

## **Brent Cyclists Meeting 1 September 2010**

The meeting was given over to a discussion with Cllr James Powney.

Cllr James Powney is the new Labour lead member in Brent Council for Environment, Planning & Culture. He was invited to our September 2010 meeting, and Ian Saville, Esther Sullivan and David Arditti were present to talk to him.

Cllr Powney's job makes him partially responsible for cycling matters in Brent, though there is also a Lead Member for Transport and Highways. Cllr Powney does not cycle, and has no plans to take it up. He emphasised that Brent's strategy is to get people out of cars, including through cycling.

Ian questioned the lack of cycle parking at the Town Hall. Cllr Powney mentioned that a new Town Hall would be built by 2013 which should have more. Ian said more should be done at the present site in the interim.

Ian asked about the status of the Biking Borough project. He told Cllr. Powney of the existence of the Biking Borough report for Brent, of which he had seemingly not been aware. Cllr Powney did not make any commitments in respect of the Biking Borough. He said funding was very tight with a 25% reduction likely this year. Ian pointed to the cheapness/cost effectiveness of cycling measures. Cllr Powney said Brent gets £5m per year for transport from TfL. The only other money it has to spend on transport is revenue from parking fines and CPZ fees. The latter are likely to increase because CPZs are being expanded. Incentives are being offered to residents to give up their parking permits such as a free Oyster. Cllr Powney suggested another incentive could be a free bike. There was some scepticism as to whether this would work. David suggested it might if coupled with the offer of free cycle training.

This brought discussion on to the subject of training. Ian mentioned that from April 2010 subsidised training had been abolished for adults. He stated this was a very important lever for encouraging cycling. Cllr Powney said that the TfL money for training had run out, but possibly Brent could find more from the parking revenue.

Ian asked who is the cycling officer now in Brent? Cllr Powney said that Adrian Piggott is the environment policy officer with whom he deals most directly.

There was a discussion of the cycling infrastructure shortcomings of Brent and the physical barriers present. The problems of crossing the N Circular Road all along its length in Brent, the River Brent at Neasden Lane, the Met and Jubilee Lines between Neasden and Wembley Park, the Chiltern Line which cuts off Wembley from the south, and the West Coast Main Line were emphasised to Cllr Powney. The Sustrans report on cycling greenways to Wembley was mentioned, which dealt with these barriers, and Brent Cyclists' idea for a new bridge across the Brent on British Waterways land just west of the reservoir, connecting the West Hendon Playing Fields to Neasden Rec ground, was raised again.

There was discussion of the Brent Cross Cricklewood plans and the extra problems they might create for cyclists, particularly on the A5. Cllr Powney said Brent is still opposed to the plans, and the Sec of State's decision not to intervene is now subject to a legal challenge. The fallback position for Brent is, if the scheme does go through, to get as much money as possible from the developers for mitigating measures in Brent. David said

that some of this money should be spent on cycling infrastructure. He mentioned the Cycling Superhighway plan to go up the A5, and how that could not happen with the BXC development plans as they are.

Cllr Powney is responsible for parks. He seemed amenable to the idea of putting more cycle routes through parks. In respect of Fryent Country Park, we repeated BC's position that we would like cycle paths alongside Fryent Way rather than N-S through the body of the park itself (as previously suggested by Sustrans and vigorously opposed by local groups). But we do support plans for an off-road cycle path E-W on the northern edge of the Country Park (Shakespeare Drive to Broad View). Cllr Powney seemed to think the Fryent Way paths would be a good idea. David mentioned the fact that under old bylaws, cycling is formally banned in all Brent Parks except for Gladstone in the mornings. Cllr Powney said he would look into this.

The Mayor's/TfL's ideas for removing "unnecessary" traffic lights were discussed. Cllr Powney said they would all be consulted on and Brent was unlikely to make changes to signals on its roads unless there was public support, which he seemed to doubt there would be.

Cllr Powney was thanked for coming, and he said he was walking home as he lives very near by.

David Arditti