

Meeting Minutes of: West Berkshire Cycle Forum
held on: Tuesday 17 January 2023
(via Teams 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 of Newbury VELO
Emma Cook (EmC) - Enterprise Manager, Canal & River Trust
Cheryl Evans (CE) - WBC Senior Road Safety Officer
Elaine Cox (ELC) – WBC Rights Of Way Officer
Clive Tombs (CT) – WBC Highways Officer (minutes of meeting)

Apologies: Martin Colston – Newbury VELO
Angela McMahon – SPOKES, and Sustrans Ranger
Neil Taylor – Newbury Road Club
Alban Luffman – Sustrans Development Manager, Berkshire

	<u>Action</u>
<p>1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies</p> <p>AM, standing in as Chair for this session, welcomed everyone to the Cycle Forum, in particular welcoming Emma Cook (EmC) from Canal & River Trust to her first Cycle Forum session. Apologies received were recorded, as above.</p>	
<p>2. Notes of previous meeting & matters arising</p> <p>Notes of previous meeting held 11 October 2022 were agreed.</p> <p><u>Station Road, Newbury, one-way section</u> converted to Active Travel route during 2020: CT highlighted that the action was on all Forum members to consider whether they wished to make a representation on the current Experimental Traffic Regulation Order by 22 February, at https://www.westberks.gov.uk/StationRoadETRO</p> <p><u>Lawrence's Lane, Thatcham:</u> CT reminded Forum members again there were 2 days left before the ETRO consultation expires on 19 January https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/40568/Lawrence-s-Lane-Thatcham-Cold-Ash-Prohibition-of-Motor-Vehicles-Experimental-Order</p> <p>Other matters arising were discussed under the relevant items on the current agenda.</p>	

3. Kennet & Avon Canal – Towpath & related Improvements

Sustrans upgrades at Burghfield: CT advised section from **bottom of Mill Lane, Burghfield to Hissey's Bridge south of Calcot** (past the sailing club, where National Cycle Network route 4 follows Footpath 15): resurfacing with an asphalt surface has been completed and section fully re-opened. This gives a high-quality sealed surface, ideal for cycling and wheeling as well as walking. Sustrans were able to get on and deliver this with the written backing of and strong support from, the Council, using DfT funding.

CT said the hope is that the successful implementation of this scheme, coupled with the planned work elsewhere on NCN4 (Dewe Lane and Activation Project Aldermaston Wharf to Ufton Lane) will then unlock additional DfT funding for Sustrans to also restore the section from Garston Lock to the M4 Motorway Bridge, east of Theale as per minutes from last meeting. Sustrans are well aware how that section has deteriorated and have been in contact with that landowner.

Off-road path from Mill Lane/Dewe Lane eastwards to River Kennet bank side – Sustrans have submitted planning application **22/03097/FUL** which can be viewed at <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/planning-application-search>. This covers resurfacing with a sealed surface, drainage and other improvements, and widening of a 380m section of National Cycle Network Route 4. The determination decision date for this project is 04 March 2023. Construction is hoped to commence as soon as this decision is given, if decision is favourable. CT flagged up need for Sustrans to give details of intended alternative route.

Sustrans

Hambridge Road crossing: CT advised concept design by Sustrans for a potential signalled crossing is underway, building upon information, including a traffic count, supplied by West Berkshire Council and using £10k funding from DfT. CT emphasised that (as also stated to the Canal Corridor Working Group) this is a very difficult site due to utilities, bridge abutments and other features and it is a long way off construction. However, the feasibility study and concept design is underway; Sustrans have advised they are aiming for end March 2023 for initial concept design, for further discussion with WBC.

C&RT/Sustrans: Aldermaston Wharf to Ufton Lane: CT said Michael Youe from C&RT had advised at start of January 2023 they are hoping to commence the Aldermaston to Ufton Lane section of the towpath 'activation project' with Sustrans "in the next few weeks". Consideration will be given to alternative routing as appropriate.

C&RT: Ham Bridge to Bull's Lock, east of Newbury: CT said the Council has reiterated to C&RT our keen interest in seeing the towpath section remediated and re-stated our offer of £80k towards the cost, particularly given linkage to the proposed crossing scheme and its potential to form part of a leisure cycling route. EmC confirmed she is awaiting activation of her account with The Good Exchange so she can progress the match funding bid further. All present very supportive. SAW has also approached Chris Boulton at the Greenham Common Trust, battling for this, and is happy to introduce EmC and C&RT leadership to Chris to help things along.

