SPOKES Annual General Meeting

Date: 8 June 2025 **Venue:** Newbury Canoe Club

Present: Rob Borthwick (RB), Kevin Bushell (KB), Ed Cooper (EC), Joe Gregson (JG), Josh Kerry (JK), Gordon Oliver (GO), Paul Rumsby (PR), William Pitt (WP)

Ref	Item	Action
1.	**Apologies Received**	
	▪ Apologies had been received from Mike Butler, Angela McMahon, and Clive Tombs.	
2.	**Review of Minutes of 2024 AGM and Matters Arising**	
	▪ The Minutes of the preceding AGM held on 9 June 2024 were agreed.	
	▪ Updates were given in relation to the following actions:	
	– The constitution had last been updated in 2023.	
	– Cheryl Evans had confirmed that the costs for new Bikeability instructors to shadow more experienced instructors were already covered.	
	– WP had liaised with Newbury Road Club and Newbury Velo regarding the festival.	
	– WP had spoken to cycling groups in Winchester about their cycling charter.	
	– The Spokes jersey had been put up on the wall in Banjo Cycles.	
	– The action for Spokes to undertake counts at cycle parking sites remained outstanding.	**All**
3.	**Reports from Officers**	
	▪ **Chair, WP:** Thanked the other members of the committee and all the other Spokes volunteers for their support. Activities for 2024/25 had included	
	– Chairing monthly Spokes meetings	
	– Onboarding JG as Publicity Officer	
	– Representing Spokes at Cycle Forum and the Sandleford development meetings	
	– Setting up the Spokes Google Drive	
	– Taking part in the cycle count	
	– Coordinating the responses to formal consultations	

- Cleared out the crates for the stall equipment.

- **Vice Chair:** vacant post
- **Secretary GO:** Activities for 2023/24 had included:
  - Preparing agendas and minutes for the monthly meetings and AGM
  - Preparing one member newsletter
  - Contributing to website articles
  - Keeping on top of correspondence and responding to enquiries
  - Manning the stand for Greenfest
  - Supporting WP in preparations for the Cycling Festival

  It was agreed that the Committee should aim to prepare more regular newsletters.
- **Membership Secretary, PR:** Reported that membership was broadly static at 170. Eight new members had been recruited at Greenfest and it was expected that more would be recruited at the Cycling Festival (a prize draw was suggested). It was noted that open rates for recent member emails were 47% for the AGM and 60% for the Cycling Festival.
- **Treasurer, EC:** As of 31 March 2025, Spokes had a cash balance of £12,440.55. Funds available had gone up by £195.94 over the course of the year.

  The cycle counts remained the main source of revenue, plus a handful of donors. Regular expenses were the website and insurance. This year, the main expenditure had been on the Cycling Festival.

  Spokes was carrying a considerable balance and opportunities to reduce this would be welcomed.

  It was highlighted that there was a potential risk to the cycle count income associated with the proposed local government reorganisation. However, Spokes would be able to survive for a number of years, even it was not commissioned to continue with the counts. It was suggested that Spokes could respond to the consultation on the Ridgeway Council proposal.
- **Cycle Counts, RB:** The October and February counts had been completed successfully, and the mailing had just gone out for the June count.

  Analysis of the count data had been completed:
  - Sites 10 and 4 had the most cyclists

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	– Sites 9 and 14 had the fewest cyclists – Activity was seasonal with numbers highest in June and lowest in February. – There was evidence of an increase over time. – Spokes was just about able to cover all the count sites. The Committee discussed a number of potential changes to the count sites: – Dropping sites 9 and 14 – Adding new sites to include key locations not currently covered by the count – Moving the site at Trinity to catch more of the school traffic – WP to discuss at the Cycle Forum	**RB**
	▪ **Events Manager, WP:** Activities had included: – Couch to 50k – Worked with NRC to set it up. – Three people in the first cohort with three more waiting. – Positive feedback to date. – Cycling Festival – Attended operations committee meetings. – Helped to develop risk assessments – Helped with publicity – Social Bike Rides – Surveyed those who had attended previous rides – Numbers were up this year – Lost Tim and Steve as ride leaders, but Phil had offered to lead – Organised the Christmas meal – No cycle maintenance sessions had been held in 2024/25 – Followed up on the Winchester Cycle Charter – Mainly used by the council rather than cycling groups – Exeter was the source of the original charter concept	

Ref	Item	Action

- The aim was to get major organisations to sign up before going out more widely

- Wrote up articles for the website
- Coordinated preparations for the Greenfest stall
  - The event was very successful
  - Spokes had subsequently been invited to be part of Newbury Show on the back of involvement with Greenfest

- **Highways Officer:** vacant post
- **Publicity Officer, JG:** Key activities included:
  - Designing the Couch to 50k logo
  - Setting up the Bluesky account
  - Providing content on Facebook and Bluesky

  It was agreed that the primary goal for the coming year should be to generate a bigger group of active members. For example, encouraging feedback on local cycling infrastructure.
- **Website Editor, JK:** Thanked those who had contributed articles.

