West Berkshire Spokes Newsletter
October 2025

Hello,

A warm welcome to the October 2025 edition of the West Berkshire Spokes newsletter. Our newsletter provides a summary of recent and upcoming Spokes' activities, updates from the West Berkshire Cycle Forum, and other cycling related news that we hope will be of interest to you.

We welcome your suggestions and feedback for future editions. To contact us please email **info@westberkshirespokes.org**.

Glow Ride Comes to Newbury



On Wednesday 22nd October, Newbury will join towns and cities across the UK in a mass “Glow Ride”, which is part of Cycling UK’s **My Ride. Our Right** campaign.

The campaign highlights the need for safer streets and better cycling infrastructure, particularly for women who often feel forced to choose between busy roads or dark, isolated paths once the evenings draw in.

We are working with Newbury Road Club and Newbury Velo to bring the event to the town. Women cyclists of all abilities are invited to take part in a two-mile ride around Newbury Town Centre and Victoria Park, helping to “light up the night” while calling for change. To find out more or to register to take part, visit: the **Newbury Road Club website**.

Anyone wishing to help with marshalling or otherwise on the night, please let William know by emailing **events@westberkshirespokes.org**.

Spokes at Newbury Show



We were delighted to be given the opportunity to be part of this year's Newbury Show on 20 and 21 September.

We had a good position close to one of the entrances and on one of the main internal roads through the site. Our stall was in the Countryside area, next to the **Marlborough Bike Company** who kindly donated three vouchers for the “find the bicycle fault” game we ran at the show. The game was very popular attracting nearly 100 entries for the prize draw, with 28 people finding all five faults correctly. The game was pa great “hook” for us to engage with people.

We connected with a slightly different audience to other events, and several people subsequently joined as new members at the event and afterward through the website. Also, a few were interested in volunteering to help with Spokes activities, which we greatly appreciate. (And speaking of volunteers, our thanks go to Clive, Gordon, Mike, William and Yves for giving up their weekend to help with the stall.)

So, that’s three shows we have been to this year – Greenfest, Newbury Bicycle Show and the Newbury Show. Such events are great for promoting ourselves and what we are about to a wider audience and – most importantly of all – getting more people onto their bicycles.

If you are involved in organising a local event and you think it would be good for Spokes to have a presence, then please do get in touch by emailing **events@westberkshirespokes.org**.

Couch to 50K



Spokes has been working in partnership with Newbury Road Club and Newbury Velo to set up a Couch to 50K programme. Taking inspiration from the **NHS Couch to 5K programme** for runners, it is aimed at new or returning adult cyclists who would like some targeted support to help develop their skills to cycle on roads with confidence, and to be able to cycle further as part of a group.

We kicked off our inaugural programme earlier this year and have spent the summer teaching them basic cycling and road safety skills before heading out on the road, building up the distance steadily over time. Our first set of participants have just 'graduated' from the programme and are now able to complete a 50 km/30 mile ride.

Thanks to Chris Treacher and Cassie Friend who have developed and run the programme with William Pitt. The feedback from our first 'guinea-pigs' has been overwhelmingly positive and provides a great platform to build on. We already have our next set of participants lined up for the next programme, which will start in the spring.

We are also liaising with West Berkshire Council's Road Safety Team, who have been looking to develop their own programme for novice cyclists and have been looking for somewhere to signpost participants to allow them to progress.

If you, or someone you know, might be interested in taking part, or if you would like to find out more about the programme, then please do email us at **events@westberkshirespokes.org**.

Spokes Social Rides



We have run a programme of social bike rides for a number of years now, with outings on the first and third Saturday of each month between March and October, led by experienced ride leaders. Our final ride of this year will be on 18 October.

All rides are promoted through the **Let's Ride** platform, which is provided by British Cycling, and participants can use this to select the rides that they would like to attend and book a place.

The rides are generally around 30 miles (48 kilometres), and go at a fairly relaxed pace of 10-11 mph (16-18 kph), with a coffee and cake stop around the half-way mark. These are 'no drop' rides and we are happy to wait for slower riders at the top of any hills. Our rides are predominantly on-road, but we often have a range of different bikes on our rides from road to gravel and even the occasional tandem.

