

RCC Reports on School Streets



Carole Richards volunteering for the Crescent Road School Streets Project

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Campaign Diary

In this issue, Kat Heath, Rob Hill and Joe Edwards look at the School Streets initiative.

This was set up to make the areas outside of schools safer for children, by banning cars during a certain period, usually at dropping off and picking up times.

Kat interviewed a volunteer at Wilson School.

Rob spoke to the Calcot Infant and Junior Schools' Chair of

Governors and the West Berkshire Council's representative about the project there.

Joe spent time observing what happens on the Crescent Road School Streets area to find out how reducing car access has made a difference to the safety of children, and other road users, in the vicinity.

You can find out more about School Streets from their reports from page 8.

Campaign News



Reading Borough Council
(RBC)

Summer 2024 Report

Since the Spring report there have been Cycle Forum (29 February 2024) and CAST (3 April 2024) meetings to report. The next Cycle Forum meeting is on 3 September 2024 and the next CAST meeting on 2 July 2024.

Shinfield Road Active Travel Scheme Tranche 2

Site works are still in progress, but have been paused while additional government funding was approved. The signals with ASLs (advance stop lines) and an early start for cyclists will be implemented at the end of the works.

RCC still has a number of concerns with the scheme including the university entrance area, sideroads and the bus stop areas. The segregated shared-path signs and all of the surface markings were unfortunately still not completed at the end of April.



Town Centre Signing and Routes

There are still a few signs to be provided, in particular the important ones in Town Hall Square. It is unclear what the delays are.

Station Subway

The subway will be closed for refurbishment prior to opening before the Reading Festival.

Redlands Road Area Traffic Calming

Despite RBC's agreement to make some improvements, there has still been no action.

Lower Henley Road Cycle Lanes and ASL

The Lower Henley Road ASL and a short cycle lane were reinstated in April, with the separate left-turn lane

for all vehicles being replaced by a mandatory cycle lane. It's a pity the ASL is not 5m deep and the mandatory lane marking is only 100mm wide, as opposed to the 150mm it should be! But at least some progress.

Cleaner Air and Safer Transport (CAST) 3 April 2024

The last meeting took place on 3 April with reports from the Council including Clean Air Living Matters (CALM) project update.

The Bus Service Improvement Plan was also reported, with 24 electric buses coming soon.

A Zebra crossing is to be provided in Upper Redlands Road with Active Travel Plan Tranche 4 funding. Also in Tranche 4 is funding to design (only) the cycle crossing from Sidmouth Street at Queens Road, as well as Christchurch Green junction.

There is a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) award for 35 dropped crossings. I hope these are not where we would prefer raised crossings to slow traffic.

There was no progress on the road 'crossings' policy that RCC had raised; this should be reported on at the next meeting on 2 July 2024.

John Lee
RBC Campaigner for RCC

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Campaign News continued...



West Berkshire Council (WBC)

Summer 2024 Report

There has been little new development regarding cycling in the eastern area of West Berkshire in recent months.

The last West Berks Cycle Forum was on Wednesday 19 May. We will report on the outcome in the next newsletter.

PAWS (Pangbourne & Whitchurch Sustainability) has been in contact with WBC and Cllr Janine Lewis, the Council member for Purley and Tilehurst, about the Pangbourne-Purley Active Travel Route.

Pangbourne-Purley A329, Active Travel Route.

WBC has completed the initial Feasibility Study for a potential future Pangbourne-Purley Active Travel Route in-house and it is proposed by WBC officers that it should be carried forward to an outline stage.

WBC are also going to be imminently capturing additional data on current levels of use by pedestrians and cyclists, using automatic counters to bolster the mobile and manual count data they have.

Bike Racks

PAWS are working with WBC and local businesses to improve bike parking by the shops in Pangbourne. Unfortunately Library Services are unwilling to compromise any of the staff car parking space in front of the library so



that facilities for cyclists can be improved.

WBC remains open to discussing all further realistic cycle parking sites in Pangbourne and Purley, as well as other villages, e.g. they have also been working with the Basildon Ward Member and Parish recently.

