



CycleReading

WORKING FOR A CYCLE FRIENDLY READING

www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

December 2019 No 145

Barriers To Cycling



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Over the past 25 years Sustrans has established more than 16,000 miles of the National Cycle Network - though it actually owns only 500 miles of this.

Two years ago Sustrans set about a thorough review of the network and its findings were summarised in the 'Paths for Everyone' report released in 2018.

The findings were not great - Sustrans assessed nearly half of the

network was of either 'poor' or 'very poor' quality with respect to safety and accessibility.

Peter Challis, Sustrans' Network Development Manager, attended our November committee meeting to outline Sustrans' plans to fix the network and explain how this affects Reading.

Bringing over 7000 miles of 'poor' cycle network up to scratch is a big challenge for a charity and will require

Campaign News

Sustrans to source considerable funding. This has been kick-started with £20 million for fifty 'activation' projects, one of which is for NCN 4 in Reading.

For the NCN 4 project Sustrans is looking to remove or replace the barriers that are located at the Katesgrove Underpass (under the IDR), at Waterloo Meadows (alongside the Kennet and Avon) and at Fobney Lock. Anyone who has cycled this route will know how difficult it is to get a bike through these barriers, and if you have a tandem or trailer ... well forget it.

However, it is recognised that these barriers are there for a purpose, namely to stop anti-social motorbike use of the route. Unfortunately there are simply no physical means of stopping motorbikes, but allowing pedal bikes and enforcement will be needed to discourage motorbike use.

Whilst the police are part of the partnership working to upgrade the cycle network Peter told us that Thames Valley Police had stopped short of committing to enforcement once the barriers are removed.

Keith Elliott
RCC Secretary



Reading Borough Council (RBC)

Winter Report 2019

No meetings with the Council have taken place since the last Cycle Forum on 19 March, though at the time of writing, the 'quarterly' Cycle Forum is due to meet again on 4 December.

No relevant issues for cycling have been tabled at the Traffic Management Sub-Committee, so no news here either.

The long Reading Cycle Campaigns wish-list remains long, with plenty more suggestions that we could add. It is unfortunate and embarrassing that there are so few actions being taken to improve conditions for cycling and walking.

No wonder there is a climate emergency! Let's hope for a better 2020.

John Lee
RBC Campaigner for RCC

Transport In An Emergency

In early February 2019 RBC received a petition from 798 residents urging the Council to declare a Climate Emergency.

A motion was moved at Council on 26 February 2019 confirming that the Council believed the world was now in a 'Climate Emergency' and committing the Council to play a full role in achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

The Council subsequently instructed its officers to identify measures which could accelerate the timescale for reducing carbon dioxide emissions to zero by 2030, and ensure that forthcoming revisions to the Local Transport Plan and Climate Change Strategy, and any other relevant policy statements, reflect the urgency of the motion.

RBC has now started formulating its Transport Strategy to 2036 - that's a timescale that takes us six years beyond the zero carbon date target. The Council's early consultation on its embryonic strategy floats ideas such as a charging scheme for private cars and reallocating road space to sustainable forms of transport.

In our response to the consultation we argued that a sustainable urban transport must include a large proportion of trips being undertaken by bike. Such an urban transport system is not a utopian fantasy - in Copenhagen 62% of residents choose to bike to work or place of study. To help bring cycling to

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Campaign News

a greater proportion of Reading's residents we have suggested that money from congestion charging be used to fund a network of e-bikes hubs, along with the associated infrastructure to encourage would-be cyclists to use them without fear of motor traffic.

As a general observation it is not in the nature of Local Authorities to do things quickly, or to implement measures that will be unpopular (at least in the short term) with a significant number of people. However, if the Council is serious about the Climate Emergency both of these things will be necessary.

The initial consultation on the Transport Strategy closed in September and the Council should now have provided feedback on the consultation and started writing the new strategy. This should be ready in spring/summer 2020.

