

Camden Cycling Campaign Business Meeting 10.2.03

Present: Stefano Casalotti (chair), James Brander, Paul Gasson, Paul Gannon, Jane Boardman, David Arditti, Jean Dollimore (minutes), Andrew Cornwell. Absent: Daniel Glaser.

1. Matters arising from the previous meeting: speakers

James Brander has arranged the following talks:

Roger Madelin (of Argent St. George, the developer for Kings Cross Central) April 14th: 'Kings Cross with an emphasis on cycle access to the site'. James will send Jean details for the newsletter. RM will arrive soon after 7 with PowerPoint slides.

Rose Ades (the Head of the Transport for London Cycling Centre of Excellence) will come either June 9th or in July/Sept.

2. New Plans for Hampstead Heath

David presented the committee with a list of 8 options ranging from doing nothing, proposing new cycle routes, meeting John Thane and requesting a new report. He will send an electronic copy to committee members who will study the options for discussion at the March meeting.

Paul Gannon presented us with extracts from the consultants report: 'Assessment of Cycle Routes on Hampstead Heath', with a view to our realizing that it seems to have been pre-written and many of the comments are nonsense. Rick Andrew (LCC parks/canals organizer) may help.

3. Accounting Report

Andrew Cornwell presented the accounts for the year to 31 Dec 2002. CCC has ~ £1000 in reserve and ~ £800 which we have ring-fenced for Bike Week 2003 related capital expenditure (eg banners, but where to keep them?) (e.g. buy banners, but where to keep them?). On applying for new funds for Bike Week, last year's expenditure should be described. The meeting thanked Andrew for his work as treasurer. He handed over to James Brander who will also replace Andrew as signatory of the bank account. James will look into getting an interest account.

4. Report of LCC Borough group Meeting

Stefano reported as follows:

- LCC are distributing the magazine through bike shops – should give them up-to-date list.
- They have improved their website.
- Parts of their activities (e.g. educational) will take place as a charitable trust to avoid tax. Groups will need to have a more formal structure. The CCC constitution is on its web site.
- Membership data will be accessible to local groups (being piloted currently in Hackney) – the aim is to assist groups in mobilizing volunteers etc.
- Magazine: no more stuffing at LCC after late March magazine mail out. From May, the newsletter must reach the LCC office by the Monday before mailing week. CCC will monitor the effects.
- Training day possibly 26th April.
- He met Tom Bogdanowicz LCC's new campaigns manager, who is interested in bike parking.

5. Bike Week Events

Paul Gasson reported: Bike Fest will be run jointly with Camden Green Fair on Sunday 15th June, in Drummond Street and St. James Garden, from 12 – 5pm, followed by 2 hours entertainment. Stefano will be the contact person. CCC will offer the same as before (expos of all things bike e.g. recumbents, trikes, rickshaws; obstacle course for kids, bike check-ups). Will investigate getting a professional to do Dr. Bike.

Cyclist breakfast Wed 18th in the usual location.

James offered to organise the following:

- Feeder ride for Bike Fest, to bring people in from afar (e.g. Crouch End, Islington)
- Dr. Bike, Sat 21st, 12-5pm. E.g. at West Hampstead to get bikes ready for the ride.

- Bike Week Ride Sun 22nd.

6. Bloomsbury Improvements

Paul Gannon reported that Camden have asked for input concerning improvements to the environment in Bloomsbury as part of their Clear Zone. Members should email points to Paul who will send a response. He already knows about Gordon Square and the crossing north of the British Museum. Also shutting off roads to through traffic around Gordon Square.

7. Key Council issues

Paul Gannon reported that due to difficulties of arranging a time, there has not been a technical meeting with the council officers since mid December. We have to acknowledge that officer morale is a problem for cycling schemes.

Paul Gannon reported: Doug Amer has said that CCC is losing political support and we need to get John Thane on our side. Councillors that support cyclists are being isolated. With respect to SSL east of Gordon Square: if we can't achieve a route of good standard, we should consider another route, e.g. along Guildford Street.

Camley St/Goods Way new cycle route survey

Paul Gannon reminded committee members that they should reply to the cycle route survey, which he mailed to the CCC mailing list on 28th Jan.

Members Meeting

Present: all of the above plus Kate Adams, George Coulouris, Richard Fletcher, Robert Greenall, Kevin Jones, E. Kaczynska-Nay, Peter McKay, Hilda Matthews, A. Mc Kinnock, Steve Outerson, Susan Rudeleff, Ralph Smyth, Beatrice Wober, A Wolfgarten

Eton Avenue Market Cycle Route

Paul Gannon: there is a well established cycle track across the pavement at the western end of Eton Avenue, giving access to Finchley Road/Fitzjohns Avenue. In planning for the new market area at this site, the council first ignored the cycle route and then stipulated that cyclists should dismount when the market is open. Councillor John Thane says that a 'cyclists dismount' sign is acceptable, but the officers will try to avoid that solution. This is an established cycle route and there was unanimous agreement from all present that the market should not displace it.

