

# ASHFORD WALKING AND CYCLING FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010  
in the Mission Aviation Fellowship Operations Centre, Henwood Industrial Estate, Ashford

**Present:** Jonathan Beare (in the Chair), Emily Neighbour (taking minutes) Central Ashford Community Forum, Christine Green CACF & Town Centre Partnership, Spencer Morgan Cycle Trainer, Adrian Steed cyclist, Greg Williams Spokes, John Wellard cyclist & rambler, Andrew Macey cyclist.

**Apologies:** Liz Wedgwood Kent County Council Transport Planner (on maternity leave), Ted Prangnell, cycling campaigner, Stephen Bourner, Ashford's Future.

**Minutes of meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September:** Stephen Bourner had submitted a request for several amendments on the subject of the Station Improvements. These were discussed and it was agreed that some amendments would be made by EN and JB to take into account his comments.

**Active Cycle Challenge:** Spencer Morgan reported that this had been very successful, with 57 businesses taking part, exceeding the target of 40. The target of getting 500 people onto bikes had been nearly achieved. The businesses had been very big e.g. Ashford Borough Council down to very small (three employees). He had held lots of events at different venues all over Ashford Borough and had helped 100 completely new cyclists to start riding. These events were continuing at the Julie Rose Stadium which allowed new cyclists to gain confidence in a supervised, off-road environment. He would also be running a maintenance course at Goldwyn School. He attended the North School Youth Centre Community Cafe every other week to give out help and information. The funding for the Cycle Challenge would continue for a further year, although Cycle England had been abolished. The Challenge would be repeated in May 2011, probably launched on May Day Bank Holiday. It was commented that many people would like to cycle to work and school but are frightened by the poor cycle path network in many areas. Spencer agreed that some sites were much safer to access than others. He had attended a meeting organised by Ashford's Future to look at the existing cycle and footpath network which had been carried out on bicycles. He asked for contacts within businesses in Ashford who would be keen to encourage cycling.

He also asked for suggestions to continue getting the message across over the winter. It was suggested that he give out cheap lights and/or reflective bands to the many cyclists who were riding around wearing dark clothing with no lights. These could have the website of the Ashford Cycle Challenge printed on them. It was agreed to discuss the strategy for the launch of the challenge next year in a special session before the next ACWF meeting. Andrew Macey pointed out that the funding for sports in schools had been cut. It was agreed that Ashford lacked a good cycling venue such as the Betteshanger Circuit in Deal. Spencer mentioned that he had held meetings with Kent Wildlife Trust about the off-road tracks in The Warren. He doubted that this use was compatible with the aims of a nature reserve and dog walkers. Other good cycle routes outside Ashford could be accessed quite easily by train.

**Station Improvements:** a meeting of Stakeholders had taken place on 9<sup>th</sup> September, hosted by Ashford's Future but chaired by Borough Councillor Gerry Clarkson. Jonathan Beare had represented ACWF and Christine Green had also attended representing the Town Centre Partnership. The meeting had failed to reach a consensus. On 12<sup>th</sup> October EN had been sent the Disability Impact Assessment and a drawing of the new layout which was examined by those present. It included a ramp up to car park A, but only an unmarked route through the car park to the

underpass. Other comments were that the crossing over Station Approach should be well-lit and that there should be two lanes available up the hill to the traffic lights to prevent long queues developing. Also, it was suggested the bridge to the roundabout should be widened as currently two buses could not pass each other on it. JB would send comments back to Neil Bowsher on behalf of ACWF.

**Sainsbury's extension:** JB, CG and EN and members of the CACF had met with representatives of Sainsbury's to discuss their concerns with regard to the layout of the car park of the proposed enlarged store. ACWF's interest was in cycle and walking access both to the store and to and from the bridge over the M20 currently being constructed. Sainsbury's had appeared to accept the suggestion that the crossing be moved from the end of the hairpin bend to the store side to allow better visibility, but were not interested in profoundly changing anything else. The application was expected to come to the ABC Planning Committee in December.

**Bovis Development and Relocation of Ashford Hockey Club:** JB suggested that assuming this went ahead it was worth considering the options for safe, off-road access to the new club for cyclists and pedestrians which could join up to existing routes. Various routes were discussed. An outline planning application was expected quite soon.

**County Councillors' offer of funding:** EN had attended a meeting with other Community Forum officers and several County Councillors. One of the subjects for discussion were possible local schemes for them to spend their personal Highways grants on. It had been suggested that it could be usefully used to fund some of the cycle routes that had been cancelled in the first line of funding cuts as they had been drawn out and were ready to go. Spencer also suggested that a bike centre could be set up in the old reception area of the Stour Centre which was currently empty. JB suggested improved signage would also be very useful. EN would contact Councillor Tweed to follow these ideas up.

**Venue of next meeting:** Adrian Steed was thanked for providing such a comfortable and convenient venue. He said that it was available any day except Wednesdays.

**Next meeting, date and venue to be confirmed:** it was agreed that some consultation should be carried out as to which day of the week was most convenient for the majority. JB would then put forward some suggested dates for the next year, between two and three months apart.

**Meeting closed:** 9pm