

**Notes of: West Berkshire Cycle Forum**  
**held on: Tuesday 15 October 2024**  
**(Via Teams call)**

**Chair:** Cllr Martin Colston (MC) – Cycle Champion, WBC

**Attendees:** Cllr Tony Vickers (TV) – Vice Chairman of Council and Member for Hungerford & Kintbury Ward, WBC  
Cllr Martha Vickers (MV) – Member for Newbury Speen Ward, WBC  
Simon Bowden (SB) – Club Chair, Newbury Velo  
Rob Hill (RH) – Pangbourne & Whitchurch Sustainability [PAWS] and Reading Cycle Campaign [RCC]  
Cheryl Evans (CE) – Senior Road Safety Officer, WBC  
Elaine Cox (EC) - Senior Rights of Way Officer, WBC  
Clive Tombs (CT) – Senior Engineer, WBC (notes of meeting)

**Apologies:** Rhys Williams (RW) – Canal & River Trust  
Kevin Hurley (KH) – President, Newbury Velo  
William Pitt (WP) – Chair, West Berkshire SPOKES

	<u><b>Action</b></u>
<p><b>1. Welcome, Introductions &amp; Apologies</b></p> <p>MC welcomed attendees to the Cycle Forum. Brief introductions were effected.</p> <p>Apologies were recorded on behalf of Rhys Williams of Canal &amp; River Trust, Kevin Hurley of Newbury Velo and William Pitt from Spokes.</p>	
<p><b>2. Notes of previous meeting &amp; Matters Arising</b></p> <p>Notes of the last meeting, held on 16/07/2024, were agreed and Matters Arising reviewed:</p> <p><b><i>SWOT analysis for future extensions of Eling Way shared route, on Newbury-Didcot axis:</i></b> had been supplied to MC on 14/03/2024 and subsequently had also been shared with Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment &amp; Highways, Cllr Stuart Gourley, on 07/08/2024. Given wider financial climate, timescales and resourcing for future Stage 2, Stage 3 etc extensions to Eling Way remain to be confirmed. CT and ITS are continuing to pursue as time allows, alongside core on-Highway/LCWIP schemes. Eling Way to be kept as an agenda item.</p>	

***Bikeability instructors:*** RH confirmed he had raised Bikeability with Karen from Reading Cycle Campaign but RCC did not have any additional capacity to help out.

KH had invited interest from Newbury Velo Members, resulting in an additional 3 instructors coming forwards.

***Toucan crossing PN130, west side of Waitrose roundabout, Newbury/Spenn:*** CT had raised again with signals engineer on 08/10/2024. Engineer has trialled maximum timings, but further investigation and configuration is required, to try to reduce wait time for pedestrians and cyclists and reduce the likelihood of people crossing in gaps instead of waiting for the signals.

***Hambridge Road – aspiration for controlled crossing at canal bridge:***

***Festival of Cycling*** – discussed under AOB.

### **3. Bikeability and Cycle Training updates**

CE has to report back quarterly on delivery to the [Bikeability Trust](#) which manages the national cycle training programme for school students on behalf of the Department for Transport.

Given pressure on Instructor resource, CE has had to declare that WBC is not able to fulfil all the objectives; grant has been reduced by equivalent 400 places but still 100% of Year 6's covered. WBC has secured additional scale-up funding for administration (school engagement etc). One instructor has been asked to assist with this element.

Thanks in part to assistance from Newbury Velo, there are now 4 potential new instructors. Of these, 2 have completed training and are shadowing current instructors (should pass their course fully in December). Travel incentive is now being paid

1 further would-be instructor is about to start and 1 more due to start February 2025. A small number of others have expressed interest but this is dependent on where their career takes them moving forwards.

WBC has gifted some equipment to Newbury Velo, to aid off-road coaching.

#### 4. West Berkshire scheme updates

**Additional cycle parking:** CT showed photos of cycle stands newly-installed by WBC adjacent to Hampstead Norreys Village Hall (at the northern end of the Eling Way) and Frilsham Clubroom/village hall.

