secure cycle stands for this location.

- **Update to Highways Asset Management Plan:** TV asked if this could be considered at next meeting in context of ongoing maintenance of cycle and pedestrian routes.

CT

SAW/
CT

Action

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Next Meeting:

Tuesday 2nd November 2021

- Time: 17:30 – 19:00
- Venue: (Zoom link to follow)