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## Private Member's Bill is Anti-Cycling and Misinformed

Tory MP Andrea Leadsom's Private Member's Bill to bring penalties for cyclists in line with motorists could well have the unintended effect of preventing children from cycling. She cites a single tragic case for her reasoning.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-13034162>

In April 2007, 17 year old Rhianon Bennett was walking home down a cul-de-sac with her friends, after visiting a skate park and reportedly drinking some cans of lager, when she was hit from behind by 36 year old cyclist Jason Howard.

Police reports said that Rhianon was walking in the road, her friends say she was on the pavement. As she fell she struck her head on the kerb. She died 6 days later.

Approaching the group, mountain biker Howard is alleged to have shouted, "Move because I'm not stopping". The road was wide enough for him to have swerved. He was fined £2,200 at the Magistrates Court.

Any death on the road is a tragedy. Much has been made of this case that Howard was riding on, or crossing, the pavement. Police reports dispute this.

Andrea Leadsom wrongly claims the court was powerless to send Howard to prison. Legislation does exist which could have resulted in two years jail but that was brought in before the bicycle was invented.

This law will open up claims that people need insurance and tax to ride a bike on a public highway. Children will be considered too high a risk by insurers. This will mean children cannot ride bikes in the street, cycle to school. Is this a good idea? Is it a vote winner?

Supporters of this Bill state that between 2005 and 2009, 10 people have been killed by cyclists on the roads and 262 seriously injured. Yet every single day 6 people die on our roads, 393 are injured and 67 seriously injured. In 2009 road deaths were 2,222 with 24,690 serious injuries. Cycling deaths numbered 104 with 2,606 seriously injured. RTAs cost the UK £33B a year.

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 a 20 year old female cyclist was killed by a lorry in Camden Town. On 24<sup>th</sup> March a 20 year old male cyclist, and in another incident a pedestrian, were killed by a lorry in London. These events didn't make many other papers.

These events happen so often that we are blind to the sheer scale of the death toll from drivers. Any simplistic solution, such as a change in the law concerning cyclists is seized upon by the press as a universal panacea, while ignoring the real culprits.

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SPOKES was formed in 1994 to campaign for better cycling facilities in East Kent. SPOKES works closely with Sustrans, Kent County Council, district and parish councils. SPOKES is affiliated to the Cyclists' Touring Club, the Cycle Campaign Nation and Euro-Regio Velo.



Snapshot of the highly successful Chartham to Canterbury Cycle Route (Photo by Sam Webb)

"Spokes bumper Edition" including SPOKES questions to all prospective councillors who are standing in the upcoming local elections, the official opening of the Chartham to Canterbury Cycle route (The Great Stour Way) on May 21<sup>st</sup>, and pull-out map of this year's Big Wheel of Kent rides.

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## Questions to prospective councillors in Canterbury, Shepway, Dover, Thanet and Ashford districts

The seven questions below have been asked of every candidate in the local elections. Spokes will publish the answers to these questions publicly to help enable our members to form their voting choices and to make sure the answers are in fact followed. They will be available on our website: <http://www.spokeseastkent.org.uk/election/may-2011>

1. Would you work to introduce a 20mph speed limit in all residential areas in your ward in order to reduce the risks of death and serious injury and encourage walking and cycling as recommended by the The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS)?
2. Would you actively pursue the creation of more dedicated walking and cycling routes away from motorised traffic such as the creation of a cycle routes to schools?
3. Across Kent District Cycling Strategies are being submitted to Kent Highway Services. Will you ensure that the new Cycling Strategy for your district will be actively pursued and implemented?
4. As property developments begin to re-emerge, will you pursue funds from developers to be utilised to increase walking and cycling?
5. Would you support your council providing free adult cycle training?
6. How will you liaise with your communities to ensure safe routes to schools and other community facilities and the increase in shared paths and cycle lanes?
7. Will you work to ensure cycling can play a key role in an integrated transport structure?

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SPOKES, PO Box 991 Canterbury CT1 9EL.

