

Meeting Minutes of: West Berkshire Cycle Forum
held on: Tuesday 16 May 2023
(via Teams call)

- Chair:** Jon Winstanley (JW) – Service Director, Environment, WBC
- Attendees:** Emma Cook (EmC) - Enterprise Manager, Canal & River Trust
Rob Hill (RH) – Pangbourne & Whitchurch Sustainability (PAWS)
Neil Taylor (NT) – Newbury Road Club
Alan Langley (AL) – West Berkshire SPOKES
William Pitt (WP) – West Berkshire SPOKES
Cheryl Evans (CE) – Senior Road Safety Officer, WBC
Elaine Cox (ELC) - Senior Rights of Way Officer, WBC
Clive Tombs (CT) – Senior Engineer, WBC
- Apologies:** Cllr Martin Colston – also member of Newbury VELO
Cllr Tony Vickers

	<u>Action</u>
<p>1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies</p> <p>JW, standing in as Chair for this session, welcomed everyone to the Cycle Forum. Apologies received were recorded, as above.</p> <p>2. Notes of previous meeting & matters arising</p> <p>Notes of previous meeting held 17 January 2023 were agreed.</p> <p><u>Path diversion associated with planning application 22/03097/FUL</u>: this application is yet to be determined. CT will again flag to Sustrans need to identify and sign diversion.</p> <p>Other matters arising were discussed under the relevant items on the current agenda.</p> <p>3. Cycle Training and events</p> <p>CE updated the Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3,188 children trained in 2022-23 via the Bikeability scheme in West Berkshire• £131,327 invested (compares with £500 in 2007-08)• £109,850 allocated by the Bikeability Trust for Bikeability Level 1 in 2023-24, plus additional for Bikeability for Families, with 10% of the total to be split between Bikeability Plus (building on	

the confidence and knowledge gained at Levels 1, 2 and 3), along with **Bikeability Balance** (complementary skills – getting children ready for cycling) and **Bikeability Fix** (which teach trainees how to perform basic bike maintenance);

- Bikeability Level 3 – currently working with secondary schools. CE reported that St Barts, Trinity and Willink Schools have all shown interest but arrangements are yet to be finalised.
- SEND – extensive work being done with The Castle and Brookfields Schools who are helping pursue extra funding. CE has worked on a bid to Great Western Railway for £50k to move this forwards;
- Road Safety Team is also working with Newbury College, and with Mary Hare School. Joanne Bassett working with Sportline on bespoke helmets that accommodate hearing aids;
- Team also aiming to link demand for Bikeability courses in schools with potential support from Newbury Velo and from West Berkshire SPOKES – discussions underway;
- Links further developed with Community Furniture Project who have helped with supply of bikes, and Cowshed donated 20 balance bikes. CycleNow emptied storage container and CE picked up cycle helmets;
- 85% of schools involved with Bikeability in 2022-23 – Cheryl hoping to extend to 94% in 2023-24;
- NT asked about travel to school post-training and identified barriers to cycling. CE referred to an Insight study that has been undertaken identifying these barriers, however research is ongoing. Cycle training is only 1 element to encourage cycling – needs to be part of wider package involving infrastructure and safety measures;
- CE noted that presently only 10% of any allocation from the Bikeability Trust can be spent on Bikeability Fix – team is continuing to compile evidence that it inspires children to take up Bikeability Level 1.
- NT said Newbury Road Club might also possibly be interested in assisting with Bikeability – NT to take up with NRC Chair and if appropriate then contact CE.

NT

4. Active Travel England and scheme updates

CT updated the Forum:

Active Travel England (ATE) is the recently established executive agency set up by Government to boost cycling and walking levels across England.

WBC has continued to engage positively with ATE - participating in a recent

workshop session on implications for the Planning process – bidding to ATE in response to funding rounds that they have announced and responding to theirs' and DfT's associated requirements.

Calcot School Streets scheme: CE confirmed this has been approved as a scheme to remain in place, under reference ID 4097. WBC's application, alongside those from other authorities, for powers under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act is being reviewed by Parliament in May 2023. This will underpin deployment of the CCTV at this site. Funding for the ANPR camera is yet to be received.

School Streets Driver Education Programme in design. This will take form of an online course, using money secured by WBC under the Behavioural Change heading via the Capability & Ambition Fund.

