

Thanet Cycle Forum Minutes of the Meeting Held 18th January 2010

Present: James Shaughnessey, Chairperson; Steve Darling, Transportation Planning Officer; Dennis Franklin, Michael Staynes, local cyclist; Liz Cooper; Chris Bax; Paul London; Moira Bush, Thanet Travel Forum; Douglas Bush, secretary, CTC RtR.

Apologies: John Rowland, Pat Baxter, Michael Randel

Chairperson: For personal reasons Roy Finch is no longer attending the Forum and has stepped down as Chairperson. For a number of years Roy has been Chair and his valuable contributions to the meetings, as a result of his cycling experience and knowledge, will be very much missed. His bringing to order at the meetings, with a humorous comment or poignant remark, often enlivened the meeting. It is hoped that in due time he may be able to return.

DB: To send an expression of the Forum's appreciation and thanks to Roy.

James Shaughnessey gratefully accepted by members as Chairperson.

Minutes of the previous meeting held 19th October 2009 were accepted.

Matters Arising

DB: Members received details of the cycle facility from Reculver to Herne Bay, "Road to Gridlock" document, the details of the diversion at Cliffsend, when cables were being brought ashore to link the wind farm with the on shore station at Richborough, and the tarmacing of parts of the VCT.

1. Behaviour through King George VI Park, Ramsgate

JS: Julie Tublin has responded to Michael Randel and my proposals of publicizing some of the intimidating and provocative behaviour of the some cyclists towards pedestrians and other cyclists and emphasizing the appropriate and responsible way to use the cycle path. At this present time Sustrans will not participate in a publicity campaign to emphasize the positive behaviour in case greater emphasis by the press was placed on the negative aspects and arouse anti-cycling feelings amongst the general public. So the promotional material will not go ahead at this present time. **As much as we are able to, we will continue to promote an appropriate behaviour from cyclists and ensure that signing is used to promote this.**

PL: You have done as much as can be expected and more. It is a social problem rather than a cycling problem and hopefully the good practices of the majority will have a greater impact on behaviour and responses from the general public rather than the anti-social behaviour of the few.

2. Local Development Framework

SD: This is basically a planning document giving details of proposed use of land in Thanet up until 2026 and sets out planning application for the next 16 years. It considers the developments at Westwood, Manston as well as the individual towns and Thanet as a whole, the growth in employment, housing requirements, infrastructure to support the increases and highway infrastructure are examples of issues raised in the document. It basically sets out all the points which need to be taken into account by Thanet District Council when they are considering any future planning application. It is a statutory requirement that TDC produce this document to show that they are thinking strategically and have aspirations and a vision for Thanet in the next 16 years.

JS: It was a difficult document to read as it lacked continuity and much had a double meaning.

SD: There was a reference to over 30 policies which were appropriate to future planning developments as well as government targets and guidelines.

DB: In sending a response on behalf of the Forum, reference was made to the Thanet Cycle Plan and where in the Development Framework, housing development, businesses, the growth at Westwood, Manston, High Streets and Ramsgate and then, what had been accepted in the Cycle Plan should be adhered to, and importantly, planning for walking and cycling should be inclusive and not an after thought as it appears happened at Westwood. Any development should take into account Thanet's natural resources eg. the coast, rural areas and open spaces and potential for tourism and not just rely on attracting businesses coming into the area for developments in Thanet's future. Open spaces such as the old railway line, Tivoli, Hartsdown, Mocketts Wood and Jackey Bakers were highlighted as potential walking and cycling routes to link residential areas with services. Any developments should be inclusive of the needs of cyclists and walkers. For people in new developments there should be secure parking for cycles as well as a safe environment in which to walk or cycle.

SD: Departments in KCC including Highways have responded to the draft Framework. According to the number of objections received it may have to go to a public inquiry and have further consultations. Highways are suggesting to TDC that a "Transport Model" is prepared to accompany the Framework and this will be looking at all forms of transport.

DF: As a member of the public I submitted a response and highlighted a need to provide the safe and attractive environment, on and off road, required by cyclists and walkers. Emphasis should be given to cycle training for youngsters which was appropriate for their needs on the road and to be safe and confident in that environment.

