

Luton and Dunstable Cycling Forum
Meeting & AGM held 9th March 2016, Travel Choices Hub, Dunstable

Attendance

Robin Cowan (Chair), Adam Bell, John Pratt, Ben Garner, Peter Woodruff, Steve Lakin, Roger Pepworth, Siobhan McSwiggan, Rod Black, Richard Williams, Barry Gregson, Terry Colver, Alan Timberlake

1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Doug Hook, Cllr Mark Rivers, Mark McCall and Paul Hunter

2) Review of last year

After everyone introduced themselves, Robin gave a review of the Forum's year, confirming that more than 50 led rides had now been run in total since September 2013, as well as starting the Charity Bike Ride, acting as cycle marshals for the Love Luton Half marathon and assisting with their charity ride to France.

3) Election of officers

there being no other nominations, after being proposed and seconded, Robin carried on as Chair, Adam as Secretary and Communications officer, and John as Treasurer.

4) Minutes of last meeting and points arising

The minutes of the last meeting were discussed and agreed. Adam confirmed in respect of the Luton taxi licence charges, the licencing authority had confirmed they can only cover their costs and not provide income for the council, which is why charges hadn't increased unlike other council fees. At Halfords in the Luton Retail Park near Parkway Station, Robin pointed out that the newly installed cycle parking and track pump had been removed. In addition, it was agreed that on the way to Hitchin, there hadn't been a previous railway line from Luton.

5) Cycle route updates

The diversion signs put up by Steve for NCN6 at Pastures Way were discussed and it was suggested others could be placed once you got to the new road. For any possible cycling event on the Woodside Link, Steve confirmed it would be at least 6 months before the road was finished and it would be a case of seeing what could be done nearer to then. The problems caused by the contractors in building the new bus stop at Chaul End was raised, and possible health & safety concerns due to the mud and small gap left. Steve mentioned it might be the case that the stretch from Jeans Way to Station Road Dunstable could have some tarmac down by April. Robin expressed concerns about the number of signs in the path at New Bedford Road and the fact that some cyclists might carry on into the road. Steve confirmed he may look at staggered bollards to slow cyclists. Peter mentioned the large puddle covering the whole path between Jeansway and Skimpot Road, and Steve requested a photo so that he could see if that section could be built up higher. Ben also mentioned the redundant A-frame barrier leading on the bus top at White Lion Retail Park, on the other side from the path.

Robin discussed the recent BBC report showing cyclists use of Strava, and the fact that their heat maps show interesting rises in cycle use in certain points, although it was noted that utility cyclists would be less likely to use Strava. However the before & after maps showed increases in numbers around J10A and along Capron Road. Steve confirmed that the junction at Capron Road had been improved, although it was likely that a tarmac path would need to be added down onto the A5. This work would then tie in with making the other side of the A5, and along Brewers Hill Road shared use, with the intention that once the A5 is de-trunked, more work can be done to help cyclists cross at the existing island, such as putting cyclists crossing paint markings there. Steve requested copies of the Strava heat maps. He also mentioned that police incidents on Dog Kennel Down had reduced by 80%, following action such as installation of CCTV.

Robin mentioned that the bollards on Station Road in Luton were now in use. Adam asked if cycle use along there was now definitely allowed, and Rod confirmed it would be formalised.

6) Luton consultations

Robin discussed the various consultations Luton are running and asked people to ensure they make a response. He also mentioned that it was possible to access the data online from the air

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pollution monitoring stations and that due to the pollution levels, Luton had to take action along Stuart Street, as the area breaches limits for emissions. Rod explained the setting up of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and said the council was looking at a number of options. One action to be taken was to increase the space for the right turn from Cardiff Road, in order to reduce blocking of traffic. Roger highlighted a particular concern of his being the pollution in Bury Park and the fact the area has high numbers of young children who would be suffering the effects from that. Robin also commented that it was dangerous to cycle through Bury Park due to bad parking and drivers blocking the road to turn, and Rod confirmed the council would also be looking at trying to improve traffic flow there.

Steve also confirmed that the centre of Dunstable is also an AQMA and that there was a 2014 council report highlighting the action to be taken to improve air quality, but in any event, this would improve when the Woodside Link opens. Robin asked if there was any mechanism for reporting smoking diesel vehicles, although Steve pointed out the problem was with invisible particulates.

Another consultation was for the new school to be built at the Brache, with an entrance opposite the Luton Retail Park on Gypsy Lane, and Robin pointed out the very limited cycle parking. Adam also commented that there was no rear access to the school which would make sense, to allow access from Park Street, so cyclists can avoid Gypsy Lane which would be very busy in the morning rush hour. Rod confirmed they were looking at the possibility of a path at the back along the River Lea, although currently there was no funding available.