Transport for the South East

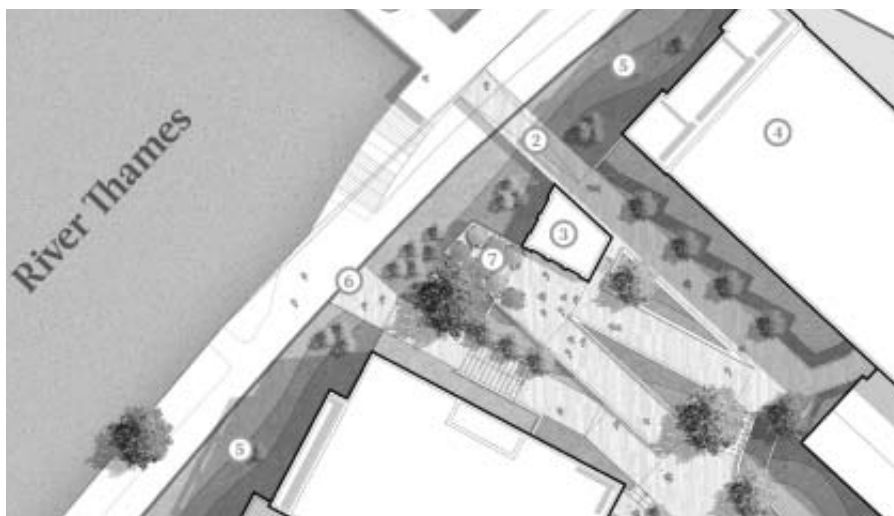
Transport for the South East is a regional body representing the views of local authorities and local enterprise partnerships. At the moment it is consulting on its draft Transport Strategy; the consultation can be found on: www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/tfsestrategy and closes on 20 January.

Christchurch Bridge Access

The cycle and pedestrian bridge over the Thames near Reading Station, or Christchurch Bridge to give it its official title, was opened in 2015. Although our plea for it to be segregated was ignored, the bridge has undoubtedly been a welcome addition to Reading's transport infrastructure.

The Council's longer-term strategy for the bridge was to improve its southern access when the SSE site between the river and Vastern Road was eventually redeveloped. Those that use the bridge will know that the current access from Vastern Road is narrow and labyrinthine.

Redevelopment of the SSE site is now being planned by Berkeley Homes. As things stand this could potentially miss the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a quality southern access route to the bridge for cyclists.



Proposed cycle access from Christchurch Bridge to Vastern Road

Berkeley's proposal for blocks of flats are shown on their scheme website, www.vasternroad.co.uk, though by the time you are reading this the plans may have been submitted for planning approval.

Access to Christchurch Bridge is proposed to be made via two 180° switchbacks, one of which forms the entrance to a proposed café. Obviously they have not thought about this as a cycle route, which will only get more and more popular as we move to being a carbon-neutral town in the next ten years.

Feedback to Berkeley Homes can be made via www.vasternroad.co.uk.

Car Door Cycle Lanes - A Brief Reprise

In 2015 we made a big fuss when RBC painted cycle lanes in the car door danger zone alongside parking bays on Wokingham Road. We pointed out that this was completely against both national guidance and RBC's own policy as given in its Cycle Strategy.

Following our concerns RBC's Traffic Management Sub-Committee made an undertaking to remove the dangerous cycle

lanes. They never did, of course, but at least the lines faded over the intervening years.

So it was with some surprise that when this section of Wokingham Road was resurfaced in August, the offending cycle lanes were repainted on the fresh asphalt.

However, this is not a rant against RBC. Reading Cycle Campaign members pointed the facts out to the Council and the newly painted lines were removed after the mistake was realised. This section of Wokingham Road will in fact be getting some more cycle-friendly lining as part of the new cycle route NCN 422.

Keith Elliott
RCC Secretary



Chairman's Letter

Dear RCC members,

I don't suppose anyone is unaware of climate change any more. We all know the climate is warming, as it has been ever since the ice cap started to retreat at the end of the last ice age. Glaciers extended almost to where Reading is at one time.

The oceans have been steadily rising, the British Isles weren't islands back then.

