

Chair's Report

February 2023

1. Preamble

This is the first *Chair's Report* to the first AGM of Cycle Winchester (CW) under its new constitution.

It follows a *Status Report* published in September 2020 when Cycle Winchester was seeking additional funding from our original sponsors and an *Operating Report* published in January 2022 to coincide with the launch of a membership scheme.

There were fears that we would get bogged down in the machinations of running an organisation, distracted from the main task of campaigning for positive changes for cycling and cyclists in the city. For a few months 'organisational matters' loomed large on the agenda but that is now behind us and I don't think anyone regrets the decision to formalise arrangements.

Our hopes were that alongside the ability to have a bank account and manage our own finances we would benefit from:

- the opportunity to build a committed *membership* thereby ensuring a revenue stream to support on-going activities;
- *clarity* about who we are, particularly when dealing with other organisations.

We are delighted to have 45 members. We hope that number will continue to grow. Our first AGM is a useful opportunity to meet members and receive feedback.

The benefit of organisational clarity has already been evident through the ability for us to submit bids for funding of projects and to apply for grants (2.1.4. & 3.4.).

2. Activities

In the past year our efforts have been divided between engaging with specific schemes & consultations and other general activities that are intended to keep cycling high on the agenda and help progress our overall aim – more people cycling, more often.

2.1. General Activities

2.1.1. Social media & website

Cycle Winchester has continued to develop its on-line presence with a growing following on Facebook (633 followers, +17%), Twitter (406 followers, +47%) and Instagram (468 followers, +28%). Our website averages 435 visits per month with a notable spike around the Mass Ride.

2.1.2. Winchester Mass Ride

Our 6th Mass Ride was held in October this year. It attracted about 250 riders and gained unexpected publicity when a video of the ride was viewed over 16,000 times. There was also coverage on BBC South. We had the repeat of the involvement of two PCSOs this time with the additional benefit of a pre-planning meeting. Most comments seemed to confirm that this was the most orderly ride yet.

2.1.3. Data: Cyclist Count

January 2022 saw the first (winter) phase of our project to count cyclists in Winchester. We selected ten locations to count cycle movements, track routes through junctions and where possible count motor vehicles in parallel. We repeated the exercise in the summer and are currently carrying out the second winter count. Aside from the numbers there is additional value in simply observing

the behaviour of cyclists in an unsympathetic or unsafe environment.

The data will inform all aspects of our campaigning from analysing general trends to understanding the design requirements at a specific junction.

2.1.4. Bicycle Thefts and Bike Parking

CW is concerned about the level of local bike thefts, particularly at the Sports and Leisure Centre and Winchester Railway Station. We are working to make sure the matter is properly addressed. To date we have engaged with various stakeholders including a site meeting with South Western Railways (SWR), published three web articles highlighting the problem, conducted an on-line survey, uncovered discrepancies in SWR bike theft data, made recommendations for signage and submitted a bid for improved bike parking at the railway station (2.1.5.).

2.1.5. Bids/grants

Our newly constituted status means we are better positioned to submit project bids. Our only submission to date is to the South Western Railway Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF): a proposal to adapt and improve the current bike parking facilities at Winchester railway station. The bid was unsuccessful: CW has received feedback.

2.1.6. Planning Tracker

We are often frustrated at the missed opportunities to take account of cycling (and promote active travel in general) in new developments. The words are often there in planning guidelines but they are not directive enough and rarely enforced. We hope that our input to the Winchester Local Plan consultation (2.2.8.) and LTP4 (2.2.9.) will be part of the long-term solution.

In the meantime, a CW supporter has developed a planning tracker to help keep abreast of what's coming through the system. As a result, we were in a position to intervene in two cases:

- we made a submission in opposition to an application by McDonald's for a drive-through restaurant at Tesco in Winnall. That won cyclists access to the site directly rather than following vehicles through the car park. We later opposed a revised application and made a deputation to the Planning Committee. That lost the bigger argument around the detrimental effect of increased traffic crossing the NCN23 at the Tesco roundabout and any lack of mitigation;
- we also responded to the planning application at the Goods Shed, Barfield Close, arranging a site meeting and then making a deputation in opposition because promises to use this opportunity to improve the adjacent cycleway were ignored. The scheme itself was also seriously flawed in its approach to active travel. We were pleased to see it rejected.