Please make cheques payable to SPOKES and send to

Senior citizen/unwaged/under 16 £5

Individual adult £7.50  Family/household £12

Annual membership - please tick relevant box:

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## Editorial

Please come along and support the official opening of the Great Stour Way on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2011. Sheila Webb has been collecting comments from recent path users. John Macdonald pictured here using the path is partially sighted and a member of the Kent Association for the blind. He said "I am amazed at the courtesy of the cyclists on this path". Nick Leader, a retired languages teacher at Simon Langton Boys School said the path was "brilliant" and that he "now cycled regularly to Chartham for exercise." Angela and Marliese both Canterbury residents said that they felt safe walking alone on the path. Sandra and Martin Cook who live in Chartham and organise the Farmer's Market there sum it all up by saying "money well spent". We look forward to seeing everyone on the 21<sup>st</sup> May.



## GREAT STOUR WAY

### A Potted History of the Chartham to Canterbury Cycle Route

Planning cycle routes and getting them built takes time, lots of time. You have to have patience and be prepared when everything is finished for people to ask, "Why did it take you so long?" When you explain they look at you in amazement and you both laugh at the reason objectors gave such as, "Naked men running down the river."

The idea for a route along the River Stour from Chartham into Canterbury came from a request from a man in a wheelchair at the Chartham Fete who thought it would be nice to go fishing again in the river. So the first idea of a safe and beautiful cycling/walking/wheelchair route into Canterbury was born. That was nearly 20 years ago.

The idea of a wheelchair route was also tied into a safe cycling route so children could cycle to school. The Stour Valley School had just closed. Of course most of those children have now grown up and have children of their own but it's great to see a younger generation cycling into school, people walking their dogs and just being happy.

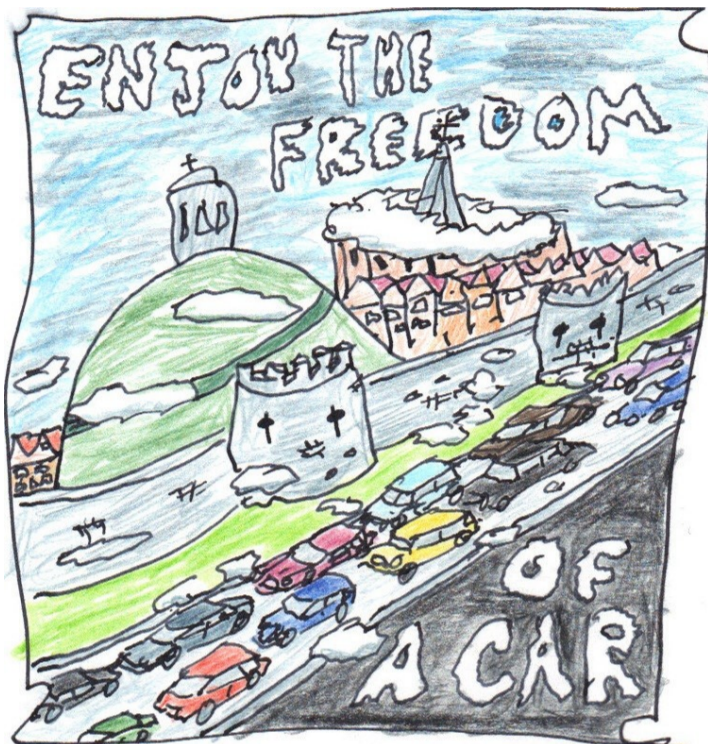
The route is just part of a much greater whole. One day there will be a route along the Stour to Ashford linking Canterbury, Chartham, Chilham, Wye and Ashford. Routes are planned through the City along the Stour. The case for Eco-Tourism and safe, greener commuting is enormous.

The route passes historic places. Near the bridge at Thanington, Caesar crossed the Stour in 54AD and laid siege to Bigbury Fort on the North Downs Way before going back to Rome only to return later and conquer Britain.

Now at long last it is possible to cycle or walk from Chartham into Canterbury alongside a beautiful river. At Toddler's Cove the route splits. To the left you can join NCR1 and cycle to Whitstable along the Crab & Winkle to the right go under Rheims Way and into the middle of town without encountering a car. Other links take you into the shopping/trading estate and shortly the Horse's & Goats Tunnel will open under the railway as yet another route into and out of Canterbury.