SAW /
EmC

WBC: Mallard Court (West Mills) to the Monkey Bridge, Newbury: ELC advised quote just received from Volker Highways to lay a bound surface on this towpath section which WBC is responsible. ELC commented Newbury Town Council-led Canal Corridor Working Group is keen to see low-level lighting added, which ELC said is likely to cause a delay. ELV has tasked WBC's Alan Coxon with investigating lighting options and costs. It was acknowledged that ownership, compatibility and maintenance of any lighting are significant considerations that need to be definitively addressed.

Sustrans / WBC: Tranche 7 funding and WBC bid: CT advised that relatively short notice, West Berks was invited by Sustrans to submit a bid to Sustrans' Tranche 7 funding pot. Bid submitted on 24 November for four potential construction schemes, including the Hambridge Road crossing, and three pipeline schemes. We await the outcome from Sustrans.

Included within the bid was a speculative sum to make good the section past Victoria Park that is affected in places by subsidence, where the sheet piling is being undercut by water ingress and sand being displaced. ELC has been following up with WBC Structures and more recently with Canal & River Trust on interim repairs.

4. Cycle Training and events

CE updated the Forum. WBC had been notified by DfT of success in securing £109,000 for Bikeability Levels 1, 2, 3 and Fix, plus some additional support for SEND students.

An SEND cycle event is being planned for The Castle and Brookfield Schools.

Some issues with engaging with certain primary schools, including John Rankin and Speenhamland, Newbury - even though school holiday availability of courses has increased to address their requests to run courses outside of main school timetable. At St Nicholas, Newbury, the playground facility is in use all the time. CE commented John Rankin won't allow that number of bikes on site.

Level 3 Bikeability continues to be a barrier for secondary schools, although The Willink School at Burghfield Common are interested.

Fun Club to resume in April 2023.

CE also referenced engagement with refugee children living in Thatcham, and good engagement with Newbury Community Resource Centre (formerly Community Furniture Project) from whom bikes have been obtained.

CE is keen to get more local Bikeability trainers on board. There are 8 current instructors of whom 2 are part-time. All instructors are self-employed. KH noted two of Newbury Velo's members are already two Bikeability instructors. KH will raise at next coaching meeting to see if anyone else from Velo is willing to become a trainer.

CE circulated links: <https://activetravel.wbcroadsafety.co.uk/> and <https://www.bikeability.org.uk/professionals/for-instructors/>

SAW asked regarding level of funding compared with last year. CE advised compared to last year we are at same level.

5. Active Travel England and scheme updates

CT updated the forum:

Active Travel England is the recently established executive agency set up by Government to boost cycling and walking levels across England. It holds the purse strings. Along with other authorities, we continue to seek engagement with ATE, to respond to invitations to bid for funding and to theirs' and DfT's associated requirements.

Capability & Ambition Funding award: Just before Christmas WBC were notified our bid for £57,000 to ATE's Capability & Ambition Fund had succeeded. WBC is aiming to deliver:

Under the Capability heading:

- Bespoke training for additional LA officers cross-service, on LTN1/20 and Manual for Streets;
- Data and evidence collection: CCTV cycle & pedestrian counts over 7 day period for Calcot (IKEA) to Theale, to confirm current level of use and inform business case for potential future works including (in long-term) possible future replacement of bridge over M4;
- Scheme planning & design: consultancy support or allocation of in-house time, to undertake Equality Impact Assessment and evolve design for Western Avenue Phase 2;
- Public engagement & consultation: capture feedback on Western Avenue proposals. Using in-house successor to Commonplace/letter drop/liaison with user groups, Parishes and other stakeholders;
- Data and evidence collection: CCTV parking, traffic, cycle, pedestrian & crossing counts over 7 day period for Old Bath Road (section between Western Avenue and the Speen Lane/Goldwell Park access), to augment earlier manual counts and bolster business case for linking Western Avenue Phase 1 with Goldwell Park route and NCN4.

Under the Behavioural change heading

- School Streets Driver Education Programme: CE said this covered introduction of an e-learning platform and delivery of a driver education programme centring on School Streets, linking in with the Calcot School Streets initiative and infrastructure already deployed.
- **Calcot School Streets**
CE said this has been approved as a scheme to remain in place, under

reference ID 4097. WBC's application for powers under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act, for enforcement of moving traffic offences, was submitted in December 2022. Application being reviewed by Parliament in May 2023. This will underpin deployment of the CCTV at this site.

Current thinking is to bid for at least one additional School Street via next Active Travel Fund submission which the wider Highways team are currently drafting.

Educational process has to be in place for first 6 months. On receipt of first Penalty Charge Notice, recipient will be offered chance to attend School Streets Driver Education Programme as an alternative to other sanction. After 6 months the £70 per PCN charge will be introduced. Any money arising from any charging over and above scheme costs will go towards infrastructure/sustainable transport.