Further sites close to community facilities and local shops are being investigated. WBC's Sustainable Travel team has again highlighted, in the [October 2024 Environment Newsletter](#), that the Council remains open to considering proposals for cycle parking at other, similar sites

**New Toucan crossing facilities:** CT showed photo of signalled crossing in B4009 Shaw Road, Shaw, Newbury recently upgraded to a Toucan crossing, suitable for considerate use by cyclists as well as pedestrians. This crossing is well-used by students attending Trinity School and is close to historic Shaw House. WBC took the opportunity to improve the approach paths on the east and west sides.

WBC is also liaising with a developer regarding a developer-installed Toucan facility on Lower Way that requires further work.

**Linkways signage:** CT showed photos of new cycle direction signing, bearing the local Linkways branding for core active travel routes and showing duration to specific destinations, as recently installed in Victoria Park with the kind agreement of Newbury Town Council. This will be complemented in the New Year by further signing on the Newbury-Thatcham 'Linkway 2' alongside the A4.

**Major schemes 2024-25:** CT advised that the [A4 Crown Mead scheme](#), just west of Thatcham town centre, commenced on 09/10/2024. Scheme includes upgrade of signalled crossing to a Toucan, continuation of on-carriageway cycle lanes, footway improvements including removal of an old drainage channel and installation of tactile paving. Consultation will take place shortly on a proposed Traffic Regulation Order, with further lining work to follow.

#### ***Schemes in development and aspirational:***

Stockcross Linkway Stage 2: proposed future Stage 2 of the Stockcross Linkway from the [A4/B4000 roundabout](#) via the [Bath Road Bridge](#) over the A34 to connect in to the quiet road called [Speen Lane](#) towards Northcroft Leisure Centre, Goldwell Park and Newbury  
WBC has met National Highways and has requested additional information relating to their bridge that carries the A4 Bath Road over the A34 bypass west of Speen. Challenges associated with this aspirational scheme, due to bridge structure (based on information currently to hand) and parapet height.

Old Bath Road, Speen: CT showed outline design on screen.

Objective to improve conditions for active travel from Speen Estate and Linkway 7 on A4 Western Avenue through to [Goldwell Park and the quiet route to Northcroft and town](#) . Scheme design will be sent to Ward Members, Executive Portfolio and Parish and Town Council imminently for their comments. Mainly a footway scheme, but aspiration to reallocate some carriageway space for cycling, in lieu of a little-used section of parking.

Eling Way Stage 1 extension, Hermitage: at detailed design stage with a view to works being undertaken in early 2025, following Planning confirmation that the scheme is acceptable. One apparently intractable landowner issue preventing widening works in one 70-metre section. WBC officers continuing to liaise closely with Ward Members, Parish and Eling Estate.

A4 London Road at Newbury Manor Hotel, Linkway 2: situation remains as discussed at last meeting. Feasibility work now underway for an alternative scheme that might be delivered within Highway boundary

Pangbourne-Purley(-Tilehurst Station): WBC have had site meeting with Volker Highways and subcontractor, regarding cutting back that would be required to enable a topographical survey to take place for the proposed section of route parallel to A329. Quote for vegetation clearance just to enable the topo is awaited

Theale-Calcot Connector: following on from the recent Feasibility Study for potential future replacement of [50+ year-old, narrow pedestrian bridge](#) west of M4 Junction 12, located on LCWIP corridor S5 (Theale-Calcot-Reading), the Executive Portfolio for Environment and Highways wrote to Olivia Bailey, MP for Reading West and Mid-Berkshire, to highlight the scheme and to seek her support in pressing relevant agencies for substantial funding to enable further progress on this scheme. Following a meeting with her team, WBC officers have supplied supplementary detail to assist with lobbying for this future improvement.

A4 Western Avenue Stage 2, Newbury, Linkway 7: Feasibility design work completed for proposed next section of Linkway 7, from [Waitrose Roundabout](#) eastwards to [Chestnut Crescent/Hawthorn Road estate](#) and to the west side of [Robin Hood Roundabout](#) and scheme submitted to ATE for their input on the design. Notwithstanding Active Travel England's expressed desire for WBC and other local authorities to demonstrate the depth of our ambition, sheer cost of this and similar 'linking up' schemes is currently challenging, when compared with likely levels of grant funding.

