

Cycle Winchester Chair's Report, February 2024

1. Preamble

Cycle Winchester has continued to grow over the last year both in membership and in our social media presence, as seen below:

Members	80	+78%
Facebook followers	729	+15%
Twitter/X followers	469	+16%
Instagram followers	566	+21%
Website visits/month	529	+22%

We are especially pleased to see more members, people willing to support us formally and financially. We believe membership is a good deal; there are now five cycle-related businesses (+66%) offering discounts, for which we are also grateful.

The one place where we've not really expanded is in the core group of members who contribute to our activities on and off through the year. It is the main limit on our ambitions and something we'd like to remedy. We are always open to suggestions if there are ways to make it easier for you to join in. Some ideas that might appeal are highlighted in this report as 'How Could I Help' boxes. But if nothing fits or you don't have the capacity, we remain grateful for your on-going support.

2. Activities

As usual our efforts can be divided into two main themes. The first is involvement with schemes & consultations as they become public and, where possible, prior to that. The second is around ideas that we ourselves initiate in the hope they will advance our aim which is to see the vision set out in the Winchester Cycling Charter become reality. In the background this year, we have also been reviewing our activities, in particular what initiatives we should be prioritising and how we connect and communicate with the world.

2.1. Schemes and Consultations

Many hours have been spent shaping detailed contributions to, and critiques of, schemes that are in the pipeline. We regularly have early access to designs and believe that our contributions are both valuable and valued. However, the process is unsatisfactory in that we are often asked for input at very short notice and in-between times know very little about progress. There is despondency that so few of these schemes come to fruition and when they do they are significantly reduced in ambition. On the other hand, we believe that any initiative on the ground will be better for our intervention.

2.1.1. M3/Junction 9

At the public hearing on 17th May last year, the National Highways (NH) representative proposed that they (NH) should agree a separate *Statement of Common Ground* (SOCG) with CW. We have continued to be involved in regular site meetings and communications with consultants from National Highways. The SOCG has now been submitted highlighting areas where disagreement still exists. These are around the legal basis of the NCN23, the design specification for the cycleways, the proposed cycling diversions during the construction phase and how the M3/J9 scheme links to future plans at the Cart and Horses junction.

2.1.2. Winchester (City) Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

We have been pushing for the city LCWIP to be substantially improved. It provides a vital underpinning to most government funding bids and at the moment is far from being a coherent masterplan. We have had reassurances of progress but seen no evidence. We are pleased to have been offered a hands-on meeting in mid-February when we hope to see improvements and help move things further in a positive direction.

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

One of the gaps in the LCWIP is its limited scope and the lack of connection between the city and the outside world. Work on a District LCWIP is now underway which ideally should address this. Unfortunately, the consultation process has been less than satisfactory. We have made our reservations with the resulting plans clear. On the plus side there has been a recognition that the city and district LCWIP should now form a single document, albeit developed in two parts. The mid-February meeting mentioned above is an opportunity to make sure those parts mesh together properly.

2.1.4. Active Travel Fund (ATF) - tranches 2&3

It's a dismal story here of funded active travel opportunities gone to waste. In previous years schemes for Upper High St and North Walls/Hyde St were both discontinued on what we think were less than convincing grounds. This year further funded schemes that we have been involved with have also been drastically scaled back. A contraflow on the top section of the High St was gradually shrunk in scope and then the remaining section between Tower Street and Staple Gardens dropped due to the excessive costs associated with long-term drainage problems. Proposed contraflow cycle lanes on St Peter St and Parchment St were reduced to just the latter street and in very recent news that has been 'de-scoped' too, again for reasons that we consider inadequate. A crossing on Romsey Road is still going ahead but the accommodation for cycling is far reduced from the more comprehensive plans we had been proposing. We can celebrate Advanced Stop Lines on Jewry St/City Road junction with advanced release lights to follow but part of the justification here was to allow cyclists to swap lanes on North Walls ready to turn into the – now not to be - Parchment St contraflow: a lack of joined-up thinking. Plans for a modal barrier in Hyde Church Lane are still in the pipeline. The story of ATF2/3 funds suggests a lack of true political will for changing local travel habits.

2.1.5. Active Travel Fund (ATF) - tranche 4: Kings Worthy Cycleway

CW has continued to have input into the designs and signage for Kings Worthy Cycleway and more recently into detail designs for the first phase of improvements, a short section between Dyson Drive and Cassandra Drive. The main changes involve east-west crossings of the main road but there are other modifications which will help cyclists. We have stressed that these changes will mean little unless they eventually form part of a complete high-quality route from Kings Worthy. Our main disappointment is the deferment from this phase, on cost grounds, of a continuous shared-use path across Cassandra Drive. We think it would have been an important 'stake in the ground' for cycle and pedestrian priority.