SD: In future the assessment of transport and traffic conditions will be inclusive of all forms and not just cars and then walking and cycling as an after thought.

PL: Are these plans more binding than previous Local Plans as over the last decade the use of land has been different to the designated use?

SD: The Local Development Framework is more forward thinking and the intention is to use this as the benchmark for developments during the next 15 years.

DB: Some consideration has been given to changing conditions as a result of climate change and rising water levels and how this might impact on available land, food resources and available drinking water.

3. Thanet's Assets

DB: The other document circulated by the Thanet Council was with reference to properties and land spaces which the Council wished to sell for private development.

Two sites which impact on the cycling, the old railway line at the rear of Margate Road, Ramsgate, referred to above with reference the Framework, and Hartsdown Park. The former is included in the Thanet Cycle Plan as a potential route from Newington to Westwood and the Business areas, the latter has the potential to provide a cycle path from Hartsdown School towards Westbrook or Margate Station. Comments were sent on behalf of the Forum to raise these issues and to voice concerns that they would be included in any development. Also the old railway line, besides providing for some local cyclists now, does provide a space for youngsters to let off steam on off-road machines and bmx bikes.

PL: Another area which will impact on the Coastal Path is included in a proposal, put forward by the Westgate Beach Warden on behalf of the local vociferous beach group, that holiday structures be built on the grass area adjacent to the car park to the west of Westbrook Bay.

DB: This wasn't included in the list of assets TDC were proposing to sell for development but should be monitored. The other assets included the Chimes from the West Cliff to the Royal Harbour Approach at Ramsgate and the old toilet structure at the rear of the Sea Bathing Hospital site at Margate. If developments went ahead at either of these places then there could be an impact on the VCT and could be detrimental to tourism.

4. Travel Plan at QEQM and Cycle Parking

DB: No progress on this at present and will continue to probe.

DF: I do frequently visit the Hospital and find the cycle parking at St Peters Road entrance inadequate and unstable as you are only able to secure the cycle by one wheel. Also the close proximity to the parked cars is very restricting on the space in which to manoeuvre the bike. The facility at the Ramsgate Rd. entrance, although in the open, is more secure.

DB: Unfortunately the Hospital hasn't appointed anybody who has the position to make decisions concerning the Travel Plan which would be inclusive of cycle parking facilities.

DF: I will contact the consultant about the cycle parking and ask him to raise the issue on behalf of the staff and visitors.

PL: Hospitals are perceived as showing very little progress in developing their travel plans. They are an authority expected to lead and set an example along with the local councils.

DB: Once a travel plan from hospitals, schools, developers etc., has been accepted by the Local Authority, is there supposed to be clear practical evidence of these being developed?

SD: There have been proposals from the Hospital and I will check on these and also ascertain whether there is an obligation to progress the plans in a practical way within some time frame.

5. Go-Ride Scheme

CB: Thanet have recently obtained two turbo machines and they were used for the first time last Saturday. They do have a computer link to virtual reality programme which assimilates different riding experiences and assists with training. All age groups will benefit from these facilities. There are now two coaches and numbers going to the meetings are encouraging. They have applied for more sophisticated machines which can be adapted for riders of different sizes as well as having other programmes.

6. Canterbury to Chartham Route

SD: This continued to be put in place up until the poor weather conditions and will continue in April when funding is available.

7. Swalecliffe to Reculver.

DB: CCC have passed the application to change the "Order" on the promenade and for the proposed amendment to be publicized and open to the public for objections. This was expected to be during the next two weeks.

8. Cycling on the Pavement

DB: Besides the Thanet areas there has been a clamp down by the Police and Community Wardens, in the Dover District, where the prosecution of cyclists has been more severe and without any reference to the behaviour of the cyclists. In essence the Fixed Penalty Notice was introduced in 1999 and was a system to deter the thoughtless and irresponsible behaviour of some cyclists and not to penalize the responsible cyclists who, because of safety issues on the road, used a pavement. CTC referred to a number of other areas where clamp downs were occurring or have occurred. They, as a national cycling organization, will write to the Chief Constables reminding them of the spirit of the law and that officers and community wardens should be reminded of the need to use discretion when considering the action of a cyclists on the path and whether to apply a fixed penalty.

