



CycleReading

WORKING FOR A CYCLE FRIENDLY READING

www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Summer 2011 No 113

Town Centre Changes Audited



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Attempting a right turn into Queen Victoria Street - some wizardry may be required

The results of the Town Centre Audit, undertaken by the Reading Cycle Campaign, Reading CTC and Sustrans, are outlined in Campaign News on page 2.

Campaign News



Reading Borough Council (RBC)

Town Centre Changes are Audited

Members of Reading Cycle Campaign, Reading CTC and Sustrans undertook a cycle audit of the new town centre layout in May after concerns were raised over the certain junctions. Our written report to the Council listed the following concerns:

1) Friar Street / Station Road / Queen Victoria Street

This was felt to be dangerous as westbound cyclists on Friar Street cannot turn into Queen Victoria Street safely, and it is not clear on leaving Queen Victoria Street that a right turn into Friar Street is not permitted, as the signs are not visible to users here.

2) Station Road / Garrard Street

The junction is extremely confusing as there are inadequate signs and no provision for cyclists. Cyclists are at risk from taxis, taxi doors opening, collision with a poorly sited bollard, and conflict with road users while

travelling along Garrard Street due to confusion among road users.

3) Station Approach and Station Hill

The unsigned and interim facilities for cyclists are confusing and inadequate and place cyclists in conflict with other road users and pedestrians. In particular the marked facilities lead cyclists into the door opening zone of taxis at the rank outside the station.

4) Forbury Road / Blagrove Street

We have seen and had reported repeated incidences of cyclists turning right who come into conflict with west-bound vehicles that fail to give way.

The provision for cyclists appears to be below other road users in the hierarchy, and leads to increasing the vulnerability of cyclists in this area. We request that you consider our views as part of the Stage 3 Safety Audit process.

Reading Council's Cycling Strategy - Have the wheels fallen off?

At the time of writing this newsletter there is a definite feeling that cycling fell off the Council's agenda in 2011.


The Cycle Liaison Group, which is supposed to meet every 3 months, last met in early March and the next

meeting is not scheduled until late September. Workshops proposed by the council on specific issues, such as the difficulty in crossing Reading Bridge, were supposed to take place in May but never materialised. Minor infrastructure improvements emanating from the cycle strategy that were due for completion in 2009/10 languish in the 'to do' list.


In fact the most significant cycle related action undertaken in 2011 seems to be the erection of 'No Cycling' signs along the Thames towpath.

We can speculate that the reasons for this lack of direction or action may be the change in local government in May coupled with cuts in local government spending. But actions to make Reading more cycle friendly do not require years of planning or huge amounts of expenditure; often it may be a case of painting some lines on the road or undertaking a cycle audit at the design stage of proposed highway schemes.

There are Councillors and transport officers who genuinely want to take steps to improve facilities for cyclists in Reading - see the article in this newsletter on the Council's proposal to involve cycling groups in highway



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Campaign News

design. The question is whether these individuals can hold sway over the general direction of transport policy and spending.

Since its inception the Cycle Liaison Group has been chaired by the Lead Councillor for Transport. After the change of Reading's local government in May, the reappointed Lead Councillor for Transport, Tony Page, indicated that he would not be chairing the Cycle Liaison Group and that the new Chair would be the Lead Councillor for Environment Paul Gittings. Paul is a keen cyclist and we wish him a successful tenure.

Calls to Consider Cycling In Highway Design

At the Council meeting of 29 March this year Councillor Tim Harris criticised the state of the council's cycle lanes and proposed asking cyclists to design them in future.

Councillor Harris is a member of the Cycle Liaison Group and suggested working with local cycle groups to make sure best practice in cycle lane design was included in new road developments and significant road layout changes. He told Reading Borough Council chamber: "Cycling groups in Reading will have, for the

first time, tangible input into what a cycle lane should be.

"Obviously there are professionals within the Council, there are cycling guidelines from central government and other legal implications, but I believe that the correct advice our cycling groups will help create a cycling infrastructure we can be proud of."