2.1.6. Cart & Horses junction

We were invited to give detailed comments on different proposals for a new junction at the Cart & Horses. Overall, we indicated a clear preference for a signalised solution.

2.1.7. Bushfield Camp

CW attended various public engagement events through the year and had other separate meetings and communications with the developers. CW submitted a response to the outline planning application, which objected on the basis of unsatisfactory cycle/pedestrian access. CW doesn't have a view on whether this is an appropriate development overall but if it goes ahead there are opportunities to transform cycling to the south and west of the city. That requires good quality access from all directions and liaison with adjacent landowners to make that happen – none of which is evident in the current proposal.

2.1.8. Mini-Holland feasibility study

The bid submitted by HCC was unsuccessful- unsurprisingly due to the drastic cut in central government's active travel budget. However we hope that work within the bid to identify an indicative secondary network of cycle routes can be utilised to improve the city LCWIP, our critique of which can be summed up as "focussed only on primary routes and on the easy wins along them, not overcoming the real barriers to cycling".

2.1.9. Central Winchester Regeneration

CW had a cycle tour of the city in the summer with the creative director of the development partner, Jigsaw. He was aware of the need to understand the wider picture of how people accessed and traversed the city by bike and the importance of permeability within the CWR site itself. CW subsequently attended a CWR Movement workshop.

2.1.10. Goods Shed/Barfield Close

CW objected to the original plans which completely ignored promises to improve the cycle route to the new Sports and Leisure centre in the vicinity of the site. The next 'revision' didn't address our objections but after meetings on site with the development team and planning officer the latest version is reasonably satisfactory.

2.1.11. Down Farm

CW objected to a proposal for stone waste processing on Down Farm with entrance on Christmas Hill. This is a difficult junction to navigate by bike and will be made more dangerous by this proposed development. The developer has just submitted a technical note which includes a response to our objections. The phrase "whilst e-bike usage is increasing they are not currently commonplace within society and their use should therefore be treated as an exception and not the norm" is indicative of their attitude. We have until 14th of February to respond.

2.1.12. Kings Barton

CW is supporting Kings Barton Forum in attempting to hold the various parties (HCC, Cala Homes) to their commitments to provide safe, direct active travel routes.

2.1.13. Winchester College dormitory application

We were alerted to the fact that WCC Planning committee turned down a request from Hampshire Highways for S106 funds for Active Travel improvements, essentially saying that the Winchester Movement Strategy (WMS) had no standing in assessing planning applications. We have been pursuing this matter with the Planning Committee and have requested to speak with WMS board members on this and related matters.

2.1.14. Knights Quarter

After agreeing 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 the developer Berkeley Homes failed to keep that promise, invoking planning rules. It is too long a tale to relate for such a small issue but neither the planning office nor the developer can justify the final, unsatisfactory outcome.

2.1.15. Sir John Moore Barracks

CW attended workshops with the scheme developers and local stakeholders in December.

2.1.16. Station Approach

We have real concerns at the moment that the new plans for Station Approach seem to ignore all previous feedback on making the scheme more accessible by bike or on foot.

2.1.17. South Wonston cycleway

CW has been pressing for updates on the, previously committed, utility route linking the sewage works with Kings Barton. The responses have been unsatisfactory as they indicate that the path has been degraded to leisure/utility and permissive. There are many parties/factors involved and CW is trying to forge a positive outcome.

How could I help?

❖ **Planning tracker**

Keep a regular watch on WCC planning applications and let the core team know when there is an opportunity/reason for a cycling-related intervention.

Maintain a simple tracker spreadsheet with actions, key dates.

❖ **Cycling champion for a scheme**

Take an interest in a particular scheme or schemes.

Work with us in making the case for cycling eg email, public engagement events etc.

❖ **Demonstrator project**

Select a suitable problem spot in the city to help develop a solution for positive change.

Use as a demonstrator project. Promote solution, seek funding, lobby councils etc.

2.2. General Activities

These are matters where the group has committed energy and time of its own volition, rather than as a response to external pressure.

2.2.1. Winchester Mass Ride

Our 7th Mass Ride was generally regarded as our most successful yet, not just because of record numbers but also for good media coverage, an expanded presence in Abbey Gardens, increased activities for children and of course some skaters alongside!

Mass Ride 8 is already in the calendar for Saturday September 28th again as part of Green Week. We are exploring changes to how we proceed with the merged ride around the centre of town which might incur some additional cost but we hope will improve the overall cohesion of the ride.

