

Published by the LCC in Brent

www.brentcyclists.org.uk

Maintenance evening 4 August

The evenings still being light at this time of year, we thought we would make the August Brent Cyclists meeting a little different, and utilise the “yard” at our meeting place, Brent Samaritans at 1 Leopold Road NW10, for a bike maintenance evening. We know there are plenty of you out there who would appreciate a few tips on how to maintain your trusty machines.

So at 7.30, after the business meeting at 6.30 (which anyone can also attend) we will have some tools and the group experts on hand to give free assistance with any mechanical problems you may have. If people want we can go through common issues like mending punctures and adjusting gears, or if you have another specific problem with your bike, bring it along and we will attempt to diagnose it and, if we can't fix it, tell you what needs to be done. Even if it is raining we can still talk over some of the issues, but we won't be able to work inside.

New Brent Cyclists website launched

Our chairman and web guru Ian Saville has been beavering away at creating a more useful, appropriate and sophisticated website for Brent Cyclists. This is now live, and carries the information the old site did, plus much more. The address is unchanged: www.brentcyclists.org.uk.



The screenshot shows the Brent Cyclists website homepage. At the top left is the Brent Cyclists logo. To its right is the London Cycling Campaign 30th Anniversary logo. A search bar is located at the top right. Below the logos is a navigation menu with links for Home, Contact, Recent posts, and Login. The main content area features a 'Welcome to Brent Cyclists' heading, followed by 'The Brent Group of the London Cycling Campaign' and 'Brent Cyclists is:'. Below this is a list of bullet points describing the group's activities and goals. To the right of the main content is a 'User login' box with fields for Username and Password, and a 'Create new account' link. On the left side, there is a 'Recent Blogs' section with a list of recent blog posts.

For those interested in these things, the site is now based on a system called Drupal. For those who are not, the point is that the site is interactive and designed to allow all those who cycle in Brent to contribute to it. If you register as a site user you can contribute to discussion forums, add comments to pages that allow them, and create polls. If you are a member of the LCC, and input your membership

number, you will also be able to create a blog or upload images to the site.

On the site currently you will find details of all our activities, photos of past events, a mapping tool that can help you to plan your routes in London (developed in co-operation with Camden Cycling Campaign), details of local bike shops, and blogs discussing all sorts of cycling topics. Apart from all this, the serious purpose of the site is to allow all who want to contribute to the development of our policies and responses to proposals from Brent and Transport for London. So, in the Campaign section, we will be posting details of the consultations on street changes that come our way, and on these pages it will be possible for anyone to reply and express their view, so we can compile our campaign responses from the opinions of the widest selection of cyclists, not just those who come to meetings.

We are open to suggestions of what others think should be on the website, so have a look, and give us some feedback. We want it to cover everything relevant to cycling in Brent.

A Cycle Highway may be coming your way

In May the Mayor of London's Cycle Highways programme was unveiled, designed to encourage more people to commute into central London from the suburbs by bike. This was an idea proposed by the previous mayor which is being taken forward by Boris Johnson. Most of the information we have about this can be found in a PDF document which may be downloaded from our website under campaign/current consultations.

The most striking thing about these Highways, going on the basis of the “indicative route” map in the document, compared to earlier London cycle route schemes (the London Cycle Network (LCN) and its successor LCN+), is that they are to be not on back streets, but on major, often very major, roads. There are two routes shown that edge Brent on the west and east sides, Highway 10 on the Harrow Road and Highway 11 on the A5. Most interesting from a political point of view is the fact that the A5 route, though labelled as “Cricklewood to Marble Arch” in fact is shown running as far as West Hendon, and thus through the Staples Corner West junction, about which we have been having a such a row with the Brent Cross Cricklewood developers, who claim in has no good cycling facilities (which has indeed been Barnet's policy) so they can rebuild it in such a way as to make it impossible to cycle that way. Since their plan is supported in principle by TfL, the whole situation there is now totally contradictory.

Back to the Highways in general: we are told in the Concept Overview document that they will be “safe, direct,

continuous, visible, comfortable, informative, and value for money". All this sounds very good. However, the million pound question is, *what are they actually going to be?*

It appears, from the "Photoshopped" pictures of London streets in the document, that they will actually be either existing bus lanes, or new stretches of cycle lane painted blue. So not serious, continental-type segregated cycle engineering. And not, apparently, much different to what we have now. There are some promising ideas mentioned in the document, such as the closure of some side roads (with cycle access retained) along these routes to minimise junction conflicts, enhanced maintenance, and dedicated enforcement (illustrated with what appears to be an electric vehicle in the cycle lane).

