



Birmingham needs your help again!

This newsletter again is focusing on the Birmingham Cycle Revolution. In the summer newsletter we told you about consultations on routes to the west of Birmingham, covering the area from Hagley Road to Alcester Road. This autumn, there are consultations on routes to the east and north, reaching past the M6 to Short Heath and Erdington.

Three of the routes consulted on in summer will have work started in the new year, after going to council in the middle of November to be voted on. These are Bristol Street, Alcester Road, Soho Road and the surrounding parallel routes. The comments made by individual cycle users were vital to the success of these consultations. It is essential that we get a good level of response again - your voice counts!

We will also have reports about some of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution green route work, including issues with the surfaces used and barriers, and hear from the Solihull Bicycle Campaign about shared use paths.

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your voice counts!**



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www.pushbikes.org.uk

Getting Birmingham
in the saddle

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➤ *As a voluntary organisation, the office is not manned on a regular basis. The most effective means of contacting us is by e-mail.*

➤ *We hold meetings on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 19:00.*

Update on the Birmingham Cycle Revolution.

Canal towpaths and green routes.

These are on schedule for completion, but the choice of surfacing - spray and chip - has been controversial (see the Cole Valley report). Push Bikes has been told that the decision to use spray and chip is heavily influenced by funding issues, because the parks budget is one area facing cuts in this era of austerity, and smooth paths have to be swept, while spray and chip paths do not. Rotting leaves and undergrowth, however, can quickly reduce a 2 meter wide path to only a few inches. Push Bikes believes that for the green routes to be usable by any cycle user, basic maintenance needs to be carried out, which includes removing dead leaves and mud.

“ride these sections to try the plain surface and tell us what you think



While the work on the canal towpaths is progressing well, Push Bikes has been told that the final surfacing process will have to be halted now

until we can get a couple of weeks of good dry weather - most likely in spring. This means that we will have several sections of towpath which are left as a plain bitmac surface for a couple of months. These sections will be the start of the Tame Valley Canal, the Birmingham & Warwick Junction Canal and the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal.

Please go out and ride these sections to try the plain bitmac surface, and tell us what you think.

Main routes and parallel routes.

The good news is that the proposals for Bristol Street, Alcester Road and Soho Road will go ahead to a vote in mid-November, to have work started in the new year.

Unfortunately the Harbourne Road route plans were sent back to the drawing board after traffic modelling showed the designs would create long queues of motor traffic. Push Bikes has seen 2 possible solutions, and we are keen on one involving a 3 meter bi-directional cycle path down the side of Harborne Road, which is better than the original plans that went out for consultation.

The Harborne Road route should be ready for building alongside the current consultations.

Update on the Birmingham Cycle Revolution.

Another positive decision has been to put off upgrading pedestrian crossings to toucan crossings. Push Bikes was critical of the substantial sums of LSTF money for the Bristol Road being spent on a couple of toucan crossings. The Birmingham Cycle Revolution team have decided that upgrades to toucan crossings will be rolled into the ongoing AMEY programme for upgrading light controlled crossings across Birmingham, which will save money. We are very pleased to see some joined-up thinking by the BCR team on this, showing how the AMEY contract can

be utilised to improve conditions for cycle users.

20mph limits

The 20mph consultations for south and east Birmingham over summer were successful, with strong positive support. Thank you all for responding. The work on rolling out those will start in early 2015.

The consultation on the city centre took place in September and October, and work is expected to start in late 2015.

Current consultations (at the time of going to press) - Please respond!

Closing date Wednesday 12th November, 2014:

Lichfield Road Main Corridor and Parallel Cycle Routes
(Going to Erdington, with parallel route reaching Short Heath)

A47 Parkway Main Corridor and Parallel Cycle Route
(Going to Castle Vale, with parallel route going to Washwood Heath)

Closing date 26th November, 2014:

Perry Barr to City Centre Parallel Cycle Routes
(Parallel routes connecting to the A47 as well as reaching the city centre)

South East Parallel Cycle Routes
(Parallel routes from Yardley Wood and Fox Hollies to the city centre)

During the consultation, there will be opportunities to look at hard copies of the the plans at different venues around Birmingham - see Birmingham Cycle Revolution website for details of when and where these are.

Solihull Bicycle Campaign: Should we support shared use pavements?

*In the Birmingham City Council boundaries the Birmingham Cycle Revolution team are designing some wide cycle lanes on roads, but Solihull has not benefited from the Cycle City Ambition funding. Solihull Bicycle Campaign founder, **Bracken Van Ryssen**, discusses one difficult choice facing cycle campaigners in Solihull:*

Shared use pavements are popular with many councils due to being relatively cheap and eliminating the need to reduce space for motor traffic. This can be seen in many different plans either as the basis for a cycle network, in the case of the North Solihull Cycle Network, or as a clumsily tacked on addition, such as in the Solihull Gateway scheme or the plans for the Birmingham Bus Rapid Transit network.