The Council unanimously supported Cllr Harris's proposal and resolved to "Work with local cycling groups to create a consistent cycling design best practice when completing any new road developments and significant road layout changes".

One of the main aims of the Reading Cycle Campaign is to persuade the local Council to adequately cater for cyclists at the design stage of all highway schemes. Once highway works are completed it is next to impossible to retrospectively get design faults rectified or go back and capture missed opportunities. In the recent past, Reading Cycle Campaign tried to persuade the Council to follow DfT guidance and undertake a formal cycle audit of all significant highway schemes whilst they were at the design stage. The Council's transport officers felt this was

unnecessary bureaucracy and at the time the relevant Lead Councillors agreed.

This year's changes to the town centre layout suffered because it seems that no-one looked at junction layout from a cyclist's point of view. We will wait and see how the new policy adopted by our elected representatives will translate into positive actions in the design of future highway schemes.

No Cycling along Thames Path

RBC has recently erected 'No Cycling' signs along the Thames Towpath between Reading Bridge and Caversham Bridge, which understandably has caused consternation amongst the many cyclists who use this route. RBC explained the issue as follows:

The towpath between Caversham Bridge and Reading Bridge is on private land and is legally designated as a footpath in the Public Rights of Way network, with no permitted rights for cyclists, although it is understood that many cyclists do use the path and there is little enforcement.

As a Public Right of Way, the Council has the right to improve the path's

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Campaign News

Other Cycling News

surface, and private sector funding became available to pave it this summer. However, local landowners have objected to cyclists using the path and raised concerns that paving would increase the speed of cyclists along the path. The compromise between Councillors and the local landowners was that 'No Cycling' signs would be installed in exchange for enabling the surfacing of the path without obstruction or objection.

A couple of years ago Reading Cycle Campaign presented evidence to the Council that the path had been used by cyclists for over 20 years and therefore could be legally designated as a cycle path. Unfortunately the Council was not confident they could win a legal challenge to this by the local landowners and did not pursue the idea.

Keith Elliott
RBC Campaigner

Repairs for the Historic Herne Hill Velodrome

British Cycling has confirmed that work is now under way to resurface the track at the historic Herne Hill Velodrome, the last surviving venue from the London 1948 Olympic Games; this is the first major work at the facility since a 15-year lease was signed between the sport's governing body and the site's landlords, The Dulwich Estate.

The future of the track had been thrown into doubt after The Dulwich Estate revealed that it planned to redevelop the site, where generations of British cyclists including three-time Olympic gold medallist Bradley Wiggins got their start on the track.

That resulted in the Save the Velodrome campaign being mobilised to try and preserve the site for track cycling, drawing on the support of

public figures not only within the sport but also those from the worlds of politics and entertainment living nearby.

The work has been financed by money provided by British Cycling under its Whole Sport Plan, together with a bequest from the estate of Leonard Lyes, who died in July 2009 and was a member of the De Laune Cycling Club, regularly officiating at Herne Hill.

Mr Lyes had requested that his bequest be used 'in the pursuit of track cycling', and Ian Drake, Chief Executive of British Cycling, said he believed he would have approved of how the money was being spent.

"I don't doubt that Leonard would be pleased that his generous donation is having such an impact at a venue that was close to his heart," he commented.

"Getting the track repaired is a huge step forward for the Save the



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Jean Crown, Kent

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Other Cycling News

Velodrome campaign and will provide riders of all ages with a fantastic surface on which to enjoy their cycling. Herne Hill is such an iconic venue and British Cycling is both delighted and proud of the role it is playing in helping getting it back to its former glory."

<http://road.cc/content/news/39959-work-begins-resurface-herne-hill-velodrome-track>

Doctors Reject Calls for Compulsory Helmets

If people are forced to wear helmets they may give up cycling altogether and lose the health benefits of regular exercise, doctors have warned.

More than two thirds of readers said they opposed compulsory helmets for adults.

One respondent in the poll of 1,427 people said: "It gives out the message that cycling is dangerous, which it is not. The evidence that cycling helmets work to reduce injury is not conclusive.