MB: The PACT system introduced by the police in the residential areas of towns is a way for people to report their concerns about aspects of anti-social behaviour and to register with the police their priority as to

the behaviour which should be redressed first. Cycling on the pavement was top of the list from residents in the Northdown Road area and in parts of Broadstairs, hence the clamp down.

DB: DfT statistics indicate far more collisions between motorized vehicles and pedestrians on pavements than between cyclists and pedestrians on pavements.

Updates on Local Routes

1. Northumberland Avenue/ Northdown Park Rd. Junction

SD: This is now in the finishing stages with a zebra crossing to be completed to allow for pedestrians to cross Northdown Park Road from the top of Northumberland Avenue. As requested, in the responses to the proposals when consultations took place at the planning stage, there is incorporated into the scheme a cycle facility to enable cyclists, when travelling from Margate direction, to negotiate the junction out of the traffic.

DB: The lay out of the junction has reduced the speed of the traffic and made it much safer for pedestrians by changing it to a T-junction from the Y- formation. It does lend itself to the development of a cycle route from Northdown Road, using the old tram line to Laleham Road, across the green to Kent Road and a link with Dane Valley Road cycle route.

2. Westfield Road/Brooke Avenue Junction

SD: The changes have been approved and are expected to take place Summer 2010/11.

3. Dane Valley Cycle Route.

SD: Continuation of this route has been approved for 2010/11.

4. Westwood to QEQM2

SD: This has now been completed.

PL: Changes suggested from the Forum and which were practical have occurred.

DF: It was brought up at the last meeting that on approach to the Hospital junction the cycle lane narrows and cyclists are being squeezed on the pavement by vehicles. Where the cyclists are most vulnerable the lane almost disappears.

SD: This has been looked at via a "Safety Audit" carried out at the junction and has been highlighted as an issue to be dealt with.

MS: In the present situation it is more dangerous having it there than being without it as drivers assume the cycle lane designates the space for cyclists and they are entitled, irrespective of what is appropriate, to use the rest of the carriageway and come very close to the cyclists.

SD: I shall keep a close eye on this as it will be interesting to see the response to a safety audit carried out after a scheme has been put in.

MD: The "barrel" type drain covers are also a hazard and for safety reasons should be replaced with ones flush to the surface.

5. Margate Sea Front to Drapers Mills

SD: These alterations have also been approved and are waiting finances in the next financial year.

CB: Which way is it going to go?

SD: To e-mail CB copy of the routes. The route does adhere to the one way system by St John's Church and there is one way out and another into Margate. They follow the routes with one or two minor alterations as shown at the previous meeting.

6. Signing from Ramsgate Station to VCT

SD: I have identified the three places where signs were reported missing and two other places where signs need to be relocated. Immediately outside the Station to direct people down Wilfred Road, at the traffic lights, Wilfred Road/Park Road/Grange Road junction, an off-set sign to direct cyclists into Grange Road and a complementary sign in Ellington Road are where signs are required. At the junction of Ellington Road with South Eastern Rd and at the junction of Elm's Avenue with Queen Street are the sites where they need to be relocated to make them more noticeable. I shall put in an order for this to be carried out.

7. VCT Minnis Bay to St Nicholas via Reculver

DB: At present sensitive negotiations are still taking place in connection with land owners and the conversion of footpaths which link with stretches of bridleway from Belle Isle to Marshside using Snake Drove. Then there is the section from Belle Isle to Court Road, used by some cyclist at present, but to have it accepted as a formal route might prove difficult.

PL: The British Heart Foundation, when negotiating a route for the fund raising day did receive permission to go from the Roman Galley eastwards on a farm track which runs to the north side of the Thanet Way and eventually leads to Chambers Wall.

SD: The farmer is quite responsive to that sort of request but due to his relationship with KCC and TDC will not accept formal use of this path for a cycle route.

CB: The section of path from Reculver to the Roman Galley is over grown and with the recent rains the surface was very muddy.

SD: David Young from Sustrans is negotiating with the land owners.

PL: It seems as if the potential for a recreational open space on the marshes is being overlooked. Horse riders, anglers, walkers and cyclists do use the area and are accepted by the farming community. A bridge would enhance these recreations as well as providing a cross island link with the Sustrans routes.

