

Reflections on Creating Networks!

Rachael Carley

Wye Active

One of my hopes for the event, was that better communication and closer working partnerships could be established – particularly between the cycle/active travel campaign groups, but, as more people got involved, also with some of the professionals whose role it is to achieve better active travel outcomes, in Kent and beyond.

It was fantastic to have so many people with that shared aim/vision together in the same room, and I hope that the day will be viewed as a positive step in terms of developing networks and working relationships.

To assist us in having a more joined up approach, and to be more effective in achieving better outcomes for active travel throughout Kent, I had requested that each speaker consider the following: -

- What they thought would be helpful for campaign groups to do more of (subject to our limited resources)
- Things we currently do that may not be particularly helpful to the cause (I don't think that anyone gave any feedback on this so perhaps we are all perfect already! :))
- What they could do to support us
- What we could do to support them (subject to our limited resources and/or levels of expertise!)
- Who we should contact about particular issues – so that there are clear channels of communication

A number of suggestions were made, but I do feel there could be some value in discussing these matters further, and also to finish working through the agenda, as we did not have sufficient time to do this in the afternoon meeting.

As the day concluded I offered to take things forward as follows: -

Liaise with Kent County Council to determine whether they would be willing to assist us again, with a venue for future meetings (particularly for a Kent wide forum)

- Circulate contact details
- Initiate the formation of a Kent-wide forum that is representative of all groups that actively promote/are committed to active travel/recreational cycling/walking/horse riding etc.
- Contact the East Sussex forum to find out more about how their forum works and feed this information back to everyone

In the meantime, everyone agreed to send me suggestions about who they think should be invited to be a part of a Kent-wide forum so that I can start to collate a list.

Charlotte Reynolds

Wye Active

Wye Active agreed to set up a private Facebook page for campaign groups and summarise the day.

Here are the key messages: -

1. Call on councils to act on their air quality management plans
2. Generate wider public support, so public vote for active travel investment
3. Help people love the network and volunteer for Sustrans
4. Promote Kent sport active travel challenge - starts 1st May - <https://www.kentsport.org/get-active/getting-active-work/active-work-tracker/active-work-challenges/>
5. Organise Councillor visit to Waltham Forest (Luke Anderson, British Cycling may be able to assist with financing/organising this - TWBUG have contacts)
6. KCC will tell us when a consultation is taking place that we could assist with by generating wider public support for it
7. Micro volunteering- getting much wider group of people to help by emailing Councillors to show support
8. Spread the word on British Cycling videos to encourage more people to cycle more regularly <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/knowledge/skills>

Patrick Jarman

Bikeability/ Spokes/Thanet Cycle Forum /YTA

Two key messages I took from yesterday were from Barbara Cooper – Lobby hard as individuals, local groups and umbrella groups, and from Steve Peckham – use the uncompromising health message as it is a powerful one.

I think it is without doubt the right way to go to try and create an umbrella body that can speak as one voice on at least a philosophy and intent, even if the different groups have their own aims and objectives. Learning from East Sussex (as neighbours) has to be a sensible move, and any other similar umbrella groups from across the country.

Richard Wadey

Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum

It seems to me that the major message from the conference was the gap between, on the one hand, the ways that a rational society would organise the infrastructure for walking, cycling and vehicular traffic and, on the other hand, what councillors and local-government officers regard as politically feasible given the current state of public opinion. It was suggested that local campaigning groups have a role to play in closing that gap - by informing and educating the

general public about issues such as air quality and about how planning policies that facilitate walking and cycling can contribute to tackling the adverse health impacts arising from vehicle-generated pollution.

This emphasis on the role of local campaigning groups, as educators and informers, may well be reasonable — but if they are to exercise that role effectively they need to be provided with the appropriate information resources and educational material.

Might it be possible for KCC and its partners to work with the University of Kent to produce materials that give an agreed assessment of risk (including risks from short-term exposure) in each locality and which can be used by local campaigning groups to inform and educate local people about the hazards of air pollution and about the advantages to be obtained from a more radical approach to walking, cycling and the management of vehicular traffic?

Gary Outram

Dartford and Gravesham Cycle Forum

I thought it might be helpful to give some feedback on the meeting, with a little comparison and contrast to the MCCF Travel Choices seminar the previous week.

Firstly and most importantly, thank you, Charlotte and Lindsay (and anyone else behind the scenes) for your work in making it happen.

Prof. Stephen Peckham gave a particularly powerful and impactful presentation on Air Quality. The facts were shocking. I feel we weren't the best audience to hear them, preaching to the converted, but once the presentation materials are shared the evidence therein will prove very helpful.

Barbara Cooper painted a rather bleak, if realistic view of where Active Travel currently sits on the KCC Members' agenda. The light at the end of the tunnel being that she feels things can change.

Familiar messages from Sustrans via David and James. Adrian's enthusiasm for Cycle Friendly Deal is undoubted. Duncan and Luke raised the profile of some of their projects.

Everything seemed to flow well with no technical hitches. Mostly familiar themes and information with a few new messages. The breaks and afternoon session were excellent opportunities for networking, putting names to faces, renewing old acquaintances and making new ones too. Time well spent.

The MCCF seminar presented the very best the UK has to offer as something KCC should unequivocally deliver. The doses of realism, in a healthy sense from Barbara Cooper, David Young and James Cleeton, not so much so from Paul Harper, meant the day was not as uplifting as the MCCF seminar.

The important thing is what happens next. I believe many of us are hoping for more than KCC are looking to deliver, I believe the solution is to grow support so that we can demand more from KCC

and persuade them to deliver rather than just hoping. I look forward to the new Facebook Group as a way to share experience, information and best practice.

Adrian Berendt and Paul Mason

TWBUG

TWBUG shared the following information re Waltham Forest: -
Video produced by Waltham Forest:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvVI3Xjpsn4>

4-minute video of the Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User's Group tour of Waltham Forest with Tunbridge Wells Borough Councillors and officers and Kent County Councillors and officers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXqOdJYs2PM&t=83s>

Katie Cullen

KCC Principal Transport Planner

Helen Fisher (Sustrans) was saying that when she trains the rangers one of things that comes out is they are not aware of how to physically report faults. I know the Ramblers always have links to the fault reporting tool on their websites. I believe some of the cycle groups do. Might be some best practice to share amongst the groups. Her suggestion was to have the web address actually on the routes too. Might be something cycle group members could put up?