



Brent's Environment chief visits Brent Cyclists Annual Meeting

Councillor Eleanor Southwood was the special guest at Brent Cyclists' Annual Meeting (or AGM) on 3 May. She is Brent's Cabinet Member for Environment, and her responsibilities range, as she explained, from rubbish collection to roads and pavements and street lighting. The most unusual fact about her is that she is completely blind, and has been from birth. She is also Vice-Chair of the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

There was much discussion at the meeting of the split nature of the borough in cycling terms, with most activity in the south of the borough, and this being attributable in part to the extreme difficulty of crossing the North Circular Road. The problem with funding a new crossing, Cllr. Southwood said, was persuading TfL that there was enough cycling demand for it – clearly something of a circular problem – and the solution might be to emphasise more the benefits for the whole local community. We pointed to the role of planning, particularly of the Wembley Park development, and the need for the council to make the developers contribute to funding necessary infrastructure outside their boundaries. The need for another new cycle and pedestrian crossing, across the tube lines between Neasden and Wembley Park, was raised. Cllr Southwood had not heard of this plan, but one of her officers also present had, and she said she would give this some attention.

Cllr. Southwood hoped that she could in fact get on a bike: for the opening of the Carlton Vale cycle tracks some time this year. We are helping her source a loan tandem and 'driver'. It was a positive discussion, and thanks are due to Ellie Southwood for making the time to talk to us. We did also invite London's new Cycling and Walking Commissioner, Will Norman, but without success.

The meeting elected the 2017-18 Committee for Brent Cyclists, which is unchanged except for the post of Treasurer, Jiten Shah having stepped down.

Chair: Ian Saville

Co-ordinator: David Arditti

Treasurer and Events co-ordinator: Richard Sisson

Secretary: Henry Lancashire

Rides co-ordinator: Charlie Fernandes

Campaigns coordinator: Clive Gomes

Other committee member: Neil Nerva

Harrow Cyclists Annual Meeting

Harrow Cyclists held its AGM on 10 May. Tony Levene was re-elected as Co-ordinator, and Anoop Shah and David Turner were re-elected as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. It was reported that there had not been much progress with the council during the year, with key cycle routes proposed in the borough's Cycle Strategy having already been abandoned in the new Heart of Harrow development. However, the group has started holding local rides again, with a turn-out of 11 for a ride on 23 April, and another one planned for 28 May.

Carlton Vale cycle tracks now under construction

Early this year Brent Council approved the building of the borough's first proper, on-road segregated cycle route, along the Brent part of Carlton Vale, Kilburn: a major achievement for Brent Cyclists after five years of lobbying on this, and also an achievement for the Brent officers who planned it and steered it through the decision-making process. The very thorough officers' report on the consultation that was given to councillors shows the extent of our lobbying success: 83% of responses were in favour of the scheme, and most of the points made by respondents mirrored the suggestions for improvement we had made, some of which were incorporated into the approved plans. Construction is now underway, with opening set for later this year.



A group of Brent and Harrow cyclists visited Carlton Vale on a grey March day and posed in front of the beginnings of the cycle track construction (bus stop bypass island behind)

Station Road, Harrow, cycle track now in use: good or bad?

Work has now been completed on a small scheme in Station Road to convert the service road immediately south of the Elmgrove Road junction into a two-way cycle track. Harrow Cyclists had some debate last year about the merits of this scheme, very limited in length, difficult to access from the south and not providing the protected route that is needed all along the very wide A409 between Wealdstone and Northwick Park roundabout.



A man in a mobility scooter making good use of the track

Now the scheme is on the ground users can make their minds up about it. It certainly represents a tidying-up of the previous situation, with the parked cars that used to fill the service road now gone, and a new tarmac surface. The main problems with it are that it cannot go all the way to the junction of Sheepcote Road and Station Road because the space runs out and the track becomes an inadequate shared pavement, there is no properly-planned way to access it if coming from the semi-pedestrianised part of Station Road (Harrow-on-the-Hill Station direction) – one has to second-guess traffic lights on the five-lane main road (or again use the pavement) – and the northern exit of the track tends to get blocked by queuing traffic exiting Elmgrove Road.



The track at the north end does helpfully allow cyclists to bypass traffic lights, but why all the 'Give Way' lines?

Major redevelopments in South Brent planned: Northfields and Old Oak

In May, David Arditti from Brent Cyclists toured the Northfields site between Stonebridge and Alperton with consultants and architects planning this major redevelopment of old industrial land. The site is bounded by the Grand Union Canal, the River Brent, and Beresford Avenue (which is a classic residential rat-run road). There is great potential for the development to improve the area and the developers seem keen to facilitate cycling. The importance of, and need to upgrade, local cycle routes was pointed out, with the cycle and pedestrian bridge across to Park Royal very close to the site, along with the route along Old North Circular Road, the canal towpath as well, and the need for a better connection to the Brent River Path on the other side of the Harrow Road, which, potentially, links this major redevelopment area up to that in Wembley Park.

Separately, preparations continue for the massive projected redevelopment of the Old Oak and Park Royal area. A Draft Local Plan has now been published (see <https://tinyurl.com/19q2vjj>). Brent Cyclists has input into this in the past. Chapter 7, the transport section, seems to say a lot of the right things, with an objective to 'deliver a comprehensive, safe, attractive and inclusive cycle network across Old Oak and Park Royal'. There are plans for a new Old Oak High Street and a segregated cycle route along Scrubs Lane. There will be a meeting of local organisations on 5 July to discuss the plan, and Henry Lancashire will be attending from Brent Cyclists. Do give us your thoughts.

Forthcoming events

Wed 7 June: Brent Cyclists Meeting 7.00pm Atrium of the Clayton Crown Hotel, Cricklewood Broadway

Sun 18 June: Ride to Bushy and Richmond Parks Meet 11am outside Pret a Manger, London Designer Outlet, Wembley Park Boulevard, for a 35 mile round trip of some of the finest parks and riverside scenes in West London. Return by train from Richmond possible if tired.

Wed 5 July: Brent Cyclists Meeting 7:00pm Pret a Manger, London Designer Outlet, Wembley

Sat 29 July: RideLondon FreeCycle Feeder rides to the closed circuit in Central London start 10.00am from Pret a Manger, London Designer Outlet, Wembley, and 9:00am from Harrow-on-the-Hill Station (Station Approach).

Wed 2 August: Brent Cyclists Meeting 7.00pm Atrium of the Clayton Crown Hotel, Cricklewood Broadway

Harrow Cyclists meetings check the Harrow Cyclists Yahoo! group, Facebook group or harrowcyclists.org.uk.

Brent and Harrow Cyclists Contacts

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