"What has, however, been shown is that laws that make wearing helmets compulsory decrease cycling activity. Cycling is a healthy activity and cyclists live longer on average than non-cyclists."

Another added: "Since nowhere with a helmet law can show any reduction in risk to cyclists, only a reduction in cyclists, why would anyone want to bring in a law for something which is clearly not effective at reducing the risk to cyclists?"

Australia made it illegal to not wear a helmet in 1991, but Sydney University researchers have called for the law to be repealed, arguing that the fall in head injuries was down to road safety improvements, rather than the new law.

They also cited figures from Western Australia which suggested that the legislation led to a 30 per cent drop in cycling rates.

However, Chris Rissell, one of the researchers, said: "I'd recommend a

trial repeal in one city for two years to allow researchers to make observations and see if there's an increase in head injuries, and on the basis of that you could come to some informed policy decision."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/8669773/Bicycle-helmets-should-not-be-compulsory-say-doctors.html>

Mind Control (Sadly for the Bike, not Other Road Users)

The world's first bicycle with gears you can change simply by using your mind has been unveiled by scientists.

The Toyota Prius Project Parlee PXP bike has a thought-controlled gearbox that works by responding to cues from the brain - and experts believe anyone will be able to master the technique.

Human/digital interface specialist Deeplocal built the one-of-a-kind helmet, which transfers brainwaves using wireless technology to a micro-control.

Patrick Miller, creative engineer at Deeplocal, said: "The system has been built using a simple off-the-shelf brainwave reader and software to read the signals.

"It takes the rider a little bit of training but we're at the stage where people are successfully changing gears with their mind while riding.

"There is some special software to train people - while in a neutral state if you think 'shift up' the helmet reads those patterns.

"So over time signals sent to the micro control when a user thinks 'shift up' or 'shift down' become recognisable.

"It's an experiment at the moment, but once you have control you can do a lot of things like change gear during a journey based on things like speed and distance."

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2019294/Toyota-Prius-Project-Parlee-Bike-gears-change-using-mind.html>

YES, I WANT TO JOIN RCC!

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- ☐ I would like details of how I can help with Campaign activities
☐ I am a member of the Cyclists' Touring Club

Signed

Date

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Our Mission



- To campaign for better facilities for cyclists in Reading, in particular a network of safe cycleways linking residential, industrial and commercial areas, and giving access to the town centre.
- To work with Sustrans, the Cyclists' Touring Club (both locally and nationally) and others interested in promoting cycling and the well-being of cyclists.
- To identify the needs of cyclists in Reading, for example the location of safe and secure parking, and to campaign for their provision.
- To work with and advise local authorities and, where necessary, criticise and highlight their shortcomings.

Chairman's Letter

Dear RCC members,

Due to only having a small number of busy people on the committee we haven't made as much progress this last few months as I had hoped, so we have yet to announce our own Cycling Forum, but we will do soon, and there will be lots to talk about.

The council hasn't had its Cycle Liaison Group meeting yet either; we were due to have one in May, but it is now scheduled to happen in September, right at the end of September, so still a long way off. The Council, of course, is run by paid staff and elected Councillors, so the excuse we use - that we are volunteers - can't be used there. If the Council used this lackadaisical approach to other areas of business it would be castigated, but, well it is only cycling. It doesn't really matter.

It is still incredibly frustrating trying to get some progress, but a few things have happened.

The first was the welcome news that the Council had received over £200,000 to spend on improving some of the routes used by non-motorized commuters, along the river Thames and along the Kennet. Non-motorized means walkers and cyclists.

Both routes are very popular, safe, scenic, flat and direct. The Thames path, between Reading and Caversham bridges was in an appalling state, partly because it had been surfaced with a sandy material, wholly inappropriate for a riverside path, especially one that gets so much use. The Council agreed to use a sealed surface, one that wouldn't wash away in the floods or turn to mush in the rain. The rest of the riverside paths along the Thames have mostly been surfaced like this, at least all the heavily used bits.

