

**Meeting Minutes of: West Berkshire Cycle Forum**  
**held on: Tuesday 31 May 2022**  
**(via Zoom conference call)**

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

**Attendees:** Cllr Andy Moore (AM) – Member for Newbury Central  
 Robert Hill (RH) - Pangbourne & Whitchurch Sustainability (PAWS)  
 Kevin Hurley (KH) - President, Newbury VELO  
 Martin Colston (MC) - Newbury VELO (also Leader of Newbury Town Council)  
 Angela McMahon (AMc) – West Berkshire SPOKES & Sustrans Ranger  
 Gordon Oliver (GO) – West Berkshire SPOKES  
 Alec Gore (AG) - WBC Transport Policy Team Leader  
 Elaine Cox (EC) – WBC Rights Of Way Officer  
 Clive Tombs (CT) – WBC Highways Officer (minutes of meeting)

**Apologies:** Cllr Tony Vickers (TV) – Member for Wash Common  
 Cheryl Evans (CE) - WBC Senior Road Safety Officer  
 Alan Langley (AL) – West Berkshire SPOKES  
 Neil Taylor (NT) - Newbury Road Club

	<u>Action</u>
<p><b>1. Welcome, Introductions &amp; Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were received either pre- or immediately post-meeting, as above.</p> <p><b>2. Notes of previous meeting &amp; matters arising</b></p> <p>Notes of previous meeting held 22 March 2022 were agreed.</p> <p><u>Garston Lock to M4 Motorway Bridge</u> and <u>Ham Bridge to Bull's Lock</u>, discussed under agenda item 3.</p> <p><u>Calcot signs</u> – CT confirmed an order had been raised for these signs in vicinity of the A4/Pincents Lane junction.</p> <p>Other matters covered under other items on this meeting's agenda.</p>	

### 3. Kennet & Avon Canal – Towpath & related Improvements

CT had asked Sustrans about scope for interim repairs in section Garston Lock to M4 Motorway Bridge, east of Theale. Understanding is that Sustrans have a licence or lease to use the towpath from the landowner, Prudential. Sustrans are in contact with Prudential, and CT has asked Luke Dawson at Sustrans to press Prudential to at least make interim surface improvements.

Sustrans

CT's understanding is that Sustrans have had to withdraw this section from their wider improvements scheme, owing to changes in DfT funding for this initiative.

Sustrans NCN4 upgrades – CT understands from Luke that the revised focus of Sustrans work, using DfT Active Travel funding and designed and delivered by C&RT, will be (a) on section Aldermaston Wharf to Ufton Lane and (b) on section from Hissey's Bridge to Mill Lane, plus (c) Dewe Lane through to Burghfield Bridge. This reflects issues with ownership of the field immediately east of Ufton Lane, and ability to deliver full upgrade within tight timescale in section east of Theale. Sustrans are however intent on continuing with improvements throughout the canalside section

C&RT

Ham Bridge to Bull's Lock, Newbury - proposed upgrade of towpath section: SA-W and CT have continued to liaise with Canal & River Trust (C&RT) about their potential funding application to The Good Exchange (funding arm of Greenham Common Trust) and also signposted to additional sources, to complement the significant contributions already offered to C&RT by WBC and by SPOKES.

C&RT's Directors are now considering their executive paper on making this funding bid. Concerns over charge associated with funding platform should now have been overcome, with The Good Exchange having amended their approach. Further update awaited from C&RT.

EC

Mallard Court (West Mills) to the Monkey Bridge, Newbury - EC advised WBC's Alan Coxon is liaising with Highways colleagues on specification for this towpath upgrade to provide a bound surface, for which she has £70k capital. EC will update further at next meeting.

Section through central Newbury – EC is liaising with WBC Structures team on the towpath section used by National Cycle Network route 4 through Newbury, in particular between American Bridge and Northbrook Street, which is being slowly undermined canal-side by water ingress. Substrate being winnowed away. EC advised this is to be monitored; EC will keep Forum updated. Any remedial works would require a large funding bid.

Direction sign array canalside close to new Lidl store: CT has approached Planning team with an indicative design, seeking to tie in

with direction signing strategy. C&RT are supportive and willing to consider ongoing maintenance if others can capital-fund.

Reporting of issues with towpath and closing of path – to be discussed at next meeting – CT to add to agenda.

EC advised that WBC's Public Rights of Way team are reliant on reports of hazards for closing off of path sections that form part of the PROW network.

***CT post-meeting note: for sections that are responsibility of Canal & River Trust, this page gives contact details for C&RT:***

***<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us/ways-to-contact-us>***

CT

#### **4. WBC E-bikes initiative and E-cargo bikes scheme**

AG updated the forum on these two schemes, for which Josh Kerry submitted successful bids when working with WBC.

WBC has received 2 Moustache e-bikes, 2 Urban arrow large cargo bikes and 1 Urban arrow conventional cargo bike, all funded via the Energy Saving Trust.

AG advised that the bikes appear good quality, although had not been impressed by the way some had been put together by those assembling. 1 broken chain already. AG advised once Timelord2 2 programme is implemented, the e-bikes will be available to staff.

E-cargo bikes – looking to put these out to local businesses, as an alternative to local vehicle deliveries. 3 local businesses made contact of which 1 engaged further with WBC, and one of the e-cargo bikes is likely to be taken up by that business. AG has sorted insurance but is keen on identifying alternative storage facility for the e-cargo bikes.