Spokes has always believed that if people are presented with well designed walking and cycling routes they will use them. The Great Stour Way is no exception.

Sam Webb



## Chairman's Ramblings

Amusingly, with regard to my last ramblings, I have been caught out or should I say caught in! The leader of Canterbury City Council Cllr John Gilbey and new prospective candidate for Nailbourne Ward, Simon Cook actually knocked on my door (small amount of egg on face) for a friendly chat! Glad to know that our councillors read our newsletter and delighted that Gilbey chose to knock on my door even though Bridge is not in his ward! I have faced criticism from various quarters, but my message remains the same. If councillors want to be elected they need to engage with the voters and that should be done by door-to-door canvassing!

In the last newsletter we mentioned the new abandoned bike initiative started by the good folk in Canterbury City Council. In order to help our friends, I would ask everybody to keep an eye on Bicycles that have been abandoned and dumped by contacting [abandonedbikes@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:abandonedbikes@canterbury.gov.uk). I would also commend this initiative to all districts in Kent. It certainly works!

Finally, I must mention a hero of mine Enrique Peñalosa. In the last newsletter there was an article entitled Ciclovía by our Spokes member Phoebe Allen who is currently working in Columbia. I won't go in to any great detail but if you are able, please follow the link and listen to Enrique's inspiring talk he gave at the London School of Economics. The talk can be found here: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hWRXdUJPPA&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hWRXdUJPPA&feature=player_embedded).

Steve Fawke

Please get to the editor all articles and photographs for the next newsletter by mid June 2011.

## Saturday 11 June:

### The Big Wheel of Kent

We're delighted to announce that the Big Wheel of Kent cycling event will take place on Saturday 11 June.

This celebration of cycling will include long rides, short rides and a cycling festival in the Dane John Gardens in Canterbury featuring live music, food, fun and, of course, bikes.

The rides are designed to appeal to all sorts of cyclists, from the less confident to the regular rider through to the sports cyclist. All the rides will be led by a Spokes volunteer, but if cyclists want the freedom to cycle at their own pace and at a time convenient to them on 11 June, then they just need to follow the detailed route maps that are available online.

Spokes has created two circular rides through the beautiful countryside around Canterbury as well as a special Canterbury Discovery ride exploring the City streets. To celebrate the new cycle path along the Great Stour to Chartham there will be special family rides to Hambrook Marshes and Chartham.

As this is the Big Wheel of Kent, as well as the circular rides there will be Spoke rides from Ashford, Deal, Faversham, Folkestone, Herne Bay, Maidstone, Margate, Ramsgate, Rochester, Sandwich, Sittingbourne and Whitstable all ending up at the hub in Canterbury at the Dane John Gardens.

This year's Big Wheel of Kent has more rides and more activities to appeal to more riders. We hope that families will enjoy the event together as it's a wonderful way for people to get on a bike and have fun. We hope that cyclists of all ages and levels will join the rides."

To get involved, riders need to register at [www.bigwheelofkent.org.uk](http://www.bigwheelofkent.org.uk). The site includes maps and guides for all the rides.

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### Potholes!

Kent Highway Services are currently engaged in another pothole filling "blitz". This has been aided by the recent budget announcement of a further £100M nationwide for highway authorities to tackle potholes, bringing the national total to £200M. Kent will receive £6.5M of the additional money. To help Kent Highway Services with spotting the most important potholes to be fixed for cyclists we encourage you to report them via [www.kent.gov.uk/khsfaults](http://www.kent.gov.uk/khsfaults), or to ring 08458 247 800.

### Entente cordiale continues

Spokes members Beatrice Shire and Gregory Williams led a party of 22 French schoolchildren and their teachers from Dover to Ashford by bicycle. We've helped out in this for several years now and it's proven to be most enjoyable. A couple of days later we lead the group back to Dover to catch their return ferry.

**SPOKES RIDES & EVENTS**  
See separate sheet for details of all rides and events through to the end of the year.