Of course there is the argument that any investment in cycling at all is a good thing and should be welcomed. For example there are many bicycle users that purposefully avoid cycling on the road due to (not entirely unfounded and unreasonable) fears for their own safety and shared use pavements effectively legalise this action and slightly reduce harassment and abuse that these users suffer.

However there is a trade-off as shared use pavements infringe on the rights of pedestrians to safe and protected spaces. While bicycle users and pedestrians still mix more safely and harmoniously than motor traffic does with either of the above, sharing a pavement or path is still far from ideal.

Often leading to animosity and conflict, effectively turning many people who are allies of sustainable and active travel away from considering or supporting cycling as part of the solution.



sharing a path is still far from ideal



Which brings us to the conundrum: do we support Solihull Council's plans for shared use pavements on the basis that at least it's funding and they're making an effort; therefore risking the alienation of potential allies? Or do we actively campaign against shared use pavements as a united front and risk the animosity of the council and withdrawal of already limited funding?

Bracken Van Ryssen (@SolihullCyclist)

Solihull Bicycle Campaign

To continue the discussion with Bracken, and to learn more about the Solihull Bicycle Campaign, visit:

www.solihullbicyclecampa.wix.com/home

Barriers: Fear of phantom bikes.

We are told that barriers on pedestrian and cycle paths are necessary to prevent motorcyclists illegally using paths, causing surface damage and endangering legitimate users, but having lived in Bournville for 20 years I really appreciate the ease of cycling on the traffic free Rea Valley and canal towpaths and have at no time during these years have I been troubled nor seen evidence of motorcyclists.

I can access both these paths and travel towards the city centre or towards Kings Norton and beyond without encountering any barriers. On the Rea Valley there are numerous road crossings that afford easy, barrier free, access to the route. Motorcyclists too could have similar access, so where are they? Yet many other paths in the city (including many towpaths) have numerous barriers; and new ones are currently being installed as part of the Birmingham Cycling Revolution.

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**Motorcyclists
too could have
similar access, so
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In the Sustrans 'Handbook for Cycle-friendly Design', barriers are only mentioned once: '*Single bollard if required. Restrictive access controls should be avoided.*' The consultation draft of the Birmingham City Council Design Guide also recommends avoiding restrictive barriers:

'Access barriers are sometimes installed to prevent motorcycles getting onto cycle and pedestrian routes. These barriers often also exclude other users (hand-cycles, tandems, tricycles, child trailers, some wheelchairs and mobility scooters) and cause delays and inconvenience on popular routes. They should therefore be introduced only when there is a persistent problem of illegal access that cannot be resolved by enforcement.'

Just think about this: while barriers are deterring those illegitimate users who don't want to use the routes anyway, they are also deterring legitimate users!

So why, you might ask, should there be new barriers being installed as part of the improvements

John Bennett

[The Dutch solution to motorbikes is speed bumps that encourage slower speeds without causing discomfort to cycles going over them. See this video of them in use: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBLz_2bmSe8]

Barriers: The Dutch solution.



Speed bumps seen by Push Bikes members on a study trip in the Netherlands.

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Cole Valley Route report

One of the most noticeable and certainly most attractive features of the Birmingham Cycling Revolution currently being developed is the Cole Valley Cycling & Walking route. It has the potential to become a favourite leisure ride for those people - and families - wanting to avoid road traffic and enjoy countryside close to home, although it will not provide a mass cycling route for commuters in that area.

Whereas previously much of the route had been unconnected and unsurfaced, lacking protected road crossings, the BCR programme is designed to make a continuous route from the eastern connection with Solihull at Babb's Mill to the southern city boundary (at Yardley Wood) - a distance of close to 10 miles through the heart of the city.

Recently some work has been undertaken both on the most northern section, and south of the A45. The work on the section near Shard End has been carried out by Sustrans and consists of a high quality, reasonably wide shared-use path finished with smooth bitmac. The section south of the A45 has been worked on as part of BCR. It is largely bendy and narrow, sometimes ludicrously so, and is mainly being finished in spray and chip, which creates a harsh, laborious surface. Along some

environmentally sensitive stretches such as The Dingle (close to Billesley recreation ground) a 'grass reinforced mesh' is used which allows grass to grow through whilst providing a hard, dry surface. Some road crossings on this southern section have been upgraded, but, regrettably, there are 8 existing or new 'K' barriers that will create problems for all cycles with straight bars. At Stetchford there is just a very muddy track connecting the northern and southern halves of the route.

At the Birmingham & Warwick Junction Canal cyclists face a short but very bumpy ride along the tow-path and a very steep flight of steps. On the other side of the canal a new path has been built through the Ackers. (See the report opposite.) There are easier paths through the Ackers.