MC asked whether WBC has a Bike to Work scheme. AG advised currently £3k available per employee that wishes to purchase a bike via this route.

#### **5. LCWIP and major schemes update**

CT updated the forum:

- **A4 London Road/new Lidl, Newbury**  
Openscape finally removed old telecoms pole yesterday 30 May and affected cable connection to new pole. Volker Highways are progressing the sign works. Date still awaited for final surfacing – WBC Network Improvements Team are progressing.

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

CT advised works are in Phase 5, with crew working on south side of road in vicinity of Old Bath Road to create a widened shared cycle- and pedestrian path. Revised schedule from contractor Volker Highways now envisages completion of core works mid-July 2022.

KH referenced discussion at last Forum meeting about extension of the cycleway and footway further east, towards Robin Hood Roundabout. KH noted that it is possible to also cycle and walk to Trinity School from A4 Western Avenue via Dolman Road, Maple Crescent, Poplar Place and the subway under A339 on the north side of Shaw Social Club, although the subway is comparatively low and is adjacent to the river Lambourn.

## 6. Active Travel Fund schemes

CT updated on the following schemes:

- **Andover Road (Wendan Road to St Johns Post Office), Newbury**  
Scheme has been revised further by WBC Network Improvements team in discussion with Newbury Town Council and stakeholders, to use the entire length of the existing southbound layby, on the premise that the bus stop can be accommodated south-west of the layby. CT showed new plan on screen. Intention is to start construction early July 2022, anticipated duration 3 weeks with resurfacing of adjoining Andover Road following on.
- **Crown Mead, Thatcham**  
Delivery has been impacted by work on the Western Avenue scheme but anticipating start autumn 2022. Revised drawings will be made available shortly.
- **Lawrence's Lane, Thatcham and Deadman's Lane, Theale**  
Traffic Regulation Orders for these two proposed point closures on quiet lanes are with WBC Legal Services.
- **Stockcross path**  
WBC had bid to DfT Active Travel Fund to deliver a raft of schemes. Having considered bids from across the country, DfT, via the shadow Active Travel England arms-length agency, had awarded WBC £280k to deliver a shared cycle- and footway alongside the B4000 on its north side, between Stockcross village and the western roundabout junction with the A4 and A34, west of Newbury. This will be a challenge to accommodate within the existing Highway. Surveys and design work underway.

- **Active Travel England**

CT advised the Forum that the DfT is in process of constituting Active Travel England as a legal entity, with powers to assist and channel funding to local authorities, and input on Planning matters with a view to enabling local authorities to continue to deliver walking and cycling improvements in their areas. Currently Active Travel England is operating in shadow form, nominally based in York, and its remit and staffing is still evolving.

## 7. Extension/s to the Eling Way

Further to discussion at last meeting, CT advised:

- A long-list of funding opportunities (capital, and revenue to 'compensate' landowners for potential conversion of strips of agricultural land) has been prepared, and realistic funding streams are being investigated in detail;
- Contact made with representatives of Mid & West Berks Local Access Forum, British Horse Society, The Trails Trust and The Watercress Way, and exchanging ideas including on landowner engagement;
- Meeting due shortly with North Wessex Downs AONB;
- Outline funding application to National Highways (formerly Highways England) is being prepared – CT had requested an initial discussion with National Highways as offered in their prospectus before submission, but NH now require outline submission first.

CT is also getting slow input from Parish representatives and has identified additional local/landowner contacts.

## 8. AOB

- **Pangbourne-Purley investigation, and Sulham Estate:**

CT advised he had had a very positive meeting with RH and colleagues from Pangbourne & Whitchurch Sustainability group (PAWS). CT will be making contact imminently with Henry Scutt, owner of Sulham Estate, to discuss scope to create a Pangbourne-Purley active travel link, via Sulham Estate land on north side of A329. CT is linked in with Reading BC on this, thinking about the wider LCWIP radial route to/from Reading.

Discussion had also touch on potential for other route/s in the area, and on PAWS' enquiries within Pangbourne about scope to site additional cycle stands near to Costa Coffee store.

- **Cycle Training and related events:**

Cheryl Evans has provided CT with the following information to share in her absence:

- As part of our cycle training programme, Bikeability Fix will be

CT

introduced as part of the Level 2 delivery for Year 6. We hope this will give the riders / parents more confidence the young riders will have a better understanding on maintaining their bikes and fixing a puncture (a key finding in the behavioural study). <https://www.bikeability.org.uk/about-cycle-training/cycle-training-for-children/bikeability-plus/>

- We will attend a Commonwealth schools event on 7<sup>th</sup> July @ Northcroft Park, Newbury (2.30pm to 7pm). The event should draw approx. 2000 young people plus parent/ guardians and wider community. **The Road Safety team are organising the Cycling element - anyone interested in supporting our pitch please contact Jo Bassett**  
[Joanne.Bassett@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:Joanne.Bassett@westberks.gov.uk)
- The Behavioural Study is now completed, see PDF supplied under separate cover and **not to be circulated beyond the Cycle Forum**. Full report will be available later in June;
- Holiday cycle programme available over the summer holidays - details can be found here  
<https://activetravel.wbcroadsafety.co.uk/>
- Family cycle training will also be available in the summer holiday - more details to follow.

Next Cycle Forum Meeting:

**Tuesday 13 September 2022 at 18:00**

- Time: 18:00-19:00
- Venue: (Zoom link to follow)