However the Council, under pressure from the new lead member for transport, agreed to add in some 'No Cycling' signs. This is a contentious route, and I won't bore you with the details, but the Council could pander to the needs of hundreds of people who choose to cycle along this route, or a couple of vociferous residents. Guess what it chose? So the most comprehensive number of signs yet seen on one of our off road routes say 'No Cycling'.

Along the Kennet and Avon canal things are different. We have been asking for a while now to have the towpath between Rose Kiln Lane and Berkeley Avenue surfaced with Tarmac. Tarmac

isn't my favourite option, but it is the most practical, because in winter this path regularly floods and washes away. It then takes a long time to get it repaired because of the costs. Last time it was surfaced with gravel it washed away in floods a few weeks later. Last year a bit was tarmacked, and we were expecting the last bit to be done this year. That is what we were told. To our great surprise the Council has just finished the section upstream, from Fobney Lock to Southcote Lock. The surprise is because it didn't need doing, it was already in good condition; years ago it was surfaced with expensive crushed limestone, and it never floods and has lasted really well. They have resurfaced it with the same material that they used a few years ago on the Thames towpath, yes, the same material that turned to mush! Not only that but it has been very poorly laid, it doesn't cover the whole path, and it is loose at the edges. In a week it has begun to break up, and in a few months it will be washing away. When it is wet it is going to get thrown up by our tyres and cover our bikes, our chains and our backsides. It is a bright orange colour, it is really sand, and do you know what makes a very poor surface to cycle on? Sand!

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Chairman's Letter

Within a few months cyclists are going to hate using this path and drive to work instead.

So more than £200,000 spent on well used cycle routes, and the net result will be fewer people cycling. The bits we have been asking for, which would have made our life better, have not been done. It is not due to lack of resources, it is because the views of cyclists do not matter to Reading Borough Council.

In the meantime a group of us cycled around the town centre to look at the changes that were initiated to accommodate the works to the new station. It was quite clear that in several places the needs of cyclists were simply not included in the designs. Now a while ago the cycling Councillor for the Conservative Party put forward a motion at Council which required that if the Council was to make a change to a junction it would have to make steps to improve it for cyclists. It is ridiculous that in Reading the Council needs such an explicit policy, you would have thought that it would automatically do such a thing!

But now we have a policy and the first chance the Council gets and it makes matters worse, much worse, downright dangerous in fact!



The right turn from Friar Street in Queen Victoria Street is one such dangerous junction: the approach to the station is blocked by taxis, and the junction from Station Road into Garrard Street is blocked by oncoming taxis, a bollard and a great chunk of granite put there for ornamental reasons!

So we appealed to the Council by presenting them with our findings and were told that these matters would be taken into consideration when they review the town centre. No date was given, and I expect these will not be much improved ever.

Some of you may have time to watch daytime TV, and if you are so fortunate, and watch Gabby Logan you may have seen a short piece about cycling in

Reading. It was introduced with the title "Is Reading the worst place to cycle in Britain?" I am not sure if it is, yet, but before long it will be.

I get to go all over the place and have cycled in towns and cities all over Britain and abroad. Most places try quite hard to enable more people to cycle, but I have yet to find somewhere that seems to actually try hard to put people off cycling. In some towns they don't do a very good job of encouraging them, but nowhere seems to conspire against cyclists the way Reading does.

The reason we all campaign for cyclists is because we would like to see the Council improve the infrastructure we need, to make it better for people to cycle. It is clear that this is not what the Council want, and instead of being a collaborative process it is a deeply frustrating one.

The upshot of our AGM was that we, the people who already cycle, the people who represent groups who already cycle, will probably make more of an impact if we work together, and do so without the Council. It is well worth a try and it is unlikely we could make matters worse.

