

Brent Cyclists social and business

We thought we would try something different to the usual business meeting in August, so the Brent Cyclists meeting on Tuesday 3 August will be a social meeting in the lounge bar of The Crown in Cricklewood Broadway, starting 7 pm.

For our following meeting on Wednesday 3 September, which will be in the usual location of Brent Samaritans Centre, Councillor James Powney (Labour), the new Lead Member for Brent Council on the Environment, Planning and Culture, and also Vice-Chair of the Highways Committee, has agreed to join us. Do come along with some questions for him on cycling in Brent.

Ealing Sky Ride a success

Ealing Sky Ride on 18 July was one of the biggest cycling events to take place in West London in recent times. Harrow and Brent Cyclists both led feeder rides to the traffic-free circuit around Ealing, which was enjoyed by thousands of cyclists. The central London Sky Ride occurs on 5 September and will be much bigger. Join us then for the ride from Harrow and Brent, details overleaf.



Scene on the Ealing Sky Ride

Brent Cross Cricklewood plans approved

The Government Office for London wrote to Brent Cyclists on 16 June to tell us that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (unstated in the letter, but this is the new Conservative Secretary of State, Eric Pickles) has decided not to intervene in the Brent Cross Cricklewood redevelopment controversy and not to hold the

Public Enquiry into it for which Brent Cyclists and many other local groups had been calling.

The letter said that the Secretary of State will only intervene in a local planning matter if it:

- may conflict with national policy on important matters;
- could have significant effects beyond its immediate locality;
- gives rise to substantial regional or national controversy;
- raises significant architectural or urban design issues; or
- may involve interests of national security

All of which, apart from the last, seem to apply in this case. So why no Public Enquiry? Answers on a postcard, please...

Cycle Superhighways launch amid controversy

On Monday 19 July the first two of the Mayor's "Cycle Superhighways", now also known as "Barclay's Cycle Superhighways", as, like the central London hire bikes, they are being sponsored by the bank, were officially completed and launched. The first two completed routes are CS3 from Barking to Tower Gateway and CS7 from Merton to Southwark Bridge. Though it is being written before the launch, the completed Superhighways have essentially been "open" for some time now, and we have a fair idea how useful they are likely to prove.

The first Superhighways have drawn widespread criticism from those who have used them. They have failed to correspond in any way to the Mayor's promises made in June 2009 that:

"No longer will pedal power have to dance and dodge around petrol power - on these routes the bicycle will dominate and that will be clear to all others using them. That should transform the experience of cycling - boosting safety and confidence of everyone using the routes."

The Superhighways are essentially blue strips, as little as 1.5m wide, painted by the kerb on bus routes. The markings have no legal status and cannot protect the space from encroachment by cars, or from parking. On these routes cyclists will still have to dodge around buses during the hours of operation of the bus lane, and around all other traffic the rest of the time. Outside bus lane operation times, the Superhighways are parked on. The markings are discontinuous, disappearing where the road narrows, and arbitrarily at other times. No advantages for cyclists are provided at junctions other than the Advanced Stop Lines which existed before (unless you count the new "Trixi" mirrors at some traffic lights which are supposed to aid lorry drivers in seeing cyclists).

LCC's main demand has been for the redesign of major junctions along the routes to improve safety, but nothing along these lines has been forthcoming. Some worry that the Superhighway markings have actually made these routes more dangerous, the narrow blue lanes possibly encouraging some cyclists to ride too near the kerb and not to adopt recommended "defensive" road positioning.

The Superhighways that will be most significant for Brent and Harrow cyclists are routes CS10, Park Royal to Hyde Park, on the A40, and CS11, West Hendon to Marble Arch, on the A5. Both these skirt the borders of Brent. It is notable that according to the TfL website, the completion date for these has now been put back to 2015, three years later than originally promised. They will be among the last Superhighways to be completed, if they ever are. This we must seriously wonder about, since this date is well into the next Mayoral term, and given the reception of the first Superhighways, not to mention the history of cycle network schemes in London tending to remain unfinished, cancelled by new political regimes. We recall Boris Johnson's abandonment of his predecessor's LCN+ scheme, for instance, which also promised a cycle route up the A5, and to which Brent Cyclists committed a lot of work, but which was never materially delivered.

This new timetable probably puts the building of CS11 beyond the date of the major rebuild of the roads at Staples Corner proposed in the now-approved Brent Cross Cricklewood development framework, which appears to make a cycle route along the A5 south from West Hendon quite impossible.

As to CS10, the elevated motorway that is the A40 seems peculiarly unsuited to a Cycle Superhighway, and on this ground alone we would doubt whether this will ever go forward (but at least if it did, there would not be parking on it to worry about!). Brent Cyclists, backed by Westminster Cyclists, has proposed that, instead, CS10 should be on Harrow Road, already a popular commuting artery, which has far more potential for improvement. The main thing that needs to be sorted out here is the gyratory system at Harlesden, but there are indications that Brent Council may be willing to consider changing this in the context of other improvements to Harlesden Town Centre. However, our suggestion, along with pretty well every other constructive comment on the Superhighways made by any LCC group, appears to have fallen on deaf Transport for London ears so far.

Harrow cyclists lobby the council and Tesco

Following on from the successful internet-based opinion polling exercise of council candidates at the election, Harrow cyclists has been pressing home some demands to the new council.

An illustrated letter/leaflet has been sent to all councillors with a list of things we would like to see done for cycling in Harrow, ranging from more Sheffield stands and increased training in schools to making Harrow's advisory cycle lanes on roads mandatory and reversing the give-way markings where side roads cross Harrow's on-pavement cycle tracks.

Members of the Harrow Cyclists committee have also been attending a Town Hall committee called the Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel (TARSAP). One cyclist representative is allowed to speak at these meetings, which frequently cover issues of significance to cyclists, including parking regulations, signals and road layouts. This is not as good as the transport advisory groups some councils, such as Camden, have, where cyclists can actually put issues on the agenda, but it is something.

Harrow Cyclists believes that we should try to influence the private sector to set a good example of cycling provision as well. With this in mind we have been lobbying Tescos over their Metro stores, a large number of which have recently opened in Harrow, and none of which have cycle parking. We want them to either ask the council to install stands, or offer to pay for it themselves. Watch this space.

Forthcoming events

Tuesday 3 August: Brent Cyclists social 7.00 pm Lounge Bar of The Crown, 142-152 Cricklewood Broadway NW2

Wednesday 11 August: Harrow Cyclists meeting 7.30 pm Beacon Centre, Scott Crescent, Rayners Lane HA2 0TY, followed by a social at 9:00 at the Village Inn, Rayners Lane

Sunday 15 August: Croxley Green ride Meet 9:30 am North Harrow Station to take the tube to Croxley Green for an easy-pace 20 mile ride with Simon.

Wednesday 3 September: Brent Cyclists meeting 7.00 pm Samaritans Centre, 1 Leopold Road NW10 9LN

Sunday 5 September: Feeder ride to London Skyride Meet 09:15 Harrow and Wealdstone Station (East side) or 10:00 Kingsbury Station or 10:45 Gladstone Park railway bridge (foot of Parkside) for a ride down to the traffic-free circuit of central London. We will also provide a ride back.

Wednesday 8 September: Harrow Cyclists meeting 7.30 pm Beacon Centre, Scott Crescent, Rayners Lane HA2 0TY, followed by a social at 9:00 at the Village Inn, Rayners Lane

Sunday 12 September: Queens Park Festival Brent Cyclists will have an information and recruitment stall at this popular community festival 12.00-17.00. Please help out if you can or just come and say Hello.

Brent and Harrow Cyclists Contacts

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