Rob Hill
WBC Campaigner for RCC

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Chairman's Letter

Dear RCC members

I have just come back from two weeks in France where we rather ambitiously combined walking in Provence with visiting friends near Bordeaux. This occasioned rather more miles in the car than I perhaps needed. However, it did give me the chance to see much of, dare I say, ordinary everyday France outside of the big cities and tourist hotspots. I liked a lot of what I saw, and whilst the French themselves would see much room for improvement, there are many areas where we can learn from how they have organised their towns and villages to make life safer and more pleasant for the people who live there.

The most obvious things are the almost total use of low-speed limits in built-up areas. This is backed up by sensible changes to the roads with regular and not very intrusive enforcement. In most built-up areas there are lots of pedestrian crossings placed where real people want to cross rather than as far away as possible as in Reading. They don't need much in the way of street furniture, as most crossings are just the black and white bars as here. In many places the crossing is on a raised

platform that slows the traffic, which is something that our committee member John Lee promotes.

Only in the bigger towns and cities are traffic lights used. Most places rely on the good behaviour of the motorists, which as far as I can see was fairly universal. When you put your foot onto the crossing, the traffic stopped for you, and it was probably under the speed limit as it approached as well.

There were some really nice touches in some towns. One town had placed little models of people on the pavement represented as cartoonish schoolchildren on bikes or old people in wheelchairs. They were fun and provided a gentle reminder to the motorist that there are many vulnerable folk to be considered.

The provision for cyclists seemed to be far more extensive than in the UK. I saw signs in one town centre saying '*priorité a velo*' - bikes have priority. Would that that be the case here? Whilst many cycle lanes were just lines painted on the road, there was often some sort of separation from the carriageway. It probably helped that traffic density was lower there, but driver behaviour on the whole seemed better.

Where dedicated cycle lanes have been built, they are of a high quality and are long enough to be useful. Cyclist behaviour seems better as they give way to pedestrians at junctions and crossings, and I saw very little of the kind of cycling that makes the *Daily Mail* fume and this government propose locking up cyclists.

The final lesson was brought into sharp focus when we got back to the UK and the awful state of our road surfaces. I saw very few road works, and the surfaces seemed to be in very good condition everywhere. As I have often said here the best thing the Council could do for me is to give me a decent smooth road to cycle on.

All this obviously costs money, and whilst I am no expert on local government financing in France, the fact that every town has its own town hall, often in a splendid building, indicates that money is available locally and M. le Maire, who is directly elected and usually well known, is responsible for its allocation. They do not have to beg Whitehall for every penny, and it all seems to be cleaner and better organised as a result.

Joe Edwards
RCC Chairman

Where Should We Put Our Bikes?

We often talk about how we can get from A to B on our bikes safely and conveniently, but we don't talk enough about where we put them when we get there.

Fear of theft is one of the key deterrents putting off would-be cyclists, and this is no surprise. We can all name several friends, family members, and colleagues who have had their bikes stolen.

I have had my precious Ridgeback Motion pinched from outside my house (though fortunately it was found and returned within a week by a very smug constable of the Thames Valley Police, thanks to BikeRegister).

Reading Borough Council have to their credit made efforts to improve secure cycle storage within the Borough. In

2022, approval was granted to a 'cycle hub', to be located in the old Primark on West Street (near the Broad Street Mall). According to the plans, the hub would have had storage for 82 bikes with attendants on watch, open from 7am to 7pm.

Sadly, Primark terminated the lease negotiations at the last minute for no apparent reason, and since then the hub development has remained in limbo. We hope the Council will find another way to open this hub.

I was originally sceptical of the idea of a cycle hub. A recent cycle tour through the Netherlands changed my mind. That's right, I saw the famed Utrecht stationsplein (train station square) 'cyclepark', the world's largest, with my own eyes, and what a beauty it was to behold.

Thirteen thousand bikes neatly and securely stored under one roof with CCTV and guards. The cyclepark actually provides a neat shortcut cycle route through the station, and I have to commend the designers there, as cycling through it is just pure *fun*, like a go-kart track.



Bike hangar seen in Central London

Where Should We Put Our Bikes?

Utrecht station is the largest in the Netherlands, so it makes sense to construct such an enormous facility there. However, smaller Dutch cities are also well equipped. Stopping at Leiden for lunch, we discovered a free-to-use staffed underground cyclepark right in the city centre!

Even if the Council is able to open the hub eventually, this is only half of the storage problem. We must also consider where to keep our bikes when at home. I can speak from experience here, having recently moved into a Victorian terraced house scarcely three and a half metres wide.