Capability & Ambition-funded initiatives: at Christmas 2022 WBC were notified our bid for £57,000 to ATE's Capability & Ambition Fund had succeeded. WBC is delivering:

Under the Capability heading:

- Bespoke training for additional LA officers cross-service, including on LTN1/20 – course arranged - and (when issued) the updated Manual for Streets;
- Data and evidence collection:
- cycle & pedestrian monitoring underway for Calcot (IKEA) to west end of Theale, to confirm current level of use and inform business case for potential future works;
- CCTV parking, traffic, cycle, pedestrian & crossing counts for Old Bath Road (section between Western Avenue and the Speen Lane/Goldwell Park access), to bolster business case for linking Western Avenue Phase 1 with Goldwell Park route and NCN4;
- Scheme planning & design: concept design underway for Western Avenue Stage 2, Newbury (potentially Waitrose roundabout to Chestnut Crescent and subway to Shaw), to be accompanied by Equality Impact Assessment;
- Public engagement & consultation: capture feedback on Western Avenue Stage 1 as built and on Stage 2 proposals. Using in-house successor to Commonplace/letter drop/liaison with user groups, Parishes and other stakeholders;

Under the Behavioural change heading

- School Streets Driver Education Programme, as described above.

2023-24 schemes and investigation

Stockcross path – alongside B4000 from Stockcross village to A4

- CT advised design work well-advanced. Scheme has been highlighted to new Ward Members and marker put down again with Parish. Discussion continuing with Active Travel England who have

made comments. Limited capital funding made available from ATE, coupled with their rejection of our approaches for supplementary funding, is significant issue;

Crown Mead, Thatcham

- Designer is intending to table revised design shortly – waiting on two utilities to provide information;

London Road/Newbury Manor Hotel

- Solicitors liaising regarding mutually agreeable terms for land transfers that could enable upgraded cycle and pedestrian route section to be built across the front of the hotel site, subject to developer's application for Planning consent.

Post-meeting note - Active Travel Fund 4

Subsequent to the meeting, Forum Members may have seen the Government announcement of funding allocations under Active Travel Fund 4 (ATF4), embargoed until 19 May 2023.

WBC was successful in securing all of the £275k bid for, for one Construction scheme and three Development schemes:

- a. The introduction of an additional School Street scheme at Francis Baily School in Thatcham (Construction scheme);
- b. Development of proposals to improve the pedestrian and cycle connection between Theale and Calcot (Development scheme);
- c. Assessment of scope to improve active travel routes adjoining Robin Hood Roundabout (Development scheme);
- d. Evolution of Speen Link Path proposal, to establish feasibility of and to design a link between the Stockcross Path and the western end of the Newbury area network at Speen Lane / Speen War Memorial (Development scheme)

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/41870/New-funding-to-enable-active-travel-schemes> ; and

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-65693038>

5. Kennet & Avon Canal – NCN4, Towpath & related matters

In absence of a Sustrans representative, CT was able to advise:

Sustrans upgrades at Burghfield: section from **bottom of Mill Lane, Burghfield to Hissey's Bridge south of Calcot**: resurfacing completed December 2022, giving a high-quality sealed surface. Sustrans were able to get on and deliver this with the written backing of and strong support from, the Council, using direct funding from DfT.

Off-road path from Mill Lane/Dewe Lane eastwards to River Kennet bank side – as discussed at last meeting, Sustrans have submitted planning application **22/03097/FUL** which can be viewed at <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/planning-application-search> . This application remains to be determined by WBC; CT has lent support internally.

Sustrans have advised (11 May) that to date everything is running relatively to programme on the Sustrans & C&RT Dewe Lane and **Aldermaston Wharf to Ufton Lane** schemes. There has been some delay getting permission to launch a boat to do the ecological bank enhancements. Sustrans also still need to plan a volunteer day. Construction anticipated during summer 2023.

Hambridge Road crossing: CT advised concept design by Sustrans for a potential future signalled crossing is underway with report from them now anticipated June 2023, building upon information supplied by WBC to Sustrans and using £10k funding from DfT. CT reiterated 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.

Tranche 7 funding bid: CT noted that regrettably Sustrans have advised that owing to a significant reduction in Government funding, they have not been able to progress bids that they invited from local authorities for further scheme development and feasibility work. CT continues in close touch with Sustrans on WBC's and shared aspirations for towpath

C&RT: Ham Bridge to Bull's Lock, east of Newbury: CT had facilitated discussion between EmC, Steve Ardagh-Walter (formerly Chair of the Cycle Forum), and Chris Boulton at the Greenham Common Trust.