However, the most important issue seems to have been omitted. There is no indication of how cyclists will be made safe through dangerous, major junctions – apart from using more of the magical blue paint. These junctions constitute the main barrier that prevents more commuter cycling from Brent and other suburbs. Then one has to wonder about the practicality about what is proposed on the routes shown. If the blue cycle lanes are to be inside bus lanes, as shown in an altered photo of Waterloo Bridge, then it seems buses will still have to cross the path of cyclists to stop, and cyclists will still have to pull out around them. This is not the "state of the art" in cycle engineering in wider Europe that the document mentions. Even if buses and cyclists share the same lanes, as other images in the document seem to suggest, consider the narrowest parts of Kilburn High Road, permanently choked with buses and vehicles stopping to service businesses. There simply is not enough road width there for lanes on both sides of the road, plus two general traffic lanes, plus the parking/loading activity. Whatever colour paint is used on the road, without draconian restrictions to general traffic, which appear very unlikely, cyclists will just continue to be involved in the normal traffic *melée* as they are now. Will this encourage many new cyclists to commute by bike?

Then, the routes are not as definite as they at first appear. It seems that "routes are indicative and detailed alignment will be discussed with the relevant boroughs". That appears to open the door to more of the years of argument between local officials about where to put routes with which those who have taken part in the LCN+ consultations have become only too familiar. But time is short, as the programme is for the first two routes to be completed in 2010 and the rest, including Routes 10 and 11, by 2012. Elsewhere, the document mentions "alternative routes through quiet roads, including links to LCN routes", which seems to confuse the basic idea. Are these alternative routes part of the Cycle Highways programme? Why should they be necessary if the Highways themselves are "safe, direct, continuous, visible, comfortable" etc.? Are they part of the LCN+ programme, funding for which, Johnson has elsewhere suggested, is to be ended?

These and other questions about the Cycle Highways programme puzzle us, and many others in LCC.

BC addresses public meeting to oppose Brent Cross Cricklewood

On 12 July a public meeting took place in Dollis Hill entitled *Safeguarding Brent's Residents: Campaign against the Brent Cross Cricklewood Development Proposals*. This was addressed by Dawn Butler, MP for Brent South, Navin Shah, London Assembly member for Brent and Harrow, councillors, and representatives of local groups including Brent Cyclists co-ordinator Ben Tansley. Ben explained the reasons we believe the scheme will make cycling in the area worse; other speakers concentrated on other issues such as lack of public transport provision, lack of affordable housing, and the planned waste facility on the A5.

It is clear that there is a wide coalition of opposition amongst community groups and politicians in Brent to the current BXC plans. It was emphasised at the meeting that the campaign will be a long haul and that we are only at the beginning of it. If, as expected, Barnet approves the plan against the opposition of the surrounding local authorities, the campaign will move on to trying to persuade Boris Johnson to use his powers to reject the scheme. If this fails it will move on to trying to get the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to hold a public enquiry. The current Secretary of State has told the leader of Brent Council that he would indeed call the scheme in.

The meeting of the Barnet Council Planning Committee to consider the application was postponed again in July until at least September, but many people now expect it will not take place until 2010.

Forthcoming events

Tuesday 4 August: Brent Cyclists maintenance workshop

7.30pm Samaritans Centre, 1 Leopold Road NW10. Preceded by business meeting at 6.30; all welcome to attend

Saturday 29-Monday 31 August 3 day ride in Norfolk. Book with David d@daavidarditti.co.uk 020 8204 3999

Sunday 30 August: Harpenden Loop ride Meet Cricklewood Station 09:35 for the 09:47 to Harpenden. Distance 23 miles, lunch stop. Suitable for all cyclists.

Wednesday 2 September: Brent Cyclists Meeting 7.30pm

Samaritans Centre, 1 Leopold Road NW10. Preceded by business meeting at 6.30; all welcome to attend

Sunday 13 September: Queens Park Day Brent Cyclists will be running a stall 12:00-17:00. Volunteers needed.

Sunday 20 September: London Skyride (the new name for

London Freewheel) Mass rides from Brent and Harrow:

10:00 Kingsbury Station, 10:45 Gladstone Park railway bridge for ride to the central London traffic-free street circuit. (See our website for details of Harrow meeting points and times.) We look forward to having clearer details of the ride back this time.

Tuesday 6 October: Brent Cyclists Meeting 7.30pm Samaritans Centre, 1 Leopold Road NW10. Preceded by business meeting at 6.30; all welcome to attend

For further details, see the website, or contact our events co-ordinator Paul Hayward on 07762 279149

Brent Cyclists Contacts

Coordinator: Ben Tansley, 36 Mora Road NW2 6TG, phone 07941 050161, coordinator@brentcyclists.org.uk

Chairman: Ian Saville, chairperson@brentcyclists.org.uk

Newsletter editor: David Arditti
editor@brentcyclists.org.uk