

Kensal Rise “Bike Hub” plans

We are now getting some idea of what the Biking Borough funding for Brent from Transport for London (£294,500 over three years) may be spent on. The proposals for implementation in this financial year are unambitious, consisting of cycle parking and signage around the Kensal Green to Queens Park area. In charity to Brent it may be pointed out that they had little time to put together the bid for expenditure this year, and, in the foolish way these things work, could have lost the money if it were not spent by April. We hope the plans for the next two years will be more ambitious.

One hundred and nine cycle stands are proposed for installation, mostly in clusters on Salusbury Road, Chamberlayne Road and Sidmouth Road. Regarding where stands are probably most needed, the stations, all has not been going smoothly. There are to be some more at Queens Park, between the station and the car park, but at Kensal Green there are problems of lack of public land on which to locate them, and at Kensal Rise, because of proposals for the next financial year to alter the pavements in Station Terrace, Brent does not want to install more stands now (though there will be some more nearby at Clifford Road). There are proposed to be 24 blue signs giving directions to places like Willesden Sports Centre and the stations.

Brent Cyclists has continued to ask for the road centre barriers on Brondesbury Park at Christchurch Avenue and Chevening/Winchester Roads to be removed (and replaced by some other sort of traffic restriction or calming measures on the side roads), and while the consultants say they will be “picking these up” in the next financial year, Brent officials seem to have been busy finding “reasons why nothing can be done”. Apparently even consultation on one barrier, the Christchurch Avenue one, could eat up the entire three-year funding allocation on its own! How absurd.

Other physical measures floated for possible funding in the next two years include contraflows on Clifford Gardens and Warfield Road and junction tightening at Bathurst Avenue and Wrottesley Road, but these, too, look far from certain. It seems that the reality behind all the “puff” about the Biking Borough is that the even many of the smallest changes on the streets are regarded as being too difficult and expensive – while the lesson from our continental neighbours is that to achieve high levels of cycling you need *massive* changes on the streets.

Harrow contraflow still missing, along with much else

You may remember that in July, Harrow Council, with some fanfare, announced that they would implement Harrow Cyclists’ long fought-for proposal for a contraflow cycle lane in College Road, by Harrow Bus Station. This facility would only cost £15,000 and should be very quick to put in place. However, it has still not materialised. Harrow Cyclists are investigating what is going on.

Another facility that has long been demanded is the opening of a proper cycle gap at the Hindes Road junction with Harrow View. There is a signed London Cycle Network route (no. 88) here, which is stupidly interrupted by an emergency gate. It is just about possible to squeeze a bike round this, via the normally glass-strewn 12 inch gutter at the south end, but trying to get here by cycling across the junction is dangerous, with fast, heavy traffic combined with the need to go slowly through the gap. Some cyclists illegally cycle across the zebra crossing just to the north to get round this problem. Officers suggested at least two years ago that it would be possible to open this gap up and install some sort of signalised crossing for cyclists, but, again, inaction has been the order of the day with Harrow Council.



The Hindes Road barrier in Harrow

One route Harrow has done some work on is the Belmont Trail, the overgrown path following the course of the old Wealdstone to Stanmore railway line. You could be forgiven for not knowing where this is, as it is not marked as a cycle route on any map. It should be possible to cycle from Kenton Lane, near Belmont Circle, to Gordon Avenue,

Stanmore, by this route. Harrow seemed to be trying to develop this as a leisure cycling route, without a hard surface. In the summer they erected some bijou little route indicators on wooden posts, with writing so small you would have to stop and put on your specs to read it. But sadly the one I photographed (below) in Vernon Drive has already been defaced. It is reported (by Alan Blann) that the route is hardly cycleable at all.



Route indicator which briefly existed on the Belmont Trail

Maintenance lessons in Kilburn

The excellent community group Cycletastic are organising some more lessons on how to get greasy, on Saturday and Sunday 18 & 19 February.

Saturday’s session takes place 10:00am–4:00pm at the Lower Hall, Salusbury Primary School, Salusbury Road NW6 (entrance at the corner of Salusbury and Lonsdale Roads). It covers puncture repair, drivetrain cleaning, brake, gear, and wheel bearing adjustment, and introduction to replacing parts. Attendees will receive a small gift to help keep them on the road. Parts and accessories will be available for purchase at discounted rates. Bring your bike, a packed lunch, and clothing that you don’t mind getting dirty. The event is free but there is a suggested minimum donation of £5. To book a place contact josie@cycletastic.org.uk, tel. 07773 865 917.

Sunday’s session takes place 10:00am–2:00pm in the Grand Electric Hall, Salusbury Primary School. This is a session for people to drop in at any time to get their bikes fixed or adjusted. Cycletastic encourages you to wait with your bike to pick up skills from the volunteers. Donation requested.

New campaigning group formed in Barnet

A “newly expanded campaigning arm” of Barnet Cyclists has been formed: their website is <http://barnetlcc.com>. Toby Jacobs and David Shannon are the joint campaign coordinators. They held a first meeting of the campaign in

January. A poll on their website has shown that the issues people think they should concentrate on are 20 mph, greenways, and crossings of the North Circular Road. A “tour du danger” ride highlighting the problems of getting across the North Circular has been mooted, along with the production of a video of this for campaigning purposes.

Brent Cross Cricklewood Regeneration

On another Barnet issue there has been a major development, according to an oblique report in the *Evening Standard*. On a day that the Boris Johnson visited the borough, it was reported that he had intervened in this scheme, a source telling the paper that it was now “dead in the water”. Johnson is said to be now talking about concentrating efforts on developing the existing shopping mall and the newer retail park on the south side of the North Circular, implying the dropping of the wider Cricklewood regeneration scheme.

This may be viewed as good news for us. We objected strongly to the developers’ plans to alter Staples Corner so that it would become impossible to cycle south on the A5 except using the dangerous flyover. We also lobbied Brent to object to the scheme on this and wider transport grounds, which they did (along with Camden and Harrow). With these destructive plans out of the way, if they really are, can start to campaign, with Barnet LCC, for a positive re-planning of the A5 corridor to make it better for pedestrians and cyclists, not just for motorists heading for Brent Cross.

Forthcoming events

Wednesday 1 February: Brent Cyclists social 7.00pm
Lounge Bar of The Crown, 142–152 Cricklewood Broadway NW2 3ED

Wednesday 8 February: Harrow Cyclists meeting
7.30pm, 60 Longley Road HA1 4TH

Saturday 18 February: Thames and Tudor Ride Meet 10:30am Willesden Junction Station for 20 mile ride through Ealing, Gunnersbury Park and Dukes Meadows.

Wednesday 7 March: Brent Cyclists meeting 7.00pm
Samaritans Centre, 1 Leopold Road NW10 9LN

Wednesday 14 March: Harrow Cyclists meeting
7.30pm, 60 Longley Road HA1 4TH

Sunday 11 March: Buckinghamshire Windmills Ride
Meet 10:45am Wembley Stadium Station to get the 10:58 to Princes Risborough (or join train at Northolt Park 11:03). About 30 miles, quite hilly, but not fast. Lunch at a pub.

Brent and Harrow Cyclists Contacts
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