Numbers are consistently around 6-8 people per ride and we have lots of familiar faces who enjoy these relaxed and informal outings. However, we are conscious that we may not be catering for as wide a demographic as we would like. Also, we are considering making some improvements for next year's rides.

To that end, we are about to send out a survey to our ride participants and also to the wider Spokes membership to understand what you would like from the programme, and whether we need to do anything differently, so please look out for the email in your inbox.

Also, we are hoping to expand our Social Bike Ride programme and we would love to hear from anyone who might be interested in helping with these. We would arrange ride leader training so you can learn about:

- how to assess participants
- different approaches to leading a ride
- route planning
- risk management

If you would like to find out more about our social bike ride programme or to discuss becoming a ride leader, then please do drop us an email at **events@westberkshirespokes.org**.

Cycle Counts



Volunteers from West Berkshire Spokes carry out three cycle counts in the West Berkshire Council (WBC) area each year. These take place in mid-February, mid-June and mid-October.

In addition to basic count data, we also collect information about the age, sex, and direction of travel of cyclists; whether they are cycling on the road or pavement; whether they are wearing a helmet or not; and if they are in ‘sporty’ or ‘normal’ attire. This provides a wealth of data for the council.

We count cyclists passing seventeen locations in Newbury, Thatcham, Tilehurst, Purley, Theale and Hungerford, between 7.00-9.00 am in summer and 7.30-9.30 am in autumn/winter.

The locations have remained constant since Spokes started undertaking the counts over 20 years ago. They are mostly based around schools, but also take place at busy junctions, town centres and in parks.

We have provided a brief summary below of the main findings from analysis of count data over four years from June 2021 to February 2025.

Count sites at **Thatcham: A4 West of Lower Way** and **Newbury: Kiln Road/Walton Way** are the most heavily used during the morning 2-hour cycle count periods with 4-year averages of **100** and **81** cyclists per count.

Sites at **Newbury: Andover Road**, **Newbury: Robin Hood West**, **Thatcham: Bath Road / Green Lane**, and **Newbury: Kennet and Avon towpath** are also heavily used with between **66** and **53** cyclists per count on average.

Nine count sites in **Newbury, Theale** and the **eastern parts of West Berkshire** are moderately used, averaging between **41** and **21** cyclists per count.

Sites at **Newbury: Battery End / Wash Common Recreation Ground** and **Hungerford** are less used, with between **12** and **10** cyclists on average per count.

As would be expected, counts show seasonality with the highest numbers of cyclists in June, October second, and February the lowest. The four-year average for June was **826** cyclists, October **725** and February **580**.

Total count numbers have increased modestly over the four years from June 2021 to February 2025. The first-year total was **1,868**, second year **2,013**, third year **2,210** and the most recent year **2,139**. This represents a roughly **3%** annual increase over the period (although numbers dipped in the latest year). We expect that some variability is likely due to weather conditions on the day of the counts.

Carrying out these cycle counts provides Spokes and WBC with valuable insights into cycle use in West Berkshire. Further detail is available on the **Spokes Website** if you are interested.

The counts also provide us with our main source of revenue, with around £750 per count. This helps to pay for our other activities, such as the Cycling Festival, and providing seed funding which we can use to leverage external grants for cycling infrastructure improvements, such as the Kennet and Avon towpath upgrade.

A huge 'thank you' to all our count volunteers - you are amazing and we couldn't do this without you. However, we always need more volunteers to cover the 17 sites. As a small incentive, after each count we enter all cycle count volunteers are into a prize draw for a £25 Banjo Cycles voucher for each 2-hour session they complete.

We would also like to thank Rob Borthwick, who has been running the counts for the last few years. Unfortunately, Rob has plans to relocate soon, so we are looking for someone to step into his shoes.

If you would like to assist with future counts, or if you are interested in taking on the Cycle Count Coordinator role, then please email us at **chair@westberkshirespokes.org**.