Consultations

Paul Gannon briefly mentioned the following outstanding consultations: Grays Inn Road (on mailing list, feedback by 15th Feb) , Albany Street (on mailing list, feedback by 20th Feb, concerning bus lanes and a Puffin crossing) and Castlehaven Road (concerning speed tables).

Matters Arising from Business Meeting

Camden Council

A general discussion about CCC's current difficulties in campaigning with Camden Council. Points made include the following: now that we have lost Gerry Harrison, we should cultivate new contacts, possibly with local councilors; Camden has many cycling responsibilities in London (e.g. LCN+) but has lowered its standards; unfortunately some councilors encourage local opposition to new things such as the Camden-Brixton tram, not just cycling facilities.

The meeting concluded that we should try to arrange a meeting with Councillor John Thane to discuss general issues of design as well as the specific problem of Hampstead Heath.

Bike Week

Stefano announced the details as given above for Bike Week which is from 14th-22nd June.

Talks

James Brander announced the talks by Roger Madelin and Rose Ades, which are detailed above. He suggested an evening ride on Thursday of Bike Week and reminded members of the upcoming ride on Sunday 23rd February: 'Parks and Open Spaces', meet at 11am outside the Old Town Hall on Haverstock Hill.

Talk by Ralph Smyth

Ralph Smyth is a barrister and chair of the new LCC Legal Reform Committee, as well as the coordinator of the City Group. He gave a talk entitled: 'Two-wheeled terrorists or persecuted minority? Why and how the law has ignored cycling and what should be done about it.'

Ralph started by telling us that earlier that day, he had been in court defending a cyclist who had jumped a red light and the judge nodded when a policeman stated that 'most cyclists jump red lights'. In general cyclists get bad publicity, which reached a peak last summer due to a rumour that the European Court would make motorists in Britain responsible for damages in all collisions involving cyclists. This culminated in Jeremy Clarkson using the label: 'Lycra Nazis'

Ralph recommended going back to basics: recognizing what cyclists do that annoys other people. (jumping lights, wrong way up one-way streets, cycling on the pavement). Although cycle crime is more visible than that of motorists, the latter is much more dangerous. Cyclists are disadvantaged by the facts that roads are designed for cars and that cycling is a minority pursuit.

Cycling and Human rights: the European Convention doesn't specify a right to travel. But there is a right not to be discriminated against with respect to another right. E.g., cycle lanes are for safety, but parking removes that safety. Bus lanes are enforced. The width of cycle lanes should be compared with those in other European countries.

Ralph advocated considering disability discrimination as a way forward: many cycle lanes are too narrow for use by disabled cyclists on tricycles and quad-bikes.

Ralph defined the concept of 'motorism' in which motorised transport is viewed as inherently superior to human-powered transport. Motorism is a tool for looking for prejudices in society, e.g. it is generally faster and cheaper to walk or cycle but motorists are portrayed as being richer. Many planners forget about walking and cycling (e.g. bus improvements are promised as a result of the congestion charge, but nothing is mentioned for human-powered transport).

Legal issues. The European Court actually said that the insurance of motorists in the UK should cover them for travel in Scandinavia, Holland etc. in case of a collision involving a cyclist. In Germany, the larger vehicle in a collision is automatically to blame. In Holland it is not assumed the motorist is guilty in collisions with cyclists/pedestrians, but there is an automatic 50% personal injury compensation to the more vulnerable participant, regardless of responsibility. This can be increased if the other party is at fault. In this country, the court punishes people for breaches of the Highway Code, but not for the effects of a collision. The insurance company pays for the damage, but no blame is attached to the driver.

Ralph reached an optimistic conclusion based on a redefinition of the use of highways. Historically highways are for passing and re-passing, apart from places such as markets. The way ahead is to see residential roads as having mixed use, allowing people to associate as well as to pass through. In our campaigning, we should use the law and first principals to make a careful analysis of the problems of cycling.

Questions

The audience asked numerous questions from which the following points emerged:

- There is nothing about cycling in the government brochure on disability, but cycle lanes should have a min. width 1.2 m and no sharp angles. Avoid pens on pedestrian crossings.
- It will be safer when there are more cyclists on the road and there should be training in schools and for adults. It should not be mandatory.
- Judges in human rights cases are influenced by the size of a minority. More disabled cyclists should be encouraged. An all-abilities cycle group will be launched in March, therefore cycle lanes should be widened. (See City Cyclists web site).
- Challenge the lack of cycle paths in court, through an injured cyclist who can get legal aid. Cyclists have a right to life. A Dutch judge would not accept the statement: 'you don't have to cycle'.
- The council could be challenged legally as a third party in bad design (e.g. making cyclists in cycle lanes stop at side roads). Unfortunately the council is unwilling to remove guard railings for fear of litigation, although they may not put new ones in.

Soon after 9 pm the meeting adjourned to the Stag's Head pub for drinks
Next meeting: Monday 10th March. JD 12/02/03