CE advised if WBC gets the Part 6 powers, it will be possible to enforce against all manner of Moving Traffic Offences with those powers applying across West Berkshire. However, in early stages we will only be using Part 6 powers in relation to School Streets.

- **Light segregation Orcas, Thatcham**

CT advised that, as per the minutes of the last meeting, following a 2-year pilot the Mini Orcas and Wand Orcas that were in the cycle lanes along A4 through Colthrop and Thatcham had been removed in early December. CT said WBC could not disregard serious issues with people tripping over them (in spite of the white markings and reflectors) and colliding with them including when walking and cycling, coupled with difficulties in cleaning behind Orcas in 1.5m width cycle lanes, and maintaining them.

CT advised WBC is going to be refreshing sections of cycle lane lining, like-for-like, as soon as the weather improves. The Traffic Signs Regulations, coupled with the findings of a Road Safety Audit, preclude use of ribbed/slightly-raised lines.

CT stated WBC have enquired repeatedly with DfT's Traffic Signs division (25 October and 14 December, coupled with two phone calls) and also with Active Travel England, about scope to explore bolstering these lines with milled-in, coloured reflective road studs to help demarcate the edge of the cycle lanes in certain sections (potentially focussing on the fast stretch past Colthrop initially), but to date we have not had any response from the Department or from Active Travel England to these requests.

- **Lawrence's Lane and Deadman's Lane**

Lawrence's Lane, Thatcham: CT reminded all again that the consultation on the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order was ending in 2 days, <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/40568/Lawrence-s-Lane-Thatcham-Cold-Ash-Prohibition-of-Motor-Vehicles-Experimental-Order>

Deadman's Lane, Theale: as per last minutes this scheme is unlikely to go ahead due to an objection from the school.

- **Andover Road, Newbury**

Scheme implemented, apart from the yellow line markings. A Traffic Services Team resource should shortly become available to pick up again on the process for the proposed TRO and line markings.

AM commented on issue with a delay in a sign being taken down, resulting in a penalty charge notice for a resident which had then deterred some from parking in the layby section repurposed for parking. CT confirmed this had been addressed in conjunction with WBC Parking Services. AM has been encouraging residents to park in the layby.

- **2023-24 schemes and investigations**

- *Crown Mead, Thatcham*

Design work has been on hold due to other commitments. CT's understanding is a revised design will be tabled in the late spring, likely after purdah.

- *Stockcross path and ATF3 funding bid*

Design work is underway. CT advised WBC had prepared and submitted a bid for additional funding to Active Travel England at ATE's invitation, to try and reflect increase in materials costs. We await the outcome of that supplementary bid.

- *London Road/Newbury Manor Hotel*

Discussions continue with the present owners of the Newbury Manor Hotel site, with a view to reaching mutually agreeable terms on a land transfer to enable a segregated cycle and pedestrian route section to be built across the front of the hotel site. Further progress is dependent on the solicitors, so at present this remains at investigation stage.

6. Extension/s to the Eling Way

CT updated. This relates to potential extensions of the Eling Way multi-user path which currently connects Hermitage with Hampstead Norreys.

Proposed Phase 1 extension: in autumn 2022 the ITS & Sustainable Travel team were invited, at short notice, to submit a bid for Rural England Prosperity Funding for an initial extension of the Eling Way.

Indications are that our bid for £200,000 has been successful, but final signoff from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is still awaited.

This is on the basis of a 1km extension to the south within Hermitage village itself. CT showed map of proposal.

We have had a very positive meeting with Eling Estate, and another landowner meeting is imminent. Hermitage Parish Council are also supportive, and colleagues across multiple WBC teams have been appraised of the scheme and its objectives. Main issue for Phase 1 relates to adaptation of and drainage on Footpath 16.

Wider activity: WBC has written to landowners throughout the section from Hermitage to Newbury along/immediately parallel to the former railway alignment, offering the chance to meet and discuss potential scheme, based on a questionnaire that we have formulated. To date the reaction has not been at all positive but we continue to explore options.

Section towards Compton: exploring whether any scope to tie in with flood alleviation scheme north of Hampstead Norreys. Letters to landowners have been held back accordingly.

CT has also met with Oxfordshire County Council officers and with National Highways to highlight the overall Eling Way scheme, its potential and to explore scope to partner with them.

The meeting with National Highways identified that the scheme might tally either with works nearer Oxford, or potentially with their next Roads funding settlement period.

Oxfordshire are keen on the scheme but recognise any connection north of Compton is long-term. CT has followed up subsequently with OCC's officer responsible for the Ridgeway area and a response is awaited.

