

The "Camden Cyclist"

Apr/May '03 Newsletter of Camden Cycling Campaign

Camden
Cycling
Campaign

Web site at: www.greengas.u-net.com

Mailing list: CamdenCyclingCampaign-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Meetings in April and May

Monday 14th April and Monday 12th May at 7.30 pm. We meet in the Castlehaven Community Centre, opposite the Stags Head Pub, Hawley Street, NW1 on the second Monday of each month. You can bring your bike inside.

Talk by Roger Madelin

Roger Madelin will give a talk on April 14th at 7.30:

Sustainable transport: keystone of the King's Cross Central Development

Roger Madelin is CEO of Argent St George, who are putting forward proposals for developing the King's Cross Railway Lands. This will be a twenty year project on a very difficult site, where planning is not helped by uncertainty about King's Cross station, Thameslink 2000 and the Cross River partnership tram scheme.

Argent St George have published several consultation documents about their ideas, and Roger has been very active in speaking about his vision for the site to as many local groups as he can. As he is a keen cyclist, we can at least hope for some good parking stands!

Bike Week and Bike Fest

For your diaries: Bike Week will be 14th-22nd June, with Camden Green Fair and Bike Fest on 15th June in St. James Garden, west of Euston Station. Cyclists breakfast will be between 8 and 10 am on Wed 18th June. See the next newsletter for more details, including Dr. Bike and a ride on 22nd June.

Volunteers needed for bike week

CCC needs volunteers for a variety of tasks related to Bike Fest, including leafleting, stewarding, setting up, taking down and manning stalls. Volunteers are also needed for Cyclists Breakfast. Contact Jane on 7794 9708.

Rising cycle thefts in Camden

A lengthy discussion took place on the CCC mailing list, following a report of the following statistics on cycle theft in Camden reported to the police:

1st April 1999 to 31st March 2000: 621

1st April 2000 to 31st March 2001: 983

1st April 2001 to 31st March 2002: 1029

Figures for 1st 9 months 2002/3 (1/4/02 - 31/12/02): 1263

Properly locked cycles are reported to have been stolen in broad daylight. The likelihood of theft discourages cyclists from using their cycles in some situations. Some attempt to avoid the problem by using folders (which they take indoors) and by using old and poor condition bikes.

The general feeling was that cycles are usually stolen by hardened criminals for immediate sale. Five years ago, the Kentish Town police piloted a scheme using decoy bikes with hidden trackers to catch thieves.

At CCC's March meeting, Mayer Hillman described meeting the local police who are willing to help, if we can identify hot spots. They are not keen to use tracker technology or decoys.

Lionel Shapiro recommended using the police website at <http://www.police.uk> for reporting minor crime. The scale of the problem will become apparent if we use it.

CCC is considering a number of initiatives to tackle cycle security. If you want to be involved contact Paul Gasson (see contacts).

First ride of 2003

On a fine Sunday in February, ten of us, including four year old Calum enjoyed the ride lead by James Brander through North London's parks and open spaces. The route included Hampstead Heath, Sunnyhill Park, Brookside Walk, Oakhill Park and Alexander Park.



Congestion charge

Cllr. Julian Fulbrook reports:

Living deep in the heart of the congestion zone, and whizzing around practically daily on my bike, two conclusions can be drawn in Week Two: road vehicle traffic is still down, and bicycle use is on the up. The 'Half Term' factor that allegedly would have such an impact on Week

One can really be discounted in South Camden. Our half a dozen primary schools serving the area are all within yards of home, so commuting by car to school is rare. If anything the traffic here in the past paradoxically went up in Half Term, as families from the leafy suburbs drove in for the obligatory museum trips.

But it was noticeable that vehicular traffic was well down in Half Term week, and it has continued to be down this week.

On the other hand, bike use has definitely been up, and by the pristine kit and teetering manoeuvres of some cyclists, these look to be 'converts'. My guess this week, heading north against the flow in the morning, and south against the flow in the evening, is that you can tell the hardened 'vets' not just by the battered bikes and the mud-streaked clothing, but by the satisfied grins as they wheel along some much emptier roads. Most cyclists in or around the Congestion zone seem to have been quite cheery these last two weeks.

A couple of footnotes. My local hardware store on Theobald's Road reports that this major thoroughfare has been much emptier for both weeks, but that his trade customers are very happy with the Congestion Charge as they can get about their work. Secondly, as someone with a resident's parking permit for a vehicle, for use in emergencies and at weekends, I needed to move it this week because of Thames Water repairs in the street and the bay being taken out of commission. Having read the endless diatribes in the press I was expecting chaos in Coventry; in fact I had no difficulty whatsoever in paying the Congestion Charge by telephone. Practical experience on the ground suggests therefore that the Congestion Charge is great - and that most of the mythology is bunk.

Report on Ralph Smyth's Talk

Ralph Smyth gave us 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 Smyth is a barrister and chair of the new LCC Legal Reform Committee, as well as the coordinator of the City Group. His very interesting talk included the following points.

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.

Ralph recommended going back to basics: recognising that cyclists annoy other people e.g. by jumping lights and cycling on the pavement). Although cycle crime is more visible, motorists' crime 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 e.g. on tricycles.

Ralph defined the concept of 'motorism' in which motorised transport is viewed as inherently superior to human-powered transport. Motorism is a tool for recognising prejudices in society, e.g. it is often faster and cheaper to walk or cycle

but motorists are portrayed as being richer. Many planners forget about walking and cycling.

Legal issues. The European Court actually said that in the UK, car insurance should cover motorists 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 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.

Weird cycle lanes website

If you are interested in seeing photos of the shortest, scariest or weirdest cycle lanes in Brighton, then look at the following web address:

<http://www.weirdcyclelanes.co.uk/>

Reporting street defects and faulty traffic signals

You can report street defects and faulty traffic signals via the Transport for London web site at

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/streets/> or phone 0845 305 1234

June/July Newsletter

This is the last issue of *London Cyclist* magazine to be mailed from the LCC office. All future issues will be distributed by a mailing house.

If you do not get Camden Cyclist with your next magazine, then contact LCC on 7928-7220 or Jean Dollimore (see contacts).

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