DB: The project to build 2 bridges at Whitstable, funds coming in part from the Connect2 project, readily fulfills the criteria when considering the potential enhancement for utility cycling as a result of completing the Crab & Winkle route into Whitstable. The Reculver to St Nicholas route, although important in the efforts to promote cycling and tourism in Thanet as well as East Kent, doesn't have the same attraction for utility purposes. Funding will not be quite so easy to find.

SD: The division of the funds received from the Connect2 project towards the Whitstable and Reculver to St Nicholas projects remains the same. Finding the balance in the funding of an acceptable bridge has become more difficult.

8. VCT Chalk Hill

SD: The farm track running alongside Sandwich Road from the western end of Chalk Hill has now come up for renegotiation since the cycle route was put in ten years ago. In approaching the farmer it was requested that the cycle route continued on the farm track up the hill alongside Chalk Hill instead of going onto Chalk Hill at the junction with Sandwich Road. The farmer is amenable to this request and if permission is granted then the kerb and the surface at the junction will be improved for cyclists and farm vehicles.

9. The Broadstairs Traffic Scheme,

Final stage is due to start and this will at completion bring about priority change for traffic at the junction of the High Street with Queen's Road, people coming from Albion Street direction will give way. There will be a raised section of the road, a toucan crossing and a bus lay-by.

DF: I have grave concerns about the junction of Albion Road, High Street and York Street, both as a pedestrian and a cyclist. It is very confusing as to who has priority and who should give way especially when the junction is crowded or vehicles are coming from the various directions and not indicating or knowing where they are going and as a pedestrian you are waiting ages before having the confidence to cross the junction safely.

LC: The building environment, the curves of the pavement and stationary vehicles all add to the confusion as to who has priority. A dotted white line across the High Street at the junction with Albion, giving priority to traffic coming down the hill turning into York Street, would help to alleviate some confusion.

SD: We are trying out a new junction lay out and after a post implementation safety audit the situation will be reviewed on the grounds of its effectiveness for pedestrians and vehicle movements. Also we need to take into account that the scheme is not fully implemented and priority signing at junctions and white lining and such things as signage to direct visitors to the car parks etc., have not yet been installed.

Maintenance Problems:

DF: Very few of the pot holes, brought to the attention of Paul Valek during my survey with him of the road conditions in Thanet, on which we had a mutual agreement that they posed a hazard to cyclists, have been repaired. **Those that have been temporary repaired are now in need of further attention.**

SD: Paul Valek has control over when it is the appropriate time to do the repairs. However, the repair to the sign at Westwood, the one by the switchbox, has been implemented and a new one has been provided for installing a little further down. Money set aside for major maintenance works on cycle routes has been used to tarmac the surfaces on parts of the VCT-the sections from the Neptune's Tower to the Captain Digby and the path alongside Joss Gap Rd. between Convent Rd. and Elmwood Avenue. At Hugin Green, extra cycle lines have been put in to discourage people from driving over the path onto the green and further towards Sandwich, some safety work has been done where the cycle path crosses the entrance to the Pegwell Nature Reserve.

PL: The addition of the signs on the cycle path telling cyclists to "give way" is a retrograde step and only the white lines had to be repainted. It is disappointing as it was the only junction in Kent where cyclists had priority over motorists.

SD: It was in agreement with the representatives of the Nature Reserve and Sustrans that the changes were made. **If there are any other parts of the VCT or other cycle routes where major repair is required then please let me know so that a bid can be made for the finances next year.**

DF: The shared cycle path running between Fairfield Rd. and Edge End Rd. is being undermined by the tree roots and is becoming quite unsafe to cycle on.

PL: When are the barriers along the Sandwich Road to be removed? Are Pfizer still maintaining the section of path by the water treatment plant? The condition of the path and environment has deteriorated, so is Pfizer still prepared to maintain the path?

JS: The old Sandwich Road is in a very poor state and in need of attention.

DB: The Sustrans milepost by the Viking ship, has slipped through the Sustrans net as one of the mileposts in need of maintenance, however it will receive due attention.

With regard to the cycle parking stands by the Obelisk, Ramsgate Harbour, I will need to ask Joe McCarthy if they are to be replaced by more substantial stands.