Lower Way reappraisal: CT noted that WBC is currently reviewing situation on Lower Way, where there are inconsistencies in provision (some shared route sections, some designated sections which pedestrians still use and which have bus stops).

## 5. National Cycle Network route 4, towpath & related matters

'Reimagining the Kennet & Avon Canalside' initiative and 'Newbury Phase II' Ham Bridge to Bull's Lock: on 30/09/2024 a meeting was held at Padworth Village Hall, hosted by Sustrans. A range of stakeholders from the local area and wider, including potential funders, were briefed on the ["Reimagining the Kennet & Avon" programme](#)

This initiative, being developed by the partnership of Sustrans, Canal & River Trust, Greenham Trust and West Berkshire Council aims to deliver - **in stages, over a period of 10+ years and as resources allow** – a programme of six projects centring on making the Kennet & Avon towpath more accessible across the District, to enable more people from various parts of the community with differing levels of mobility to share and enjoy the waterside environment.

Stakeholders attending the Padworth event were shown a recently upgraded, accessible section of towpath and were invited to participate in the programme's evolution and delivery.

Working together and with valued input from other organisations such as local cycle group [West Berkshire Spokes](#), the partners have already delivered:

- 1.7km of upgraded, surfaced towpath between Victoria Park and Ham Bridge, Newbury
- 700 metres of improved route between Aldershot Water Bridge and Brimpton Road, east of Thatcham
- 2.4km of widened, resurfaced towpath between Aldermaston Wharf and Ufton Lane
- 1.25km of resurfaced route between Mill Road, Burghfield and Hissey's Bridge, Calcot
- 380 metres of reconstructed waterside path between Mill Road, Burghfield and the waterside near the Cunning Man pub

The partnership, led by Sustrans and with its website hosted by Greenham Trust, is now seeking further funding on top of that committed by WBC and Greenham Trust, for sensitive design and delivery of improvements along the waterside corridor, with the initial emphasis on the Heart of Newbury section between Victoria Park and Northcroft. A bid for

In addition, the partners have supported a bid by Canal & River Trust to the Government's Waterways Restoration Fund, seeking additional funding towards restoration of the section east of Hambridge Road. The outcome of this bid is still awaited.

The partners would like to take a holistic approach in developing proposals for waterside improvements. Key considerations include:

- The sensitivity of the waterside environment and ecology
- The need to make the towpath more robust and fit for the purposes it serves, giving access for anglers, boaters, considerate cyclists using [National Cycle Network Route 4](#) and walkers with differing levels of mobility, and for relaxation and enjoyment
- Opportunities to reduce risks associated with flooding
- Opportunities to boost the economic vitality of towns and villages on route, tying in with Town Centre Strategies and local objectives
- Heritage, reflecting the importance of the canal as a historic transport route for goods, coupled with multiple heritage assets along the corridor
- Interpretation and Wayfinding

**For details of the towpath improvement initiative and how local organisations and individuals can contribute, visit <https://www.greenhamtrust.com/canal/>**

This initiative has also been trailed in WBC's Environment Newsletter, on social media and with Parish Councils.

B3421 Hambridge Road, Newbury – aspiration for controlled crossing at canal bridge: location is on National Cycle Network route 4, and other towpath users including boaters and anglers also have to cross B3421 Hambridge Road. CT confirmed WBC had commissioned additional, low-resolution CCTV-based surveys to gauge numbers of cyclists and pedestrians crossing B3421 Hambridge Road at and within 50 metres of the current uncontrolled crossing point. These surveys took place (a) during a 7-day period over summer holiday, 12-18 August 2024 and (b) during a 7-day period in term-time, 23-29 September.

The WBC crossing movement count surveys augmented recent 'feasibility' work and traffic and speed data compiled by Sustrans. **CT reiterated to the Forum this is an extremely challenging site; the implications for traffic movements are being further assessed and additional statutory utilities information is being obtained. Both the footways and the carriageway all contain substantial underground utilities and the site proposed by Sustrans adjoins a substantial structure.** All of this has a major bearing on affordability and deliverability, or otherwise, of a controlled crossing. In addition to costs of outline and (if appropriate) detail design stages, construction costs (including utility diversions if required) and ongoing revenue costs of a controlled crossing are yet to fully gauged.