EmC had submitted the Canal & River Trust's application for match-funding to The Good Exchange/Greenham Common Trust and the application is now live - seeking contributions via The Good Exchange funding portal: <https://app.thegoodexchange.com/project/19729/canal-river-trust/newbury-towpath-improvements-hambridge-road-to-bulls-lock-kennet-avon-canal>

SPOKES have previously offered £2k towards this scheme, augmenting the £80k offered to Canal & River Trust by WBC.

WBC: Mallard Court (West Mills) to the Monkey Bridge, Newbury: ELC advised Public Rights of Way team is now considering a FlexiPave porous surface using recycled rubber. As noted previously there have been requests at Newbury Town Council-led Canal Corridor Working Group for low-level lighting. ELC has tasked WBC's Alan Coxon with investigating lighting options and costs. JW and CT signposted PROW to speak with WBC's Lighting team, given maintenance considerations and costs.

6. Extension/s to the Eling Way

This relates to potential extensions of the Eling Way multi-user path which

currently connects Hermitage with Hampstead Norreys.

Proposed Phase 1 extension: CT confirmed that following a bid from WBC, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has earmarked £200k, to be made available in 2024-25, to enable a 1km extension to the south within Hermitage village itself.

CT again showed map of proposed extension. Preliminary Ecology and drainage assessments have been undertaken, with tree and further ecology surveys to follow.

Positive meetings held with landowners bordering Footpath 16. Hermitage Parish Council also supportive and scheme is in line with Hermitage Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Hermitage to Newbury: WBC wrote 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, building on earlier Feasibility work by Sustrans and Spokes. Nil or negative reaction is leading to consideration of upgrade/restoration of existing Bridleway between Shaw and Curridge as an Interim measure – CT, ELC and PROW colleagues exploring further.

CT /
ELC

Hampstead Norreys to Compton and towards Didcot: CT has asked again internally about scope for a path to run alongside the proposed Hampstead Norreys flood alleviation scheme. Detailed response is awaited. JW said he would assist with this discussion.

CT /
JW

CT is also continuing to pursue National Highways, following on from WBC's Expression of Interest submitted in 2022, to see if they are interested in further joint working with WBC, given that the corridor parallels A34.

7. Any Other Business

Additional cycle parking: CT advised new cycle stands have been installed in the following locations, following on from the recent Active Travel Heat Map consultation.

- Yattendon Square, beside the village shop;
- The Croft, Hungerford, near to the doctors' surgery and primary school;
- St John's Post Office, Newbury
- near City Arts, Hampton Road, Newbury

WBC are also pursuing provision at other locations that were identified through the consultation.

Pangbourne & Eastern area issues: RH said that Pangbourne & Whitchurch Sustainability (PAWS) had a meeting upcoming with Beale Park, regarding a possible upgrade to their existing cycle parking, and a riverside link to the

park. PAWS are also hoping to meet with Sulham Estate again to discuss the recent WBC Feasibility Study on a potential future Pangbourne-Purley link.

CT noted again that any further development of this beyond Feasibility stage would be subject to allocation of resources and securing significant external funding, likewise with any Pangbourne-Whitchurch footway improvements.

RH advised that Reading Cycle Campaign were again meeting with Reading Borough Council regarding the proposed Reading town centre Cycle Hub.

Linkways emerging network and route signing: CT again showed the current map depicting the emerging network of 'Linkways' core cycle routes.

Initial batch of Linkways-branded direction signs will be installed shortly, bearing cycling times to destinations as discussed at last meeting and similar to those in situ on the Eling Way.

Festival of Cycling 2025: this is as discussed two meetings ago. Chris from Newbury Road Club not present at this session.

NT will catch up with the Newbury Road Club Committee and remind them of SPOKES' and Velo's keen interest in all working together to evolve a family-friendly event that celebrates cycling, in particular utility cycling. WP from SPOKES is open to further discussion based on the outline for a Festival event that SPOKES had previously developed.

NT

Vote of thanks to outgoing Chair and Deputy Chair: all present agreed a vote of thanks to former Councillors Steve Ardagh-Walter and Andy Moore for their steering of Cycle Forum, as Chair and Deputy Chair respectively, during the preceding Administration.

Next Cycle Forum Meeting:

Tuesday 12 September 2023 at 18:00. Teams link to follow