Our living room is small enough as it is without a stack of bikes taking up one of the walls. In my previous home, a first-floor flat, I had no choice but to carry my bike up and down the stairs daily (don't tell my landlord about those tyre marks on the wall). The #ThisIsAwkward campaign has more examples of the ridiculous lengths people will go to ensure their bikes are safe.

Could bikes instead be stored on the street, just like cars? In an ideal world we would keep our streets free from all parked vehicles, giving more space for trees, and for kids to play.



On-street bike hangar seen in Surbiton

Outside of nicely spaced-out suburbs, this is not the world we live in. Practically all street space in my Victorian neighbourhood is dedicated to cars, either moving cars or parked cars (and this with only 60% of households actually owning a car, according to the 2021 census).

If I owned a car, I could keep it outside or near my house for a modest annual fee *permanently* without raising an eyebrow. It seems reasonable to demand that I also be allowed to store the two-wheeled vehicle I actually use outside, especially considering it takes up one sixth of the space.



Off-street bike hangar seen in Surbiton

There are a number of residential bicycle storage solutions being installed across the UK. The most common seems to be Cyclehoop's bike hangars. These can store six bikes within one car parking space, and can be found throughout London, and increasingly in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee.

FalcoPod's bike hangars are very similar and have been rolled out recently in Bath and Brighton. Another provider is Spoke Safe, who provide individually lockable pods big enough even for cargo bikes, though these don't seem to be intended for residential use, but rather cycle commuters.

The latter already exist in Wokingham, and I wouldn't be surprised if some turned up in Reading soon.

The conversation about on-street cycle storage in Reading has already begun. In a meeting of the Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee in 2022, Green Councillor Rob White asked whether the Council would be trialling "on street, secure cycle parking (bike hangars for example) in areas where people don't have a front garden such as Newtown".

The Council's response indicated that they were interested but noncommittal, and no further action has been taken as far as we are aware.

We are calling on the Council to take residential cycle storage forward as an integral part of the strategy for encouraging cycling in Reading. Specifically, we would like to see a pilot programme of ten cycle hangars distributed around the Borough in the areas where they would be most needed, namely terraced neighbourhoods.

A large-scale rollout of cycle hangars would likely incur reduction in parking spaces, which would of course require careful consultation with residents. However, we are confident that space can be found for ten hangars without sacrificing parking space.

Do you know a good place where a cycle hangar could be installed? Get in touch!

Sam Hatfield

Kidical Mass Summer Report

Safer Streets Now!

On 20 April Kidical Mass Reading held a ride in collaboration with Safer Streets Now, an action group who want to see our streets made safe, ideally now.



RCC Chairman Joe Edwards giving a speech



Cllr Dave McElroy and Cllr James Moore on a tandem

We were delighted to have representation at the ride from Reading Cycle Campaign and three different political parties. Labour Cllr John Ennis, (who is the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport) gave a candid speech at the rally after the ride.

He asserted that the Council is determined to make cycling in Reading easy and safe, and acknowledged that at the moment it often falls short of that goal. He placed the blame largely on the lack of funding available for active infrastructure, and certainly this is part of the story.

We were able to offer our thanks that he and his colleagues were able to reinstate the bike box on Lower Henley Road that was removed earlier this year. And we are also grateful to RCC for helping to put pressure on the Council about this. We use this on the school run if our seven-year-old son rides his own bike to school, and we are very glad about its return.

Cllr Dave McElroy of the Greens and Cllr James Moore of the Liberal Democrats also joined us, and they were brave enough to ride together on

our tandem (after an initial test run twenty minutes before the ride).

Having the two of them on the tandem was a great metaphor for the kind of cross-party collaboration which we need to see at all levels of government if we want to see investment, action and change on cycling infrastructure - all of which will contribute to safer streets for our children.

Hilary Smart

Wokingham Kidical Mass

With a few weeks to go, April's Wokingham Kidical Mass looked like it might not happen...

The April ride was planned to coincide with the national Safer Streets Now (SSN) action day on 20 April. This gave us the benefit of cycling in support of two great causes (Kidical Mass and SSN), but meant we couldn't rely on our Reading KM neighbours for support as they were running their own ride on the same day.

This combined with the absence of several of our regular marshals, meant we considered cancelling the event. However, as is so often the way, we

Kidical Mass Summer Report



were lucky (thanks to Natalie and Danny) to find four volunteers who kindly stood in to marshal and allowed the ride to go ahead.