2.1.7. 20's Plenty

CW is fully behind the aims of the '20's Plenty' campaign with a supportive response to the consultation and making references to the importance of speed reduction at all relevant opportunities. CW made a deputation at the recent Select Committee.

2.2. Schemes and Consultations

It has been a particularly busy year with a continuing stream of opportunities and requests for input on a wide variety of topics. There is often little notice and a short turnaround time. There is often extensive follow-up with the relevant parties and where public input is sought we always aim to keep supporters informed and make it as easy as possible for them to frame an individual response.

We believe our input to schemes and consultations is valued and that CW is building good working relationships with many of the relevant officers and councillors at local and county level. CW is increasingly invited to consult early in a process often with privileged access to information and individuals.

Whilst these are all moves in the right direction, we are not yet seeing significant benefits. Our main involvements are noted below.

2.2.1. M3/Junction 9

CW has been involved in regular stakeholder meetings with National Highways consultants. Sustained pressure has managed to see a cycle-link from Kings Worthy to Winnall re-instated in the design. The feeling is that money shouldn't be spent on this major road scheme, but if it goes ahead at least the new cycle way and associated improvements to the NCN23 here would be significant improvements for cyclists.

2.2.2. Winchester Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

Following CW's comprehensive critique of the LCWIP during an earlier public consultation there has been a tacit acceptance of its deficiencies. We are working to ensure that acceptance of the problem leads to substantive change. Sustrans have been engaged as external consultants to work on updating the LCWIP.

2.2.3. Winchester (District) Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

CW has long been making the case for addressing the links between Winchester city and the surrounding settlements and villages, linking in turn with through routes to other districts. We are glad this work is now

underway but have some reservations about the process to date.

2.2.4. Active Travel Fund (ATF) – tranches 2&3

We are continually monitoring progress and providing input to proposals around funding that has come to Winchester as part of the ATF scheme. Currently that means contraflows on Parchment Street and the upper section of the High Street; a pedestrian crossing on Romsey Road at St James' Terrace; new cycle parking; and the removal of 'barriers to cycling'.

2.2.5. Active Travel Fund (ATF) – tranche 4: Kings Worthy Cycleway

CW had a site meeting with officers to discuss ideas prior to open-house sessions for the general public which CW also attended. A bid is being prepared for submission to Active Travel England. CW has had opportunity more recently to comment on confidential early drafts of the proposals.

2.2.6. Bushfield Camp

At an early stage CW were invited to meet the developers where we shared our ideas of how to maximise the opportunities for cycling in and around the site. Since then we have maintained communication with developers, attended public meetings and co-hosted a recent WinACC meeting on Bushfield camp.

2.2.7. Mini-Holland feasibility study

Our involvement began with a city walkabout alongside consultants, officers and councillors. We submitted a group response to the Common Place consultation and shared it on our website.

Since then we have participated in three workshops with the bid consultants alongside the Winchester Walking Strategy Group.

One further workshop is planned before the submission deadline at the end of February.

2.2.8. Winchester Local Plan

CW submitted a group response to the (Regulation 18) Draft Local Plan consultation. Although not all about transport the document was 572 pages long so this was no quick task! We posted an article on our website with guidance and support materials for making an individual response.

2.2.9. Local Transport Plan (LTP4)

CW submitted a group response to the LTP4 consultation. This document was only 140 pages long! As with the Local Plan consultation above we posted an article on our website with guidance and support materials for making an individual response.

2.2.10. Winchester School of Art

CW has been pursuing various avenues and contacts to try and get action around cycle access across the old police station site.

2.2.11. Kings Barton

Whilst reporting regular barriers and blockages to cycling, CW continues to seek clarity about the long-term plan for cycling at Kings Barton. We didn't sign the petition by the Kings Barton Residents' Association: from a cycling perspective it was trading a specific, funded cycleway for a non-specific, unfunded alternative.

2.2.12. Ecogen Planning Application

CW made a deputation in opposition to the revised Ecogen Planning Application which was turned down but sadly only on noise grounds.