West Berkshire Cycle Forum



Spokes is a member of the West Berkshire Cycle Forum, which meet four times a year, and provides a platform for local cycling groups to raise concerns/suggestions about cycling infrastructure/services with the Council, and to get updates on how new schemes and initiatives are progressing.

The latest meeting was on 24 September 2025. A summary of some of the key points is provided below:

- **Close Pass Initiative** - Thames Valley Police are yet to confirm when they will run this in West Berkshire, but a future event is planned.
- **Cycling facilities in Lambourn** - Lambourn Youth Council asked if the Council could improve cycling facilities in the village. There are currently no schemes planned, other than cycle parking at the Lambourn Centre, but officers will meet with the Youth Council to discuss this further.
- **Festival of Cycling** - Feedback from the event had been overwhelmingly positive. It was suggested that this could be held every other year, to be managed by a joint committee of the three cycling clubs.
- **Eling Estate** - The estate has announced that it is creating around 5km of new trails suitable for 'considerate mountain biking' on a site to the north-east of Hermitage.
- **Clubhouse/Cycle Hub** - Newbury Velo is looking to bring forward a proposal for a Clubhouse/Cycle Hub on Hambridge Road.
- **Andover Road** - Spokes has long lobbied for the existing north-eastbound cycle lane to have double yellow lines to prevent parking. WBC Councillors have agreed to escalate this.
- **Cycle Count** - Spokes queried whether there was merit in continuing to undertake counts at Battery End/Charles Street, Newbury and in Hungerford due to very low numbers of cyclists recorded. Spokes also suggested that the site near Trinity School be relocated to an alternative site that would pick up pupils cycling to and from school. This is to be discussed with WBC's Transport Policy Team.
- **Bikeability** - WBC is on track to meet its target for Level 2 Bikeability. However, Cllr Colston has been asked to follow up with schools that are not engaging with the programme. Newbury Velo reported on their excellent work with SEND pupils.
- **Eling Way Stage 1 Extension** - The scheme is progressing well and a resolution has finally been found for the missing section south of Yattendon Road. The strategy for future stages has been put to WBC senior management.
- **London Road/Floral Way** - This is being progressed by WBC Projects Team. The scheme will link two separate sections of cycle route via a widened shared path and an upgrade to the signalled crossing. It will also link with the earlier Francis Baily School Street.
- **Linkway 3 (Thatcham to Trinity School)** - Consultation has been completed with key stakeholders on proposed cycle direction signing, tactile paving and minor works on the A4/Tull Way Garden Centre Roundabout.
- **Linkways 4 & 5 (Lower Way, Thatcham)** - It is proposed to convert the existing cycleway to a shared use path to make it consistent with adjoining sections of route and to reflect its existing use by pedestrians as well as cyclists, to accommodate bus stops along the route, and to link to the Lambourn Meadows development.
- **Linkway 6 (North Newbury to Town Centre)** - Cycle direction signs have been installed and other minor infrastructure tweaks are planned.
- **Linkway 7 (A4 Western Avenue Stage 2)** - Plans to fill in the existing subway and replace it with a Toucan crossing have had to be abandoned for cost reasons. Current plans for the section between Waitrose roundabout and Dolman Road include:
  - A Tiger parallel crossing over B4494 Oxford Road to the north of the roundabout
  - Two-way segregated cycle track along the north side of the A4
  - An upgraded signal-controlled crossing
  - Footway widening in several locations
- **Stockcross Linkway Stage 2** - Plans for a segregated cycle track along the south side of the bridge over the A34 are being considered by National Highways. Plans for the section near Speen Lane have had to be revised due to the presence of utilities - WBC is now looking to widen the footway to the rear in order to convert it to shared use.
- **Pangbourne to Purley** - The proposed route would be parallel to the A329. A drone LiDAR survey of the route is planned.
- **Theale A4/A340 roundabout (vulnerable user assessment)** - A study has been undertaken and is being reviewed by the Traffic and Road Safety Team.

Copies of all Cycle Forum minutes are available on the Spokes website.

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