The weather was better than it had been over the previous week (no rain), although there was a cold wind and arriving at the traditional starting point in Elms Field at around 13:40 and finding no other cyclists in sight,

I did wonder if we might not need those marshals after all!

Around 13:50 people started arriving; a recumbent cyclist who had come over from Bracknell was the first to arrive and after that the path along the park started to fill up.

We cycled the usual circular route with the highlight being the ride down Denmark Street through the town

centre. Maybe it was just me, but it felt like the reception and waving we had this time around was the best I have ever seen and the noise from the bells was definitely louder than I remember!

We had about 30 riders on the main ride and about five minutes after we arrived back at the finish in Elms Field, we saw a family of four coming in. They had arrived a few minutes late and missed us at the start, but had been picked up by the partner and son of one of our regular marshals, who were also late and had gone round with them!

As is the tradition now, we had delicious home-made cake provided by Lyme and caught up with people who are now familiar faces as the Wokingham rides head towards their second anniversary.

So the April ride did happen, and cycling home I reflected on what makes these things a success. It's the people - the marshals who give up their time (at the last minute in our case) and the attendees who prioritise coming even when the weather is bad. It's all those people who waved and even cheered as we came down Denmark Street and it's the 99% of car drivers who were lovely (and mostly always are...).

Thank you all for making Kidical Mass what it is.

Alex Cran
WoBC Campaigner for RCC



School Streets Projects

Wilson School

Kat Heath interviewed Rodrigo Perez Vega about his involvement in Wilson School's School Streets:

Why do you marshal for the school streets?

I received an email from Wilson Primary School, asking for volunteers to take part in the School Street initiative.

My son goes to this school, and I have witnessed the benefits of having a school street closed for pedestrians and other forms of transportation children use to go to school (bikes, scooters) during both drop-off and pick-up times.



Rodrigo Perez Vega volunteering

What's the biggest challenge?

The main two challenges are finding volunteers every term that want to take part in the initiative. There are some days when there are no volunteers to continue supporting the initiative, and children and families are less safe during those days.

The other challenge is to change the mentality of some parents, who rather than parking in a nearby street and walking, try to arrive just a few minutes earlier before the school

street is implemented so that they can be close to school.

This means we still have some cars from non-residents during these busy times, and it defeats the purpose of the initiative.

There are also sometimes some people that insist on going through for different reasons that are not urgent or necessary.

As a resident what's the best and worst thing about a school street?

The best thing is knowing kids are safer during those times. There's a lot of buzz in the mornings and afternoons and it is good to see parents with their kids using the space that this initiative grants them.

The worst thing is not being able to park or go through the streets during that time. That is less of a problem now, as I don't have a car anymore, but it was a while ago when I used to have one.

It's not a huge inconvenience, and it can be easily solvable as the school provides stickers for residents, who can still go through.

As a parent what's the best and worst thing about a school street?

The best thing is knowing my son can walk safely to school. We live almost in front of the school, so my son's journey isn't too long. But still, it is reassuring to know there will be less or no cars during that time.

The worst thing is ... well for me there's no worst thing. I imagine for parents who do not live close and drive to school, the worst thing might be they will struggle to find parking in front of the school unless they arrive early. But as I explained, this is not my case as I live very close to the school.

Do you feel safer with a school street?

I do feel safer in general when the school street is in operation. Seeing others walking on the street and knowing volunteers are keeping the street closed to motored vehicles is reassuring for my family.

Kat Heath

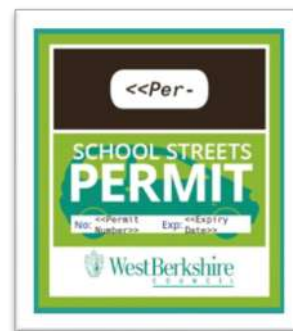
Calcot Schools

Rob Hill contacted Cheryl Evans from WBC and Joe Lally from Calcot Schools about how the School Streets initiative had made a difference to child safety. WBC gave their own report on how it has worked:

Positive Impact of the School Streets Initiative at Calcot

Introduction and Implementation

The School Streets initiative at Calcot Infant and Junior Schools began as a pilot project in 2021 to enhance child safety by restricting vehicle access during busy school hours. This initiative aimed to create a safer, more pleasant environment for students, encouraging walking and cycling.