PL: They were well used when installed by people visiting the toilets, fish & chip shop and other food sources. Now there are only a couple by the roundabout and a couple positioned towards the Harbour towards Madeira Walk. The latter are positioned too close to a wall so that they cannot be effectively used.

SD: If JM has space for cycle parking then we are able to provide him with racks.

PL: If the "Sheffield Stands" are too bulky there are other less obtrusive fittings which could be used to which cycles can be securely fitted.

SD: I'll have a word with JM and see if there are places along there where racks may be fitted.

JS: On the shared cycle paths there is still the problem of lack of awareness and where to walk or cycle. A sign painted on the surface, consisting of a 25cm diameter circle divided in half by a vertical line with an image of a pedestrian in one half and the image of a cycle in the other half, is used off highways in Canterbury and other areas. Can we have such markings in Thanet?

SD: There is no such legally prescribed sign to use on the highways but it would be up to TDC to decide whether to use it through parks and on the esplanades.

PL: There is another general point concerning facilities to encourage cycling and also to be more acceptable to motorists. Instead of toucan crossings at which pedestrians or cyclists wait quite a while and motorists are sometimes unnecessarily kept waiting with a consequence of traffic backing up, could 3m wide zebra crossings be installed across each junction of the roundabout at Westwood? Traffic would only be held up when someone was crossing. For the pedestrian and cyclist, the route would be more direct and the tedious diversion to the toucan crossings, which does put people off from using the shared pavement facility are unnecessary.

DB: £200k from KCC and £40k from Sustrans was pledged for maintenance of traffic free routes, has this been obtained?

SD: That was used to carry out the major maintenance during this year and it is in part that as a result of the requests from an active Cycle Forum that a bid was placed and the allocation of funding made available.

PL: Now that the surfaces have been improved should signs be placed on the tight corners to warn users of the path to slow, be prepared to give way to pedestrians and that there may be on coming cyclists too.

SD: Signs similar to those recently installed behind the garage on Sandwich Road would be applicable.

DB: I have a couple of Sustrans signs which could be placed either side of the bend at the Digby.

PL: Also noticed was the new fencing by Bleak House and the missing "give way to pedestrians" sign which had remained there for some years.

DB: I will make inquiries to see if the new owners would accept a new sign on the corner post. If the response is negative then there are other options which Joe McCarthy may help us with.

JS: There is a section of cycle path from the top of Stirling Way to Leigh Road, running along the east side of Haine Road, which is really beginning to crack and be hazardous.

Should I report this through the normal channels?

SD: Yes, in the first place go to the report fault web page and see what response there is then come back to me if there is no reaction.

DB: When Stuart Smith was working at TDC he approached Julie Street, managing Gateway, to request that the parking stands situated at the corner of the library be reposition near to the entrance. I need to go back to TDC to see if can be done as the present positions are not conducive to secure cycle parking.

In April, Sustrans are hoping that a particular week can be set aside when all Rangers will be looking at the condition of signs and signage.

PL: Can we arrange a time, perhaps the first week in April to carry out a survey of the VCT?

Agreed and date to be arranged.

Survey of Cycling in Thanet

DB: When the topic was put on the agenda of the last meeting the matter concerning DF's survey with Paul Valek was discussed. The purpose of a survey, I wish to put forward, is to ascertain the numbers of Thanet people using a cycle, purpose of use, frequency etc. those who wish to use a cycle and reason why they will not and the conditions which might induce them to do so. Such a survey was carried out when preparing the first Cycle Plan. Is now the time to conduct another survey?

PL: Does the Traffic Survey include cyclists?

SD: A manual count is made of pedestrians and cyclists going through specific junctions in and out of towns and the results are used to ascertain any trends in the numbers of people travelling these ways in Kent. These numbers are available and there are also automatic counts of cyclists on a number cycle paths.

MS: These are counts of cyclists who use these particular routes and a proportion of the total cycling.

DB: To bring example of surveys to the next meeting in April.

SD: It would be possible to put a survey on the Web site and publicize it in the local press.

Future Venue for TCF Meetings

Forum members expressed their thanks and gratitude to members of the Friends Meeting House for hosting this evenings meeting and asked, if it was convenient, to continue holding further meetings here.

