

Labour takes control of Brent and Harrow Councils

Bucking the trend of the national election, the vote in the council elections in London swung heavily towards Labour. Harrow Council moved from Conservative control to Labour control, with Labour gaining 10 seats, the Conservatives losing 8, and other parties losing 2. Brent Council (along with Camden) moved from being run by a Conservative/Lib Dem coalition back to its traditional full Labour control. Here the results were even more dramatic, with Labour gaining 21 seats, the Conservatives losing 9, Lib Dems losing 10, and others losing 2.

In the general election, Glenda Jackson won, by a very small majority, for Labour the new Camden/Brent constituency of Hampstead and Kilburn. Sarah Teather won Brent Central from the Lib Dems (this constituency was previously mostly split between Brent East and Brent West), while Barry Gardner held the nearly unaltered Brent North constituency for Labour. Harrow East was won by former Harrow Council leader Bob Blackman for the Conservatives from Labour's Tony McNulty (boundary changes affected this seat and maybe also the expenses scandal), while Harrow West was held by Gareth Thomas for Labour. The new Hillingdon/Harrow constituency of Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner was won by Nick Hurd for the Conservatives.

Results of the survey of Harrow Council candidates

So Brent Cyclists and Harrow Cyclists will both be dealing with completely different local administrations for the next four years. How this will affect policy towards cycling remains to be seen, but Harrow Cyclists has a particularly good idea of the attitudes of many of the new councillors, thanks to a brilliant internet opinion polling exercise conducted by Dan Hanley, Harrow Cyclists' Campaigns Coordinator and e-guru. In the weeks leading up to the election, Dan used a free internet tool called Survey Monkey to put to all the council candidates a set of policies on cycling agreed by the HC committee. The survey gave seven statements, graded from those which should be easy to support at the beginning, to those showing real commitment to increasing cycling at the end, with the options to answer Yes, Undecided, or No. This was a quick and easy exercise for the candidates to complete, and 41 responded, a success rate of about 30%, which is quite high for this kind of thing.

The statements to which the candidates were asked to agree were:

1. The Council should provide ample cycle parking at all local shops, libraries, council, NHS & school buildings.
2. The Council should provide free on-road cycle training to national standards for all school children.
3. The Council should provide a cyclist awareness program for all council lorry drivers and fitting of proximity mirrors to council and council contracted lorries to reduce the danger caused to cyclists.
4. The Council should substantially increase the budget for repairing roads scarred by potholes.
5. The Council should allocate 10% of the transport budget for Harrow to cycling schemes.
6. The Council should convert the borough's advisory cycle lanes (which are not legally enforceable) to mandatory cycle lanes (which are).
7. The Council should apply a default 20 mph speed-limit on the borough's non-strategic roads (as pioneered by Islington).

Full results of the survey can be found on the Harrow Cyclists website. Of those who were elected as councillors in the event, notable for agreeing with all the points were William Stoodley, Krishna James and Philip O'Dell (Lab), and Christopher Noyce (LD).

Kilburn gains a bike shed

Community group Cycletastic, run by Josie Warshaw, has set up a "bike shed" located at the back of 36-38 Willesden Lane NW6, entrance on Streatley Road. The shed is equipped with tools, and, though limited in space, there is space for working on bikes outside as well in good weather. The group recycles donated bikes, and the plan is to have volunteers working in pairs on Sunday afternoons at the shed. If you could help, please contact Josie, email josiewarshaw@aol.com for more information.

Report bad driving online

The Metropolitan Police have set up a new website, [RoadsafeLondon](http://RoadsafeLondon.com), where you can report "illegal or nuisance road use". The URL is: <https://secure.met.police.uk:443/roadsafelondon> (note the s in https). In an emergency, obviously, you should dial 999 (if possible). However, it will be interesting to see how anybody using this new method of reporting bad or dangerous road use gets on in terms of action from the police. If you use this site, do tell us if anything happens.

Harrow cyclists explore Peterborough

Report by Tony Levene

Peterborough – flat, featureless, and a stop for the express train from Kings Cross on its way to more enticing locations such as York, Newcastle and Edinburgh. But there's more than that – as three Harrow Cyclists discovered on a joint weekend away with Watford Spokes in early May.