However the recent rate of change has been faster than ever before, and it is due to the activities of humans, mostly since the start of the industrial revolution. Now it is accelerating due to the vast amounts of carbon released into the atmosphere, mostly due to the burning of fossil fuels, but there are a few other sources of 'greenhouse gases' which are causing the warming.

The scientific consensus is alarming, to put it mildly. If we don't do something now we'll be too late to stop some of the 'feedback loops' where the result of the warming will cause things we can't control.

For example if the tundra, that landscape found in the frozen belt of land around the globe north of the arctic circle, starts melting, it releases methane. This causes

climate warming, so even if we stopped all our own carbon emissions immediately, once the methane is out of control we can't stop it.

So we need to rapidly decarbonise our lifestyles right away.

Are we able to do this? Well, yes we can.

Of course we can. But we won't.

We won't because there is a lot to lose, mostly money. Our lifestyles have to change dramatically. Everything we do has to change. We have to do so many things and there is nowhere near enough momentum towards doing anything at all.

In fact there is a huge industry lobbying the government to stop doing anything about climate change. £250million has been spent by five companies in under 10 years to persuade the government to take no action, or even to take action which causes us to consume more fossil fuel.

Of course, the other side of the coin lobbying for action to do something is a well organised bunch of volunteers, Extinction Rebellion, and without committed activists we'd be absolutely nowhere, no matter how loud the scientists shout.

In Reading a climate emergency was declared back in February. That acknowledges the problem, but has yet to come up with a plan, let alone any action. In fact despite a fair bit of lobbying, the climate change declaration didn't even make it onto the Council website until October, eight months after the declaration.

One of the key messages I have heard is that we must communicate the urgency of the problem by every means available.

In November the Council sent a newsletter to every house in Reading. This never even mentioned climate change, or the climate emergency.

When Cllr Page, Deputy Leader of the Council, and the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment Planning and Transport, said at the time of the declaration of the emergency: "This declaration will be the golden thread which runs through everything the Council does."

I genuinely had high hopes we were about to see a complete change in Council policies.

The first big action, to 'have a meeting' to come up with solutions, wasn't until June, four months after the emergency was declared, and even then it seemed as if the

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Chairman's Letter

whole concept of the problem, and the solutions, was a total surprise. We were talking about the issues in the early 1990s, after the Rio Summit, and back then RBC had at least three people working on it full time. Despite this, CO₂ has continued to be released into the atmosphere at an accelerating rate.

Now, almost 30 years later, we were filling out ideas on post-it notes. We now have to wait until next year for the launch of a strategy that identifies what to do. All that is new really is the amount of adaptation we are going to need to make. The scientists have a much clearer idea of the implications, and of course the problem is now very much worse.

Even at the recent launch of the 'adaptation plan' by Reading CAN, the network established to get Reading ready for the challenges ahead, there wasn't a plan, just some vague ideas about planting some trees, moving away from low lying land due to flooding, insulating homes against heat and cold. Nothing about coping with the massive migration of the human population from uninhabitable parts of the planet.

What does this have for readers of the Reading Cycle Campaign newsletter?

Well, apart from the fact that climate breakdown will affect everyone, some things are really relevant to us. One is the decarbonisation of our transport means we have to get lots more journeys made by bike. We have to rearrange our town so that people don't need to travel countless miles around the town every day lugging their car, their spare empty seats, their unfilled boots, just to move their body from their home to their work.

I really did think after that declaration the Oxford Road would fall quiet as through traffic was prevented. There would be no motor vehicles passing through the town centre. There would be bike racks everywhere. Painted cycle lanes would be replaced with kerbs to keep cyclists safe. None of this has yet. In fact nothing has happened at all. I know it's early days, but if this really is an emergency, then we really do need to act.

And we're not acting, we're just talking, and putting off doing anything practical to some point in the future. Actually we are hardly talking. The Transport Action Group of the Climate Action Network has met once. The Cycle Forum has met once. The new Clean Air and Safer Transport Forum has met once.