7. Pangbourne-Purley Feasibility Study

CT circulated a link to the Feasibility Study that WBC had prepared, following discussions with PAWS, on potential for Active Travel improvements between the east end of Pangbourne village, Purley-on-Thames and potentially Tilehurst Station.

CT has shared the study with Ward Members for Pangbourne and Purley, relevant Portfolio Members and more recently with the two Parish Councils, PAWS, Sulham Estate and officers at Reading Borough Council. While feedback is welcome, CT drew attention to the findings of study and emphasised resource considerations.

RH acknowledged receipt of the study; PAWS will consider content.

8. Any Other Business

Linkways emerging network and route signing: CT had circulated the draft of a cycle direction signing strategy, focussing on gradually signing the core 'Linkways' routes in Newbury & Thatcham, along with minutes of the last meeting. No feedback had been received to date, therefore WBC were obtaining a quote for a small initial batch of Linkways-branded signs for Western Avenue Phase 1.

AM said his only comment was about use of anticipated cycling time to

destination (e.g. “10 mins”) in place of a distance (e.g. 1 [mile]). SAW said he was also unsure about this.

CT referenced Sustrans 2019 guidance, coupled with the provision of ‘cycling time to destination’ information on existing Eling Way destination signs.

Post-meeting note: the Sustrans guidance (paragraph 5.1.7) states that “On an urban route that has high utility use, time to destinations may be the most appropriate approach”. In addition, in Chapter 6 of the London Cycling Design Standards states that for core cycle corridors in London (TfL’s Superhighways), time to destination in minutes should be used, with timings calculated using an average cycling speed of 10 miles per hour (16kph), as used in TfL’s journey planner. Off-highway, a lower speed of 8 miles per hour may be applied if appropriate.

CT also referenced proposals recently discussed with Newbury Town Council to begin signing the Linkways through Victoria Park, connecting from the town centre to the A339, A4 London Road and points beyond, which NTC are supportive of.

Cycle parking updates: CT advised WBC are pursuing installation of cycle parking at five sites across the District, as the next phase following on from the Active Travel Heat Map consultation. Further sites will be pursued in 2023-24.

RH noted PAWS, liaising closely with WBC, are continuing to investigate potential for cycle racks, especially in section of High Street by Costa Coffee.

CT had provided PAWS with a letter of support on 20 December, to help along PAWS’ discussions for this site with the landowner.

Whitchurch Bridge Southern Approach Feasibility Study: RH referenced this study. CT confirmed WBC have commissioned this study from consultants, with the study being focussed on identifying, at initial feasibility level, options for possible future pedestrian footway improvements on the southern approach to Whitchurch Toll Bridge.

Beale Park: RH noted PAWS have been liaising with Beale Park about cycle and pedestrian access riverside between Pangbourne and their site.

CT commented that following discussion with PAWS, WBC had followed up with Beale Park regarding cycle parking and Beale Park had confirmed they do already have cycle parking available on site.

Cycle Hub, Reading: RH advised, as referenced in Reading Cycle Campaign’s latest newsletter, Reading BC are waiting on Primark to

sign the lease which is anticipated to be 6 weeks away.

Festival of Cycling 2025: this is as discussed at last meeting. Chris from Newbury Road Club not present at this session, so will have to be left to next or future session to discuss further.

e-Cargo bikes update: 2 e-Cargo bikes now in regular use, including one being used by a café in Tilehurst and one by a music teacher transport musical instruments. 1 remains available for an intending business. The profile of e-Cargo bikes for last mile sustainable freight movements is being highlighted more and more e.g. <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/local-transport-today/news/72560/new-reports-cargo-bikes-make-business-as-well-as-environmental-sense/>

Equestrians in cycle scheme design: ELC asked about this. CT commented this was most relevant to rural schemes, exemplified by The Eling Way. CT has met and corresponded with the local representative of the British Horse Society, who also sits on the Local Access Forum and has been keeping her posted on the Eling Way scheme.

Lower Way – post-meeting note: it is intended that the existing 3.5m wide path on the south side of Lower Way from [a point opposite and just west of Swings & Smiles premises](#) to the [east side of the Nature Discovery Centre access](#) should be formally translated to shared cycle- and pedestrian use, in parallel with the Lower Way residential development. This section of path is already used by pedestrians, technically illegally (see example within link above, also [here](#)) and has a long-established bus stop within its length. The adjacent section of path west of the Discovery Centre entrance to opposite Parsons Down Junior School is already designated as a shared route.

Next Cycle Forum Meeting:

Tuesday 16 May 2023 at 18:00. Teams link to follow