2.2.13. Knights Quarter

The developer agreed to our request to remove a bollard and alter remaining bollard

spacing to comply with latest regulations (LTN1/20) for the cycle entrance on West End Terrace.

2.3. In the background

2.3.1. People Who Cycle

The 'People Who Cycle' series is awaiting suggestions – yourself or someone you know? – for the next person in the series. A suitable subject is someone who uses a bike to get around the city and who doesn't match too closely to a previous profile: it's just about variety.

The comment below in an email a few months ago shows the value of the series.

On a side note: I've been enjoying reading your series 'people who cycle in Winchester' – good to add a bit of human interest to what myself and my team are trying to achieve. Regards, XX, Scheme Development Transport Manager, Strategic Transport HCC

2.3.2. Winchester Cycling Charter

Effort to promote the Winchester Cycling Charter is similarly on a pause, although sign-ups continue to trickle in and currently stand at 84 organisations and 837 individuals. We are always open to a good opportunity to promote it and push the message. Working with consultants recently on the mini-Holland bid (2.2.7.) it was encouraging that they talked of using the Charter as part of their evidence for strong local support.

3 Looking forward

3.1. Officers

The current officers are due to continue in their roles until elections at the next AGM in February 2024.

3.2. Schemes/consultations

Key things to keep us busy in the coming months will be LCWIPs (city and district);

ATF tranche 2 & 3 projects; Kings Worthy cycleway and mini-Holland if either goes ahead; and pushing for action on other fronts eg Winchester School of Art and Kings Barton.

3.3. Membership

Our aim is for continued growth in the numbers of those who support our work. We think that being a member of Cycle Winchester is 'a good deal' in the light of associated benefits around Cycling UK membership and discount offers from local retailers.

We hope it also seems 'a good thing' when members know what we are up to.

3.4. Grants

Following our first venture into bidding for grant money (2.2.6.) we are currently considering making two further bids. We'd like to acquire equipment (trailer, signage, etc) that can be used to support bike bus initiatives and plan to submit a bid to the Winchester City Council Town Forum Small Grant Scheme. A group in Twyford/Colden Common have developed a successful school bike bus. They are keen to build a network around the city. We want to help spread the word and have practical resources to get people started.

We are also contemplating submitting a proposal to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) fund either for improvements along the old leisure centre – St Bede Primary School – St Peter's car park corridor or for a joint proposal with the Winchester Walking Strategy Group for improvements to Cheriton Road around Westgate School.

3.5. Website & Communication

Work is underway to develop an 'evergreen' tab on our website: information that doesn't

date and which local cyclists might come to our website expecting to find. It will be a mixture of new and existing content and will also consolidate advice we often give out on an ad-hoc basis in response to hello@enquiries.

Those in the group who manage our communications are also involved in every other aspect of the group's activities so our efforts will always lag behind our ambition. That said we do want to improve on all fronts: publishing regular web content, maintaining a consistent social media presence, sending timely emails to our mailing list and developing a closer relationship with our members.

One small step is an undertaking to produce a quarterly newsletter.

3.6. Rides

3.6.1. The Mass Ride

The intention is to fix the ride in the calendar, probably linked to Winchester Green Week. We have plans for a coffee van in Abbey Gardens next time around and are interested in other ways to attract more riders to stay for longer afterwards.

We'd also like to spread the idea of people following the Twyford/Colden Common model: an independently organised group that merges with the Mass Ride. Other constructive ideas are always welcome, particularly around more teen-aged riders.

3.6.2. Other rides

Cycle Winchester is assisting with a ride being planned to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Viaduct Way. Originally pencilled for late February (the actual anniversary) it is now being scoped for warmer weather! It is intended to start on

Water Lane with a managed crossing of Bridge Street which will perfectly illustrate how poor the NCN23 is at that point. Watch out for announcements.

We are looking for other ride opportunities with a similar specific focus or protest element. And we wait expectantly for a new section of cycleway that deserves a celebratory ride!

3.7. Get involved

We always have room for anyone with energy and enthusiasm to get involved. Contribute around your interest/expertise or just lend a hand with what is going on. Two specific roles that would be helpful are:

- overseeing communications;
- keeping track of all the different consultations/schemes we are involved in (key dates, contacts, next steps etc).