There are tons of things we could do right away.

We need homes that have room for bikes, not cars. We need to take parked cars off

the streets and find space for shelters for bikes. We need to prevent cars being driven through our residential streets, but allow cycling and walking.



Adrian Lawson

We need hubs for the delivery of goods from out of town so that small electric cargo bikes can do the last mile delivery, so our streets are not clogged with half empty vans delivering tiny packages containing stuff we've bought online. We have to have networks of safe routes to get to where we need by bike. We have to make the private car the least favourable option, and make the bike, e-bike, scooter, cargo bike and walking the default.

We know this. RBC knows this. Big businesses know this. The government does too.

We need a ton of other things too, as we can't fully stop burning carbon right away, so we need to offset this, with thousands if not millions of trees, with vast areas given over to tree growing and wetlands and other natural carbon stores.

But getting a lot of people cycling is one area we really could focus. Despite this the last 'big meeting' to discuss making infrastructure for cyclists came up with a few ideas. One I really like was to make all the arterial routes proper high quality connected cycle highways. Then after the meeting the maps came out and the high quality connected routes all had one glaring omission, the town centre.

So the suggestion that people could cycle down the Oxford Road and straight through to Reading College has been watered down. I don't know the reason yet, but it's probably Broad Street. The route from Reading across town to Caversham has got another gap, probably the station underpass. Even while the plan is on paper it has been diluted. I can only begin to imagine the compromises that will be foisted on us as the plans go from Council reports to physical infrastructure.

We know we need to make proper segregated cycle facilities on all the arterial routes into and out of town. We've had painted cycle lanes and proved they don't work. London and countless cities worldwide have proved that making properly safe roads can make a huge difference as people feel safe, and if they are direct, unobstructed and convenient, they'll work. We need separate space for pedestrians and cyclists, not the ridiculous

YES, I WANT TO JOIN RCC!

Name: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms (please select) _____

Address _____

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- ☐ I would like details of how I can help with Campaign activities
- ☐ I am a member of Cycling UK

Signed _____

Date _____

How did you hear about the Campaign? _____

- ☐ Individual membership (annual) £3
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I enclose a cheque for £..... covering my membership and a donation* of £.....

*An additional donation to help fund our activities would be very much appreciated

Please make cheques payable to **Reading Cycle Campaign** and send together with the completed form to:
RCC Membership Secretary, Reading Cycle Campaign, 27 Rochester Avenue, Woodley, Reading RG5 4NA

Alternatively you could join online via www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/join-us/

Data Protection Act: Reading Cycle Campaign keeps membership records online. Please be reassured this information is not disclosed to third parties.

Our Mission

- To campaign for better facilities for cyclists in Reading, in particular a network of safe cycleways linking residential, industrial and commercial areas, and giving access to the town centre.
- To work with Sustrans, Cycling UK (both locally and nationally) and others interested in promoting cycling and the well-being of cyclists.
- To identify the needs of cyclists in Reading, for example the location of safe and secure parking, and to campaign for their provision.
- To work with and advise local authorities and, where necessary, criticise and highlight their shortcomings.



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Once again my sincere thanks for your kind assistance and courtesy in dealing with this claim and bringing it to a successful conclusion.

Jedn Cronin, Kent

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Or contact: Sel Dixon, Secretary Reading CTC by emailing secretary@readingctc.co.uk
or by phone or text on 07867 442046

Chairman's Letter

shared-use nonsense we have at the moment. I really hope we're going to get this, but I have my doubts.

But then in Reading we won't be too badly affected. We have the money to offset most of the ill effects. So what if a few thousand people die prematurely every year? So what if parts of Reading flood a bit. We'll suffer

none of the catastrophes of arid countries where a population has to completely abandon its land, or low lying regions disappear beneath the waves. No polar bears will go extinct, perhaps only our nightingales.

So long as we can drive into town to fill our cars with Black Friday bargains, and we can sit alone in our electric cars every day.