  It was proposed to retain the current web host and domain name provider for another year.

4. Confirmation of Required Committee Roles

- It was agreed that all posts should be retained, and the vacant posts should be kept open.

5. Election of Spokes Committee

- Election to the Spokes Committee roles was as follows:
  - Chair – William Pitt
  - Vice-Chair – vacant
  - Secretary – Gordon Oliver
  - Membership Secretary – Paul Rumsby
  - Treasurer – Ed Cooper
  - Cycle Count Co-ordinator – Rob Borthwick
  - Events Manager/Rides Co-ordinator – William Pitt
  - Highways Officer – Kevin Bushell
  - Publicity Officer – Joe Gregson
  - Website Editor – Josh Kerry

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	▪ It was noted that RB was looking to relocate, so the Cycle Count Coordinator role would probably fall vacant during 2025/26.	
6.	**Review of Constitution**	
	▪ No amendments were proposed. However, it was noted that the current version was quite 'wordy'.	
	▪ It was highlighted that the constitution was not easy to find on the website. JK to make more prominent.	**JK**
	▪ There was discussion about the need for a mission statement. JK to update the About Us page on the website and send round draft text for approval.	**JK**
7.	**Motions for Debate**	
	▪ **Bank account** - It was agreed that Spokes should continue to bank with Metro Bank, since Spokes had relatively few transactions and it was free (alternatives accounts charged fees).	
	▪ **Investment Priorities** - Priorities for investing Spokes funds were agreed as:	
	– ***Couch to 50K training*** – WP to discuss with Chris Treacher.	**WP**
	– ***Newbury Cycling Festival*** – It was acknowledged that Spokes could not support this to the same extent as in 2025, particularly if it became an annual event.	
	– ***Eling Way/NCN4*** – Providing seed funding/levering third party investment and/or getting a 'seat at the table' on steering groups (e.g., Eling Way Community Interest Organisation (CIO)).	
	– ***Supporting other relevant CIOs in the district***.	
	▪ **Spokes Mission** – KB highlighted a number of concerns:	
	– The Spokes Constitution required the committee to:	
	– *'achieve, through collaboration with others, better facilities for leisure and utility cyclists in West Berkshire'*, and	
	– *'to lobby on behalf of cyclists and cycling and to hold local government administrations and other responsible bodies to account in delivering better cycling provision across the district of West Berkshire'*.	
	– He felt that more should be done to lobby for change and hold decision makers to account.	

Ref	Item	Action

- He had previously made a number of suggestions for improvements to cycling infrastructure and wanted to see them put to WBC/other responsible bodies.
- He felt that in too many cases, cycling infrastructure was deteriorating, new schemes were being badly implemented, or nothing was done to address identified issues.
- He noted the recent proposal to downgrade the cycle track on Lower Way and expressed concern that Spokes appeared unbothered by this – he felt that the corridor needed to be upgraded and challenged the committee to lobby more effectively.
- RB expressed concern about the form of cycling infrastructure being provided (e.g., on the Stockcross route), resulting in two-tier provision for confident and non-confident cyclists. He was also concerned about government legislation that effectively criminalised cyclists who caused accidents.
- GO indicated that a lack of priority over side-roads and accesses on the Stockcross route was down to safety auditor comments.
- It was noted that LTN1/20 accepted compromises. However, compromises were less apparent in London, where there was sufficient funding and political will to deliver high quality schemes.
- GO admitted that Spokes had not been as effective as it could have been and should push harder for improvements. For example, WBC had been making excuses for years not to implement the double yellow lines on Andover Road.
- KB highlighted the missing section of cycle route on Oxford Road.
- It was noted that Spokes had adopted the approach of trying to work with WBC rather than oppose them. Adopting a more adversarial approach carried a risk of losing the good will that had been built up. It was suggested that Spokes could lobby more but achieve less.
- It was suggested that Spokes was not taking the correct stance, and should be more assertive. However, there was some support for the current approach.
- It was noted that Spokes could be more active in lobbying following the recruitment of KB as Highways Officer.

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	– It was suggested that two committee members could attend Cycle Forum in future. – Concern was expressed about the role of Active Travel England. It was felt that they should be consulting with local cycling groups like Spokes to understand if investment/schemes were adequate. – Concerns were expressed about what might happen following local government reorganisation and the change to Ridgeway Council. – It was agreed that the committee should: – Reflect on its purpose and agree a way forward to respond to the concerns raised.	**All**
	– Seek to instigate a relationship with Active Travel England.	**WP**
	– Raise concerns about the new unitary authority at the next Cycle Forum.	**WP**
8.	**Date of next AGM**	
	▪ To be arranged for Sunday, 14 June 2026.	**GO**
9.	**Any Other Business**	
	▪ No other items of business were raised.	