7) Cycle Forum events

Adam also confirmed that thanks to Ben, we had secured Kensworth Village Hall as the start point for the Charity Ride, and that there would be 2 routes, a family 20 mile route, the same as last year, and a 40-45 mile route on roads going around Luton. In addition, there was now a Forum web site at www.LutonDunstableCycling.co.uk and the intention would be to have a registration page on the web site and people would pay via Paypal, which would mean far lower costs than using Active Network. Robin also explained that last year, the event didn't cover its costs, so asked if we should simply run the event and get charities to get riders to raise money for them, rather than partnering with charities other than Sustrans (who would be needed anyway for insurance). Adam confirmed we should run the event and simply ask people to raise money for whichever charity they wanted to. Ben pointed out the issue about which charities to support should be discussed at a separate meeting between the ride organisers.

Adam confirmed the success of the led rides, whilst Robin and Barry also mentioned the development of the social rides outside of the led rides, to get people riding in other groups in a less formal way.

For Bike Week, Adam confirmed he was hoping to run a cycling treasure hunt, and it was also suggested to look at running some beginners rides. Siobhan suggested an Easter Egg Hunt ride in Wardown Park, although Barry commented that the numbers of people in the park would make that difficult.

Adam queried what had happened to the large box of security tags that Travel Luton had, as it would be useful to use those at an event at Luton train station. Rod confirmed he would investigate.

Robin also mentioned the successful events run with Aviva Buses to highlight the dangers around buses and the fact that generally their drivers are fairly well trained to drive around cyclists, although this was not the case with the other bus companies, which was also a point raised by Siobhan, in respect of an incident involving Richard Noon.

Adam confirmed that unfortunately due to funding cuts, it seemed likely the Hub would close from 31st March, and expressed his thanks on behalf of the Forum for the work done and support given. Therefore the Forum would try and attend events in place of the Hub, and was intending

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to have a stand at the Luton Carnival, and the Dunstable Kite Festival. Robin also asked people to let us know about any other events it would be worthwhile attending.

8) Luton issues

Adam mentioned that someone had been in contact querying why the shared use signs along Icknield Way from the A6, onto Bramingham Road and up to the junction with Watermead Road had been covered up, and Rod confirmed that he would find out. Siobhan also flagged up that the surface along there is also very rough.

Robin mentioned that following the first frost after Hatters Way had been resurfaced, the adjacent path was now covered in stone chips and expressed concern about how robust the resurfacing was. Steve asked for feedback on the rail put up under the Clifton Road Bridge by the football ground, which had been put in after a cyclist had been hit by a bus. Robin queried if pedals could get caught on the rail and suggested it should be covered over.

Following the recent led ride along the A6 out of Luton, Barry commented that it was good to see how much of the path had been cleared of overgrowth, but that the section towards Luton hadn't been touched. Steve commented that this would have been due to being under Luton's control.

In respect of additional links on the Busway, Peter asked about a link at Telford Way, which Steve confirmed was on the list for improvements, but it would be subject to funding, but requested input on any other links which could be added.

Barry confirmed that Dave Barford felt that My Bike Shop might have to close following a 47% increase in rates. He was however hoping for a 6 month reprieve which would give him time to sell off his stock.

Adam asked about the additional Sustainable Travel funding, which Steve confirmed was transitional funding from May to bridge the gap from the 3 year Sustainable Transport funding which had provided the Hub, and the new Access funding which starts in 2017. He confirmed that Central Beds & Luton were putting in a joint bid which would be for revenue funding and confirmed that a letter of support from the Forum would be useful.

The bike counter on the path at Hatters Way was also discussed and the fact it was recording 200 riders on average per day. The point was made that it was only recording at that spot and there may well be more riders using the Dunstable end.

Robin also confirmed he had got both Luton and Dunstable mayors to agree to a ride, and would be looking to do this by May, possibly as one ride.

9) Central Beds issues

Steve reminded that he would look details of which 3 junctions and sections of roads could be improved, bearing in mind that over 50% of incidents were SMIDSYs (Sorry Mate I Didn't See You). Robin confirmed he'd like to build up a list of good and bad examples. Adam pointed out that for new works, it all depends if councils take account of cyclists' needs when looking at altered road layouts. The introduction of Advanced Stop Lines was discussed, and Steve confirmed that these are generally put in unless there is a specific engineering issue preventing it. Alan mentioned that one example of a poor junction is at Round Green at the roundabout with Stopsley Way.

The next social evening was agreed to be on Wednesday 13th April at 7:30 pm in the Bricklayers Arms, High Town, Luton, with the next Forum meeting on Wednesday 11th May, 6:30 pm at the Hub.