The latest target is "doubling the number of people cycling into Reading Town Centre from 4% to 8% by 2030, and to 10% by 2036". We have 12 years and this is the best we can imagine?

Some emergency!

Adrian Lawson
RCC Chairman

Reading Bike Kitchen

Reading Bike Kitchen (RBK) is an entirely volunteer-run, not-for-profit organisation founded to encourage cycling by making low cost bicycle maintenance available to all. You can find out more via our website: www.readingbicyclekitchen.org.

I'm hoping everyone has heard about, visited or even volunteered with this fantastic community facility which not only supports making cycling more open to all, but also has huge environmental benefit through recycling and re-using!

Did you know we've now been operating in the new premises at the Queen's Arms for most of the year and undertaking lots of mobile activities as well? Read on to learn more about our fantastic work and how you can get involved!

The objective of Reading Bicycle Kitchen is to help people in the Reading area to keep their bikes safe and working well, so that they can enjoy all the benefits of cycling. We are a 'not-for-profit' organisation staffed entirely by volunteers, who love what they do!

We are a 'we help you fix it' bicycle workshop. You supply the problematic bike and we help you with the tools, tips and support you need to mend it. Maybe you have a puncture, need to adjust your brakes or gears, replace worn out parts, or upgrade

with some shiny new bits? Let us help you.

We are very cost conscious, so we reuse, repair, and recycle whenever we can, and only charge £5/hr for full workshop and facilities. We have more tools than in your Dad's shed!

Through running weekly pop-ups at the Queen's Arms, and attending a range of local fairs and events along with regular sessions at University of Reading (during term time), RBK has helped keep over 500 bikes on the road, from basic safety checks and tweaks to carrying out major part replacement surgery!

We are very fortunate to get a lot of bikes and related items given to us, and as a duty to the kind donors we ensure that we make the most of them. The majority of bikes are refurbished by our keen volunteers and then resold, at very reasonable prices, to local people.

In the past year we have helped recycle somewhere in excess of 280 bikes in this way.

Nothing goes to waste; if a bike is beyond economic repair we strip it of all the useful parts, which can then be used as spares to fix customers' bikes.

Sometimes donations are too nice, or collectible, to fit with our general work. These are cleaned up and offered to a wider audience through eBay.



In 18 months we have sold over 200 items this way, ranging from a brake lever to a full carbon mountain bike, and it has made a significant contribution to funding the project.

We also benefitted from some additional Cycling UK Big Bike Revival grant funding this year, which enabled all the additional community events to be run and funded the costs of the Queen's Arms during this period.

How can I help?

Come along and volunteer. There are lots of ways you can get involved aside from being a mechanic: customer support, marketing and finances all need to be run besides the fun stuff!

If you'd like to learn more, we are really welcoming to newcomers and you can get lots of useful tips by working alongside others with every tool at your disposal!

You could also donate a bike or any good second hand parts we might find useful.

And remember to spread the word to friends and family about the Reading Bike Kitchen, so more people get to know about us.

And above all, let's keep Reading cycling!

Karen Robertson
Events Co-ordinator



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You can now find RCC on Facebook:
<http://www.facebook.com/ReadingCycleCampaign>
and Twitter: <http://twitter.com/ReadingCycle>

Next newsletter copy deadline: 1 February 2020

The newsletter will now be delivered electronically to members. If you'd prefer to receive a paper copy, please email newsletter@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Council Contacts

Please let the relevant campaign officer know of anything you've reported.

Reading Borough Council

Highway queries: 0118 937 3797; parking: 0118 937 3767;
potholes: 0800 626540

Wokingham Borough Council

0118 974 6302 or www.wokingham.gov.uk

West Berkshire Council

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Windsor and Maidenhead

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Oxfordshire County Council

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Monthly Meetings

7.30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month:

Wed 15 Jan 2020 - cttee mtg

Wed 19 Feb 2020 - open mtg

Wed 18 Mar 2020 - cttee mtg

Held in Room 1 of RISC, up the stairs beyond the bar. See RCC Facebook Page or website for updates. We hope to see you there.

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