4. Finances

Cycle Winchester's treasurer, Mike Caldwell, will present a financial report for the year at the AGM on February 6th 2023.

5. Summary

We believe that the time we spend on cycling matters makes a difference: small wins; disasters averted; helping grow a community of cyclists with a clear voice that gets harder to ignore. And then with certain bids such as the mini-Holland feasibility study there is an excitement that if successful this could be the 'game-changer' for Winchester.

Yet a lot of the time it's hard not to feel deflated. So many fine words and policies but always too vague. So many good intentions but a lack of ambition and radical thinking.

The benefit of working together in a group like Cycle Winchester is that when someone

is demoralised someone else is fired up. Similarly, when some are feeling positive about the benefits of our relationship-building, our careful contributions to every imagined scheme and our many other activities, others want to up the ante.

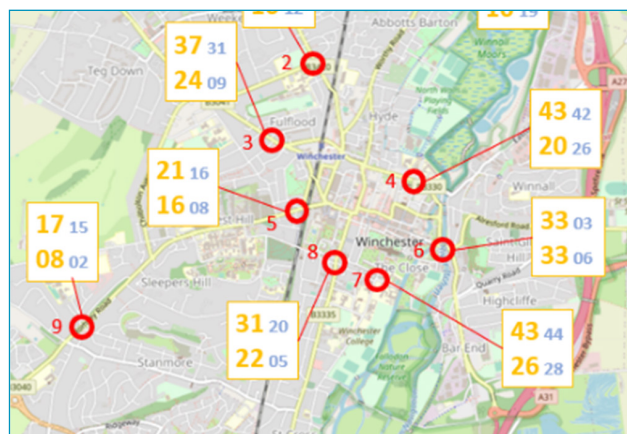
The year ahead will again mean navigating a line between pragmatism and protest!

6. Appendix

6.1. Core group meetings

Meetings usually take place on the first Monday of the month from 7.30 at the Hyde Tavern. All welcome. Scheduled dates: 6/03/23; 3/04/23; 2/05/23 (Tuesday); 5/06/23; 3/07/23; 4/09/08.

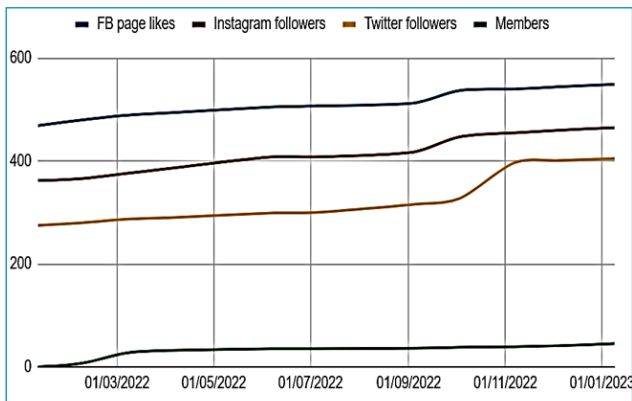
6.2. Images



Winter and summer data: cyclist count



Response to inconvenient and unsafe bike park at WSLC



CW membership and social media followers



'People who ride bikes' #13 The Parrott Family



Mass Ride 6, 01/10/22

Customer and Communities Improvement Fund Application Form	
PROJECT DETAILS	
Name or title of the project	Re-purposing Secure Bike parking at Winchester Station to help reduce high levels of bike theft and encourage active travel.
Will your project require the use of any SWR property (i.e. a station) or other railway land?	Yes
Which category best describes your project?	Station Improvement If "other" please specify: Click or tap here to enter text.
Which station on the SWR network is closest to your project?	Winchester
Write a brief description of your project setting out its objectives and scope of works proposed. This description should not be longer than 250 words	The aim is to help reduce the high level of bike thefts at Winchester Station, removing one of the barriers to active travel to the station. Bike thefts are higher here than at comparable stations, partly because the current bike parking options at the station are not providing an effective deterrent to thieves. The existing "secure bike parking" compound has capacity for

Cycle Winchester CCIF bid to South Western Railway