Signposting along the entire route is poor, largely consisting of vague, unreadable wooden finger post signs. None of the path is lit, resulting in very poor social safety, and of course none of it is serviced (so it disappears under leaves in autumn, and snow in winter).

John Bennett & Robert Latham

Cole Valley Route report: Col des Ackers

The Cole Valley route includes a section past the ski slope at The Ackers near Small Heath. To get there from the canal, you have to climb a steep flight of steps up to a road bridge, from which you go back down the hill, through the Ackers.

Until now, cycle users had three options: a direct route along an old tarmac path down a short, steep incline, which is straight and wide enough to pass other users; or two detours which are longer but with much shallower gradients - useful when travelling up the hill.

To this selection, BCC have added a fourth option, which rises higher than any of the others and is almost as steep as the direct route. It snakes down the hillside, and there are several chicanes made from metal barriers to negotiate.

It is slow going down hill, but I have tried 6 times to climb the path and failed each time at the second chicane (Video evidence: vimeo.com/110083771). This is supposed to be a bi-directional shared use path, but the design is ludicrous.

Robert Latham



Warning signs on the Col des Ackers.

Join Pushbikes and help improve cycling for everyone in Birmingham



CycleBirmingham

The rides & social part of Push Bikes

Weekly Evening Ride & Social:

The rides vary from 2 to 12 miles, depending on season and weather, with the pace set by the group. We try to use quiet routes for most of the rides, and advise on route type for each ride. Most destinations have food if you don't have time to eat after work. We try and pair you up with other members of the group for your return journey home, for example a number of the women riders cycle home together.

Weekly Saturday Morning Rides in Bournville:

A gentle ride starting from the Bournville area 10am each Saturday Morning.

Monthly Sunday Rides:

The rides vary in length and tend to be a bit quicker and longer than the Wednesday or Saturday rides. They

usually return to the area they start from after a leisurely lunch at the destination.

Evening & Sunday ride details can be found on the following sites:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CycleBirmingham

Visible without a Facebook account - Click 'Like Page' and Tick 'Get Notifications' and 'Following' to ensure you receive regular updates or bookmark it in your browser if you don't have a Facebook account. There is also an older Facebook Group in existence (This older group is only visible with a Facebook account).

Twitter: @cyclebirmingham

Saturday Bournville ride details can be found at: <http://bournvillegentlecycling.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Futurerides>



The Sunday ride on the way to Hartlebury this April

Space for Cycling Mass Bike Ride at the Conservative Party Conference

During September, the Space for Cycling campaign held two mass bike rides, one at the Labour Party conference in Manchester, and one here in Birmingham for the Conservative Party conference. 150 cyclists gathered on a Monday evening in Victoria Square to show their support for the national level demands of the Space for Cycling campaign: **Consistent on-going funding of at least £10 per person per year across the country.**

At a fringe breakfast event the Bicycle Association, the CTC, Sustrans, British Cycling and the London Cycling Campaign spoke with a unified voice about the need for consistent funding.

Robert Goodwill MP, the minister responsible for cycling, and his shadow counterpart, Richard Burden MP for Northfield, both came to the start of the ride. Robert Goodwill said that “we really need to get the Cycling Revolution that the Prime Minister talked about last year on the road.”

However, the latest draft Cycling Delivery Plan does not, however, include the funding that we have been calling for. Although support among MPs for proper funding for cycling is growing, more campaigning is necessary to get central government to put its money where its mouth is.

Chris Lowe



Riders gathering before the ride. (Image courtesy of Alison Kennedy.)
For a video of the ride, visit: <http://vimeo.com/108231726>



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Birmingham is starting to plan better for cycling, but there is still a lot to do.

We currently have several campaigns in progress and are in frequent contact with local councils over cycling issues whether raised by cyclists or matters the councils contact us about, as they believe they might affect cyclists and therefore ask for our views. With the new funding for cycle infrastructure

announced by the DfT in August 2013, it is even more important that we influence local planners and Centro and local councils to build good quality infrastructure that increases the safety of cyclists.

Your support for PushBikes will help benefit cyclists in and around Birmingham and Solihull.

Please fill in the form to the right to join us. 

Push Bikes Members' Discounts:

Push Bikes members receive a 10% discount in a number of shops.

Please note that you will need your Push Bikes' membership card to claim the discount.

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iCycle	Harborne (B17 9QH)	None
Red Kite Cycles	Shirley (B90 3DX)	Bikes
Sprocket Cycles	Digbeth (B5 5TH)	None
On Your Bike	Digbeth (B5 6HY)	Bikes
Fletchers Autostores	Duddeston (B7 4LS)	None
Mechanix Bicycle	Moseley (B13 8EH)	None

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