For starters, there's the 750 year old cathedral plus some fine 17th and 18th century buildings. There's the river Nene, a steam railway and some huge open spaces. And for two-wheelers, there's one of the best laid out cycle networks in the UK.



Harrow cyclists welcomed by the Watford Spokes group in Peterborough

Despite its ancient heart, much of Peterborough is effectively a post-war new town. The planners took advantage of this newness to build in safe cycle facilities with good signage, although the routes themselves are not so great in the city centre.

We had a 30 mile plus tour of the city, guided by Peterborough Cycling Club, which claims to be the oldest continuously existing cycle club in the UK. We also had a trip out of town to Stilton to watch some very fast Peterborough cyclists doing time trials – another 30 or so miles. Some of us also went to see the cottage in nearby Helpston where 19th century rural poet John Clare spent his life, while others saw a Roman enactment.

So Peterborough is no longer just a stop on the railway.

Forthcoming events

Tuesday 1 June: Brent Cyclists meeting 7.00 pm
Samaritans Centre, 1 Leopold Road NW10 9LN

Sunday 06 June: Ride to Camden Green Fair and Bikefest Meet 10:15 am North Harrow Station or 11:00 Kingsbury Station or 11:45 Gladstone Park railway bridge for an easy ride, on minor roads so far as possible, to Regents Park to take part in this well-known fun eco event. The Bikefest is run by Camden Cyclists and is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Return by about 5:30 pm. Total distance 30 miles.

Wednesday 9 June: Harrow Cyclists meeting 7.30 pm
Beacon Centre, Scott Crescent, Rayners Lane HA2 0TY

Sunday 20 June: Chiltern ride Take the 11:14 am train from West Hampstead Thameslink Station (11:17 Cricklewood, 11:20 Hendon, 11:23 Mill Hill Broadway), buying a return ticket to Harpenden. Ride starts 11:50 from Harpenden Station. 30 miles through rolling countryside, lunch stop, suitable for all riders.

Sunday 27 June: Queensbury Eco-Cultural Festival 12 midday to 5.00 pm Eton Grove Park, Queensbury NW9. Come and visit or help with the Brent Cyclists stall at the second year of this community festival.

Saturday 3 July: Hertfordshire ride Meet 9:00 am Harrow-on-the-Hill Station (E side) or 9:30 Watford Metropolitan Line station for an all-day ride following disused railway lines and canal paths. Pub lunch, easy pace, total distance 45 miles, not suitable for skinny tires.

Saturday 3 July: Try-a-bike event 1.00-5.00 pm Kilburn Square NW6: cycling information and “try a bike”

Sunday 4 July: Brent Respect Festival 1.00-5.00 pm Roundwood Park NW10. Come and visit or help with the Brent Cyclists stall at this popular community festival.

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

Sunday 11 July: Bucks Chilterns ride Meet North Harrow Station 9.30 am for tube to Amersham, then 25 mile circuit back to Amersham where there will be an opportunity for more serious riders to do another 25 miles. Medium pace.

Wednesday 14 July: Harrow Cyclists meeting 7.30 pm Beacon Centre, Scott Crescent, Rayners Lane HA2 0TY

Saturday 24 July: Scenic Brent ride meet 11:00 am Kingsbury Station for a 20 mile tour of the picturesque and historical curiosities of the borough. Lunch at a café, suitable for families. Return by 4:30 pm.

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

Saturday 28 to Monday 30 August Summer Bank Holiday 3-day ride. Book now with David Arditti (details below) to go on this tour of about 120 miles somewhere in England.

Brent and Harrow Cyclists Contacts

Brent Cyclists Co-ordinator: Ian Saville, 8 Aylesbury Street NW10 0AS, phone 07949 164793, coordinator@brentcyclists.org.uk

Harrow Cyclists co-ordinator: Colin Waters, 152 Whitmore Road HA1 4AQ, phone 07799 537 504, col@harrowcyclists.org.uk

Newsletter editor: David Arditti

editor@brentcyclists.org.uk, phone 020 8204 3999