## 6. Secure cycle parking

MC had asked for this to be added to agenda.

MV articulated desire to see provision of secure cycle parking facilities in Newbury and potentially other town centres, and asked scope to progress. MV noted existence of GWR-run Cycle Hubs at Newbury Station. In addition the proposed Eagle Quarter (Kennet Centre redevelopment) proposals incorporate internal cycle parking, albeit focussed on residents and visitors to those premises.

CT advised:

(1) there is an issue with the station Cycle Hubs, with parts of at least one rack and a bike having been removed by unknown persons, in spite of GWR CCTV. Officers raised this with GWR in July, physically shown their technical staff the concerns and followed up with them. This is now between GWR and its supplier;

(2) WBC Sustainable Travel and Transport Policy officers have met with a local organisation, to investigate interest and scope to establish a Cycle Hub or potentially a broader Mobility Hub, including some form of cycle parking. Discussions are at an early stage.

(3) Cycle Hubs and Mobility Hubs have previously been suggested by WBC Sustainable Travel team to WBC Economic Development team colleagues, in context of their schemes e.g. Bond Riverside, Thatcham Town Centre

CT emphasised there are a range of issues that would need to be addressed for any town centre Cycle Hub, including:

- Extent of any offer: whether or not cycle parking would be augmented with bike maintenance/bike hire/longer-term bike loan
- Structure and support required for set-up
- Finance: what Capital and Revenue investment may be required and what sources this would come from?
- Locations and fit with Town Centre Masterplans (underlining the importance of linking in with Economic Development Team)
- Access: if a cycle hub is to be created, what will the opening hours be? How will access be managed, especially to drop-off and pick up bikes - will people have to apply for membership and receive an access card or tag, or QR code?
- Staffing
- Security measures such as CCTV: which organisation would operate this, how would the data be securely stored and viewed if necessary, and how would revenue costs be covered?
- Any scope for revenue generation: without impacting on other

existing town centre businesses

- Presence of self-serve facilities such as pumps, tyre levers and other tools, and how these would be maintained

CT is hopeful of another meeting in the next couple of months with the local organisation to explore interest in a Newbury Town Centre cycle facility further and will advise at next meeting.

CT

## 7. Any Other Business

### Close pass

SB highlighted a concern that road traffic-related incidents affecting cyclists, including 'close pass' and verbal abuse, appear not to be receiving the level of attention that they deserve from Thames Valley Police. This appears to be borne out in a [recent media report](#).

CE will specifically raise the importance attached locally to raising awareness of close pass risks, at next meeting with police. A 'close pass' monitoring and intervention operation has previously been undertaken on B3421 Hambridge Road, Newbury, when TVP officers were available to participate.

CE

General information on close pass is available [on WBC's website](#).

### Festival of Cycling – Saturday 14 June 2025:

MC advised Northcroft Park and Goldwell Park booked by WBC

Victoria Park booked by Newbury Town Council

Original 'driver' for this event is that it will be [100 years since founding of Newbury Road Club](#); represents an opportunity for the clubs, local authorities and other stakeholders such as local bike shops to come together to promote leisure and utility cycling in Newbury and West Berkshire.

The event will include a parade of historic bikes

SB and MC are closely involved, and WP from Spokes is also participating, alongside David Appleton (WBC Head of Cultural Services) and April Peberdy (WBC Service Director, Community Services).

Martha Vickers mentioned a similar weekend event had taken place in 1997, including Dr Bike maintenance events

SB mentioned recent [Bracknell Forest Cycle Festival](#) which took place on 14/09/2024 – organisers could provide useful information on what

went well and what could have been done better.

SB suggested Trek store would be interested in having a stall

Cheryl suggested getting FTA/HGV lorry driver representatives to help highlight risks associated with cyclists getting in blind spots

**Next Cycle Forum Meeting:**

**6:00pm Wednesday 8 January 2025.** Teams link to follow.