Phases and Enforcement

The project was introduced in two phases, with implementation starting in September 2021 following a 6-week public consultation. Initially, a permit system was used, but many parents and residents ignored the restrictions. In July 2023, West Berkshire Council (WBC) received Part 6 Powers, allowing them to enforce traffic rules strictly. ANPR cameras were activated on 8 January 2024, marking a move towards stronger enforcement.

Positive Results

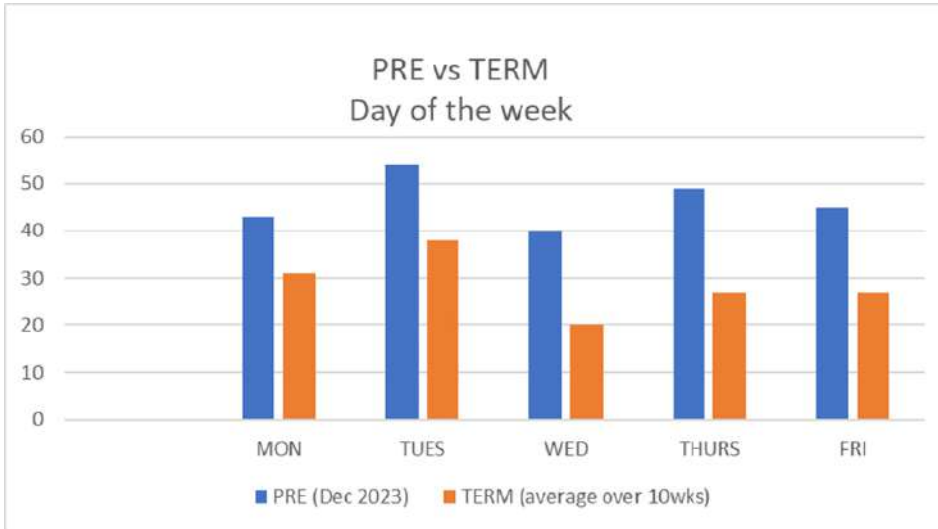
Since the cameras were installed, there has been a significant reduction in vehicles within the restricted zone, significantly improving safety (see the charts on the next page). So far, 1,132 warning notices and 133 penalties for repeat offenders have been issued, demonstrating effective compliance.

Education and Penalties

The School Street scheme includes a six-month educational period. Offenders can reduce their penalty by completing an online awareness

School Streets Projects

TOTAL VEHICLES	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	OVERALL	%
PRE (Dec 2023)	43	54	40	49	45	231	
TERM (average over 10wks)	31	38	20	27	27	143	62%



course, which explains the importance of the School Streets initiative: <https://schoolstreets.wbcroadsafety.co.uk>

Supporting Measures

The success of the School Streets programme is supported by several additional measures:

- Bikeability cycle training and push-scooter training to encourage safe cycling and scooting.
- Increased cycle and scooter storage at the school.
- Park and Stride schemes at The Calcot Centre and Linear Park to promote safe walking routes.
- A new zebra crossing on Royal Avenue (coming summer 2024) to ensure safe pedestrian access.
- Pedestrian railings and parking restriction reviews on nearby roads to improve safety and traffic flow.

Community Response

Joe Lally, Joint Chair of Governors for the two schools in Calcot, reports that parents feel the school area is now calmer and safer. While some concerns were raised about parking shifting to nearby areas, many neighbours and businesses appreciate the improved conditions. Some parents suggested that those living close to the school should not have exemption permits, as they were often the ones ignoring the rules.

(Take a look at the differences in the before and after photos on the left.)

Expansion

Encouraged by the success at Calcot, a second School Streets initiative has been introduced at Francis Baily School in Thatcham, aiming to replicate these positive outcomes.

Conclusion

The School Streets initiative at Calcot has significantly improved child safety by reducing traffic during school drop off and pick up times. Supported by educational measures and complementary programmes, this initiative has created a safer, more pleasant environment for everyone. The continued efforts and community support are key to sustaining and expanding these benefits.

Cheryl Evans and Mandip Bikhu
(West Berkshire Council)



Before School Streets started



After School Streets had been initiated

School Streets Projects



Crescent Road

Joe Edwards observed what happens in the environment of a School Streets initiative on Crescent Road in Reading.

