

Editorial

Air pollution is killing people in Canterbury. It is also killing people in Dover, Margate, Maidstone, Tonbridge, Tonbridge Wells, Dartford and Gravesend to just name the key pollution hotspots in Kent. All the aforementioned towns/city have at least one Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). This means that the air quality there is not meeting legal objectives and that a plan has to be put in place by the local authority to work towards meeting the legal air quality objectives. To date no AQMA in Kent has managed to meet the legal air quality objectives. In fact it would appear that air pollution is actually getting worse in these areas. As a result, more people in Kent will continue to die directly and indirectly because of air pollution. Children will be born prematurely, heart attacks will become more frequent and lung diseases will increase. Why are so many of our politicians so dismissive about air pollution? Take Canterbury for example. In 2006, there were two streets that were designated as an AQMA, now there are 9 that will be so designated- in essence Canterbury is being strangled by air pollution. What are our leaders in Canterbury going to do about it well er...nothing actually. They have planned to keep levels as they are now until at least 2016! Related to this is the recent transport modelling that Canterbury City Council has paid for. The modelling called VISUM will be used to gauge how new development proposals in South Canterbury and elsewhere will impact upon the transport network. Surprisingly and contrary to Highways Agency guidance, cycling and walking have not been included as part of the modelling database!!! Apparently, cyclists and walkers are merely recorded as part of the 5% of people that do not travel at all. I suspect that the VISUM is unlawful in its current guise. More worrying still is the cavalier attitude of some of Canterbury's Tory dominated council. Kent County Council Leaders appear no better. It is high time that the irresponsible, car obsessed dinosaurs are removed from power.

Chairman's Ramblings

This year's AGM will be held on Monday December 5th and will be held at the Friends Meeting House. Doors open at 7pm and the AGM will start at 7.15pm so please make sure you arrive in good time as we are anticipating a full house for this year's guest speaker. The agenda will be put on the website no less than 14 days before the AGM. If any member has questions that they feel need to be raised at the AGM these need to be sent to me no less than 7 days prior to the meeting.

This year our guest speaker is none other than the famous and inspirational Rosie Swale Pope MBE. Rosie is an author, adventurer and marathon runner who has sailed across the Atlantic in a small boat, trekked 3000 miles through Chile on horseback and successfully completed a five-year around-the-world run for a charity. I could go on and list her achievements but it would be far better to attend this year's AGM and allow Rosie to tell her story in her own words.

In the last edition of ramblings I mentioned the gathering pace of two campaigns that are spreading out across the country; Twenty's Plenty for Us and Sustrans Free Range Kids. By the time you read this edition of ramblings Norman Baker MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department of Transport will have produced a new Traffic Signs Policy document that will make speed reduction and signage easier and cheaper to implement. Interestingly the European Parliament has also voted on a resolution for 30 km/h (18.6 mph) speed limit in residential areas and is calling for a road safety action plan as a matter of urgency across Europe. This is great news for our communities and the streets we live in, great news for the environment and for real social and economic sustainability. This could be a chance for local politicians to shine if they have vision and ambition for change. But don't hold your breath-

Do we have your email address? If not, please email our Membership Secretary with your membership number in the subject line so that we can contact you quickly regarding our campaigns. The email address is: membership@spokeseastkent.org.uk

16.8% increase in subversives*

In October, SPOKES commissioned 16 highly trained operators in an exercise code-named "spot the 2 wheeled subversives".

SPOKES operatives gathered intelligence about the numbers of 2 wheeled cycling subversives at large on our city streets.

Full protection was issued for this work including clipboards, pencils and oxygen breathing equipment for the most hazardous areas.

The threat levels imposed by these two-wheelers are mainly that they make no contribution to the levels of benzene, carbon monoxide, lead, sulphur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide levels in the air, nor do they help the Oil Companies' profits or the Exchequer with any fuel duty. Air pollution and congestion have almost become traditional values and could be under threat and subverted by these 2 wheelers.

That's why SPOKES counts and celebrates these agents of change for posing a threat to the established order (it seems) of ever more pollution and congestion.

If you have full security clearance, find out about SPOKES special services at www.spokeseastkent.org.uk/census.php

Robin Townsend

* Compared with last year, based in the same survey locations.

EU adopts 30km recommendation for residential areas

The European Parliament has recently adopted a resolution to encourage lower urban speed limits across Europe

The resolution "strongly recommends the responsible authorities to introduce speed limits of 30kmh in all residential areas and on single-lane roads in urban areas which have no separate cycle lanes."

This will make it easier local authorities in the UK to push for more 30kmh zones (20mph in the UK). Spokes is delighted by this resolution and hope it will spur on the UK's Twenty's Plenty campaign. Residential areas across Kent need to be reclaimed by people and liberated from car domination and pollution.

This resolution is part of a wide range of European measures to halve Europe's 31,000 annual road fatalities by 2020. A EU survey undertaken in 2010 showed that there was massive support across Europe for 30kmh.

John Shirley

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

NEWS . . . NEWS . . . NEWS . . . NEW

M20 cycle bridge opens

By the time you read this the M20 cycle and pedestrian bridge between Ashford's Eureka Entertainment Park and Warren Retail Park will have opened. This route replaces the cycle path which crossed the M20 J9 sliproads and will make many cycling journeys substantially easier. In Eureka Entertainment Park the bridge links up with the new Pilgrim's Cycle Trail, part of National Cycle Route 17. On the south side of the M20 the bridge links up with the cycle path beside Simone Weil Avenue.

Peter does LeJoG

I'm an older short-distance cyclist but I recently did the Land's End-John O'Groats trip. It was wonderful, especially because of my support party a.k.a Sue Lakeman. Here's the sum-total of 15.5 days of reflection on cycling, headwinds, lorries with trailers, where the next energy snack is coming from and related issues:



1. The UK has some great cycleways (thanks to some extent to the efforts of members of Spokes). I particularly liked, the Lune Estuary path, the Camel valley and Taunton-Bridgewater canal cycle paths and Tay Path around Perth and onwards through Dunkeld. There are some brilliant sections over the Grampians, apart from the bit that dumps you without warning onto a busy A9, a few miles south of Inverness. Bristol and Edinburgh are of course brilliant, and Runcorn and Widness are not bad.

2. I felt that the Lake District (Windermere to Thirlmere) could do with some work, and also bits of the South-West, where it is sometimes hard to avoid the A30. Are cycleways generally best where property values are lower?

3. The UK has so many glorious areas tucked away. Revelations to me were the White Esk valley and Etterickvale, due north between Carlisle and Edinburgh, and the floe country in Caithness, vast, flat and lovely, with a lower population now than some 3000 years ago.

4. Almost everyone is very helpful when asked directions, but almost no-one knows anything about cycle routes.

5. Is it typically the more expensive cars that are most inclined to whip past your elbow leaving three centimetres clearance on blind corners? Well I suppose pricier cars are generally wider than cheaper cars, so they need more of the road...

6. Why does John O'Groats get all the attention? Dunnet Head is further north, more spectacular and less commercialised.

7. There is a sign just south of the Forth road bridge: 'cyclists are required to use the pavement', a rather different approach from that of East Kent councils.

Peter Taylor-Gooby

Freshly painted Sustrans Mile Post. Work carried out by young volunteers Isobel Rice and Helen Delmar

Picture: Sam Webb