As numbers grow, we are also revisiting route details which have remained unchanged since our first ride in 2018. For instance, the Badger Farm route could start beside St Marks church in Olivers Battery. It has a larger gathering point, a larger catchment for the ride ... and space for one or two enterprising folk to maybe organise a pre-ride coffee, croissant and chat!

How could I help?

❖ **Volunteer marshal**

Individual offer to help on the day as a ride/support marshal or helping to set-up in Abbey Gardens.

or

A small group (3-4) of riders offer to 'manage' their local route.

❖ **Leafletting/promotion**

Offer to post leaflets in your area.

Promote the Mass Ride through friend/neighbourhood groups.

❖ **Add a route**

If you don't live close to an existing Mass Ride route you might like to devise an official link-up ride with one or two friends. We can share times/locations if you're happy for other riders to join you. You could even be on the 'official' tube-map!

2.2.2. Bike Bus

November last year saw the first trial of occasionally replacing our regular core team meeting with an open invite and single focus: in this case Bike Buses.

We had a good attendance and excellent presentations on the two local bike buses currently in operation: a primary school bike bus (Abbot's Barton to Saint Bede) and a secondary school bike bus (Colden Common/Twyford to Kings and Westgate). The talks illustrated the issues to consider when organising for different age groups. Both bike buses have developed over time and learnt a lot on the way. Those involved are keen to share their experiences and support any groups of parents who would like to get a similar venture off the ground in their area. Cycle Winchester was successful this year in securing a Winchester City Council grant to purchase ~£1000 of equipment for this purpose (trailer, tabards, signs, first aid kit, toolkits, camera etc). We hope that at least one new route will be trialled in the spring. Our ambition is to see this continue to grow eventually towards an integrated network with a website.

How could I help?

- ❖ **Volunteer support marshal**
eg ~8.00am, spring/summer, one day per week.
- ❖ **Form small informal parent group**
Plan prototype bike bus.
Ask CW for support, equipment, advice (routes, protocols, insurance etc).
Lobby school for changes eg bike parking facilities.
- ❖ **Software developer**
... to build that website.

2.2.3. Bicycle Thefts and Bike Parking

Bike parking provision is an on-going issue. We have highlighted poor bike parking provision in various planning applications; supported local schools with advice and information, advised a local retail consortium; responded to individual concerns, and from time to time liaised with Winchester City Council.

Bike theft is more of a hot topic and the statistics in and around Winchester make us extremely upset. We felt it necessary to publish a web article 'Bike Security and Theft Reporting in Winchester: a guide'. We have been very involved in making sure this is not ignored and have had ongoing communications with most of the relevant parties. We welcome the changes at Winchester Sports and Leisure Centre but still see a lack of action at the railway station. Last year our bid to South Western Railway's Customer and Communities Infrastructure Fund (CCIF) to rework the town side secure lock-up was unsuccessful. We are awaiting the result of a new bid this year which would involve a *Spokesafe* system to make the Bike Hub secure. If that is unsuccessful we are considering a more public form of protest at the station.

How could I help?

- ❖ **Join a protest**
keep an eye out for news of any action.
- ❖ **Share your story**
If you are a cycling station user or victim of cycle theft there and happy to share your experience if required end your contact details to hello@cyclewinchester.org.uk

2.2.4. Travel Data

We see an importance in collecting and finding data to support our campaign objectives.

For the last two years we have carried out a biannual count of cyclists (and in some cases cars) at ten key locations in the city during and after rush-hour. There was a very consistent relationship between summer/winter and rush-hour/non-rush-hour results over the two years so in future we will focus on capturing summer rush-hour data only. Currently that is a total of about 300 cycle movements over a one-hour period across the ten locations.

For the proposed contraflow on High St (2.1.4) we initiated a one-off data collection exercise - in this case to show the small proportion of cars turning right into Tower Street in order to argue for cycle priority on the proposed downhill lane.

CW also uses data obtained via Strava Metro, which is skewed towards leisure cycling but is an important supplement to our own data, giving a more comprehensive picture of routes and usage levels.

There is an annual Winchester Cycle Parking Survey carried out independently of CW.

We are considering using some of our funds to buy or form part of a bid for a mobile sensor which would provide a step-change in the breadth and quality of the data we could capture. Given time we would also like to fully research what other data is out there. We have the results from some HCC sensors but they are limited in scope. Hampshire spoke recently about upgrading their systems but we've heard nothing more since.

How could I help?