Carol Richards pulls the heavy metal no-entry sign to the middle of the road and places a traffic cone on either side. It's now 2.45pm on a Thursday afternoon and another session of marshalling the Crescent Road school street has begun.

The road is wet, but the rain stopped half an hour ago, so today the high-viz yellow jacket will stay dry. However, Carol has to be here several days a week, come rain or shine, as the leader of the team of volunteer marshals who turn out twice a day, every day during term time.

Crescent Road is a narrow but very busy stretch of road in East Reading, which apart from a lot of local traffic, serves as a rat run for motorists going east out of town wanting to avoid Cemetery Junction. There are three schools along the road, Alfred Sutton Primary, the UTC college and Maiden Erlegh in Reading secondary school. These cater for many hundreds of pupils from nursery to sixth form.

Carol has been part of the team that set up and has run the scheme since its inception in February 2022. She is retired and lives locally and does it like all the others to put something back into her local community. Her own children are now grown up and she has no direct interest in any of the

schools, but she turns up several days a week to make sure other mothers' children get home safely. Her biggest wish is that she could find more volunteers to help spread the load.

The rules are quite simple - no motorised vehicles are allowed past the barrier unless they have reason to be visiting one of the schools or are an authorised taxi picking up a student. This means Carol has to drag the barrier to one side, move the cone, remind the driver that the speed limit is 10mph, then move the barrier and cone back again after they have passed through. There is another volunteer down at the Wokingham Road end doing the same thing and the two of them communicate by walkie-talkie.



It is obvious quite quickly that the scheme is working and is much appreciated. A woman comes by with a little one in a pushchair on her way to collect an elder sibling from Alfred Sutton. She walks happily in the middle of the road and tells me that closing the road has made everything so much better at end of school time.



A local resident comes by on his bicycle and gives Carol a cheery wave. He won't have to fight with cars until he gets past Bulmershe Road. He should try cycling past Reading School at the same time and he would take his life in his hands.



When Maiden Erlegh comes out suddenly there are dozens of people everywhere. The staff mainly wait until after the road re-opens to drive away by which time the majority of the students have gone.

The Head of Maiden Erlegh told me that he very much supported the scheme and that it made the start and end of the day far less stressful.



For Carol and her volunteers, the afternoon is far from stress free. There are too many drivers who argue the toss, and some can get quite rude. There are often chaotic scenes at the Bulmershe Road junctions as vehicles try to turn around or can't decide which way to go. But for the children

School Streets Projects



and their parents, it all looked very calm and well organised, even if some of the students wanted to ride their bikes in an anti-social way.

Quite a few of the students are cycling and there are several cycle racks visible, but there were less bikes

than I expected. When I spoke to a couple of teachers, they were of the opinion that the scheme has encouraged some more, but not many more to come by bike. One of the teachers admitted that she had started to cycle to school, but now comes by car.

The scheme gets no funding from the local authority, and it was obvious that it needed better provision. The signage is quite good and clear, but proper fixed electrically operated barriers would make it look far more official, and also ease the load on the marshals. The walkie-talkies are provided by one of the schools and another does a certain amount of the admin, but ultimately it is totally reliant on volunteers.

It is difficult to see how you could measure its effectiveness except through the opinions of those who use it. Certainly the parents and locals I spoke to wanted it to continue, but some of the car drivers were far from pleased at being sent round the block. How much of a contribution it makes to cleaner air and safer transport is difficult to measure, but I suspect that the low uptake of cycling from the students reflects the fact that once they are away from Crescent Road, they are still at the mercy of Reading's merciless traffic.

Joe Edwards
RCC Chairman

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Next newsletter copy deadline: 1 August 2024

The newsletter will now be delivered electronically to members. If you prefer to receive a paper copy, please email membership@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Cycling Events

19 June @ 18:30 - 20:00

[RCC Summer Bike Ride Open Meeting](#)

23 June @ 12:00 - 18:00

[East Reading Festival 2024](#)

6 July @ 14:00 - 16:00

[The Weller Centre Free Bike Register & Dr Bike Event](#)

View more events on our Events page:

<https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/events/>

RCC's Monthly Meetings

7.30pm on the third Wednesday of each month

Wed 17 July 2024 - cttee mtg

Wed 21 Aug 2024 - open mtg

Wed 18 Sept 2024 - cttee mtg

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