MS: Thought that this would be acceptable and could not see any problems.

DB: I will approach TDC and ask for details about applying for a grant to assist with covering the cost of using the Friends Meeting House.

PL: In view of the assistance the Forum has voluntarily given to improving and setting up cycle routes in the area and since we no longer meet at the Council Office, then TDC should be prepared to allocate some financial grant to the Forum for using the Meeting House.

MS: The running cost of the Meeting House averages £5 per hour and groups using the premises are asked to contribute towards the expenses.

Copy of TCF Minutes to Spokes – East Kent Cycle Campaign Group, Canterbury.

DB: There has been a request from Steve Fawkes, Chair of Spokes, Canterbury, to receive and circulate to the Spokes Committee a copy of the TCF minutes. Would the members of the Forum agree to the minutes of the meetings being circulated as requested?

Forum agreed to the circulation of the minutes to Spokes.

“Growth Without Gridlock”

DB: It is important that we respond to this document because of the influence County has upon what happens on the highways in Thanet and the distribution of funding towards financing schemes. The strategy outlined in the document is for the next 20 years so it is important that the vision for a really integrated transport policy is actually seen to be the aim of the contents of final document. All transport organizations and groups, including the various cycle forums in Kent, are being given the opportunity to respond. Comments are to be received by 12th February 2010. On the sheet I have distributed are references to where concerns and issues have been raised about the contents in the document. The main concerns centre around the lack of lateral thinking in joining the various modes of transport into an integrated whole. Modes are still being considered in isolation and the emphasis being placed on motorized traffic in the urban areas of Kent. In the rural areas there are no suggestions as to how cycling and walking may be integrated with bus routes and at transport hubs there is little reference to facilities for cycling or walking.

Would members of the Forum read through the comments with reference to the document and e-mail me any thoughts. I will then put together a response on behalf of the Forum.

JS: The document is based on the commercial aspect of Kent and how the congestion on the roads may be reduced to assist the flow of traffic. It is focused on the economy in Kent as applicable to the use of motorized transport.

PL: The lack of a timetable which links up the local train services so that interconnections are without half hour delays and also the loop bus not going to Margate station reflects Thanet is lacking an integrated transport policy.

Future Events

Thanet Coast Project Rides:

31st May Viking Bay to Viking Ship ride, 2pm Viking Bay;
18th June Droit House to Minnis Bay ride, 6.30pm from Droit House;
26th July Droit House to Viking Bay ride, 10am from Droit House;

13th-21st June Bike Week

13th June BWOK, rides commencing from various venues in Kent, hopefully one of these will be Ramsgate, cycling to Sandwich and using NCN 1 to Canterbury.

17th Oct British Heart Foundation ride, expecting to have a more challenging distance this year;

Spokes Newsletter has details of rides and events.

SD: The Hospice is looking at putting on an event during the year. I'll bring further details to the next meeting.

CB: There are numerous events being arranged with the Go-Ride groups. I'll pass on the details as soon as they are confirmed.

AOB

LC: A problem I am now encountering is when coming up behind a bus and trying to assess whether or not to overtake, the view of the interior of the bus is now blocked by adverts placed on the rear of the bus. No longer can you see what is happening which would give an indication as to whether the bus was about to pull away or remain at the stop, so that I could judge whether to overtake or not to. There are numerous times now when I just start to overtake and the bus begins to pull away and this can be quite intimidating as well as dangerous.

JS: Drivers only refer to the external mirrors to ascertain the road condition before pulling away, the only time the internal mirror is used is used is when observing the passengers.

CB: I tend to pull out before reaching the bus so that I am located in the bus mirror which may not be the instance if I cycle up to the rear of the bus and pull out.

LC: Although most bus drivers do indicate, the ability to make overtaking safer by not having the rear obscured could be a problem to the cyclist. I will contact Stagecoach and say how this is making it more difficult to assess whether it is safe to overtake.

Date of Next Meeting;

19th April 2010; 19th July 2010; and 18th October 2010 – Taking place on a Monday at 7pm, finishing at 9pm – Venue Friends Meeting House, Broadstairs, corner of St Peter's Park Road and Fordoun Rd., close to the traffic lights and behind the garage.