- ❖ **Travel research**
Research/collate data on traffic in and around Winchester.
- ❖ **On-site data recorder**
Help record passing cyclists at one or more locations.
- ❖ **Mobile camera bid**
Research suitable sensors. Put together a bid for purchase.
- ❖ **Data collection programme**
Help create a data capture programme and rationale.

2.2.5. Winchester Cycling Charter

Part of an ongoing review (2.3) was to reassess our aim or mission statement. We concluded that the Winchester Cycling Charter already exists and perfectly sets out the vision we want to become reality.

We have been impressed with York Cycle Campaign's high-quality publication *42 Ways to Improve York* and have been considering the value of a Winchester-ised version. It would sit nicely at the next level below the Charter – unpacking the vision and something of a How-To guide.

We see scope in engaging more city businesses in discussions around the charter, the economic benefits of giving space to active travel and the opportunities for the city to draw in touring cyclists arriving to start the South Downs Way or King Alfreds Way.

We also want to encourage existing signatories to use their influence.

How could I help?

- ❖ **Charter/business advocate**
Talk to local businesses. Promote the charter and encourage sign-up.
Promote the business case for active travel, including local cycle tourism.
Gather understanding about resistance to improving cycle infrastructure.
- ❖ **42 Ways to Improve Winchester**
Create content for a Winchester version of York Cycle Campaign's publication. These are a mixture of generic arguments and specific practical steps to support the vision set out in the Winchester Cycling Charter.
- ❖ **Design/produce high class publication**
Would need specialist skills.

2.2.6. Local routes

We get requests from time to time for advice about getting around the city on a bike by those who have recently arrived here – another sign, if needed, of how forbidding that can be. It would be nice to have some routing advice generally available rather than provided on an ad-hoc basis. To that end one of our group pump-primed the exercise by mapping the routes he takes from Badger Farm, as useful suggestions for other cyclists who might want to avoid the worst parts of our traffic system. We hope that others of you out there might follow suit for your local patch.

How could I help?

❖ **Local knowledge (of least-bad routes!)**

Send us the routes you use to get between your area of the city and local destinations.

2.3 Review

We decided soon after our last AGM to spend some time reviewing our aims and activities. It's a background process going on slowly behind everything else. Currently we are considering two main aspects of how we operate: *projects* and *communications*.

Some of the 'How could I help' items have arisen directly out of a projects wish list – things we would like to be doing as a group if we had the capacity.

Communications is a look at the world outside of CW, how it divides up and how we connect (or don't!) with each of those sectors asking when, what, why and to what effect do we communicate. An example is our plan to make a one-off approach to individual signatories of the Winchester Cycling Charter (2.2.5) – a cohort we have always kept at arm's length – respecting the fact that signing the charter didn't indicate support for us as a group. We'd hope that at least some of them would like to be kept more abreast of local cycling-related developments.

3. Looking ahead

Schemes and consultations will continue to arrive thick and fast. Fulflood Liveable Neighbourhood will shortly be underway and so too the latest iteration at Station Approach. We will be actively engaged with both.

We were pleased with the success of using a bright yellow painted bike -moved around town to various central locations - to help advertise this year's Mass Ride. We have an idea for a wider campaign of painted and messaged bikes spread over the city. If things move forward on that we'd be glad of input with the messaging, the locations and the scheme as a whole. We'd especially appreciate help from anyone with experience in running a focussed campaign like this.

Beyond that, the 'How Could I Help?' boxes give an indication of some of the directions we'd like to push with a few more hands on deck!

And please feel free to offer your own ideas/skills/expertise if not directly mentioned here.

4. Summary

Finally, I'd like to thank everyone on the core team and especially my fellow officers for all their enthusiasm, hard work and good humour through a very busy year.

No-one keen to see the interests of cyclists in our city taken seriously can be happy with how things stand at the moment. We can look back on a year of small gains (and some 'bad stuff' prevented) but we are going to continue to push for transformational change - working to see a great body of cyclists grow here who traverse the city in all directions and at all hours with barely a care in the world!

I hope you'll stay with us on that journey.

5. Appendix: upcoming meetings

DATE	MEETING	VENUE	START
8 th April	Core Team Meeting	Hyde Tavern	7.30
13 th May '24	Focus meeting (TBD)	TBD	7.30
3 rd June '24	Core Team meeting	Hyde Tavern	7.30
1 st July '24	Core Team meeting	Hyde Tavern	7.30
8 th Aug '24	Summer Ride + Focus meeting (TBD)	TBD	TBD
2 nd Sep '24	Core Team meeting	Hyde Tavern	7.30
7 th Oct '24	Core Team meeting	Hyde Tavern	7.30

All welcome to all meetings but please let us know via hello@cyclewinchester.org.uk