Adrian Lawson
Chairman

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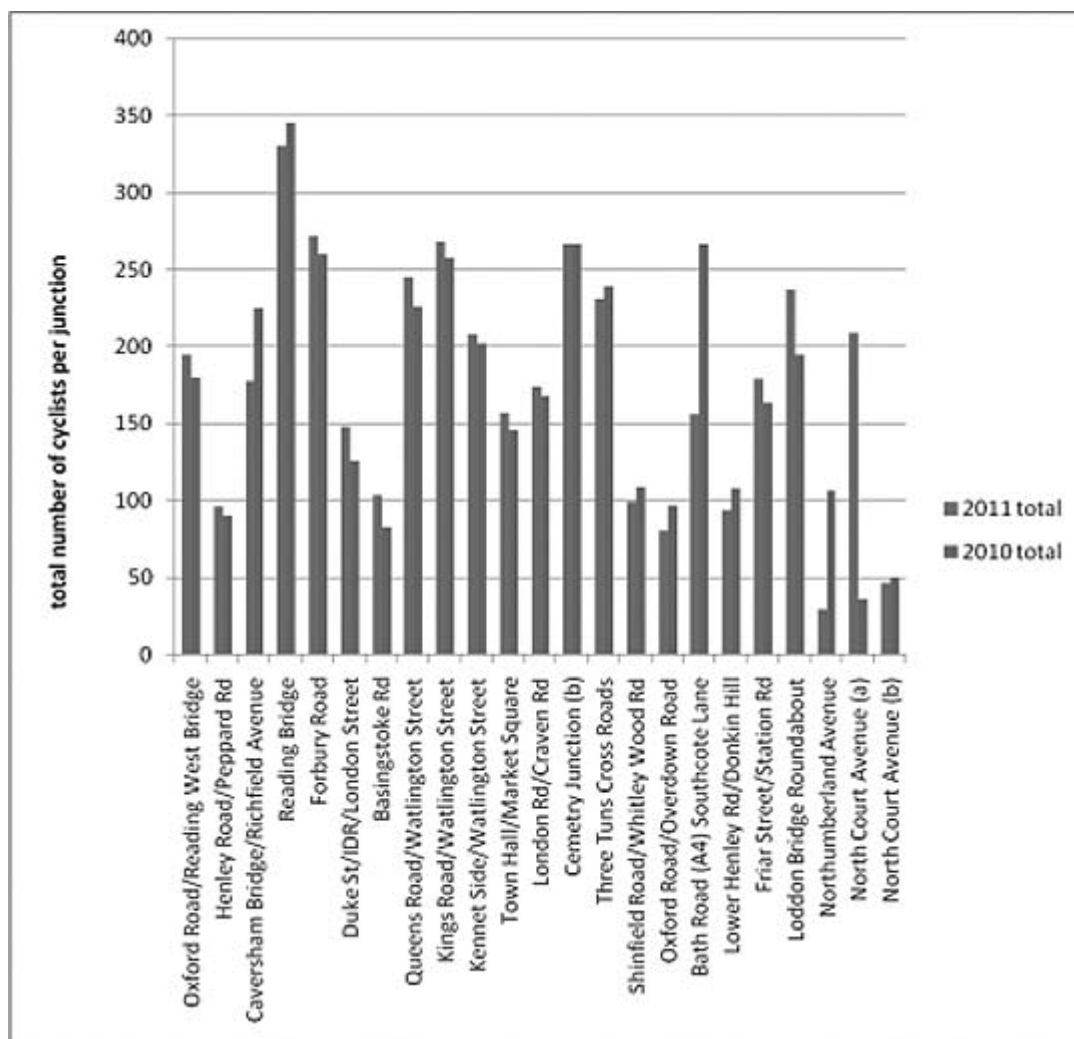
Annual Bike Census 2011

Bruce Main has again organised the annual cycle audit. Here are his findings.

As with the previous five years, the weather for the 2011 cycle count was warm and sunny.

Not all junctions were counted, but the total from 24 junctions compared favourably from last year, with last year being one of the best on record: 4005 (2011) compared to 3948 (2010).

The proportion of cyclists wearing helmets rose from 48% to 52% this year for these 24 junctions.



Bird Racing

Anyone who knows me knows I like bird watching. Meetings can - for others - be incredibly frustrating if something interesting flies by, as I stop and point it out. I often cycle to places where there are interesting birds, but once a year I do something very very different, I go bird racing.

The idea is simple, from midnight to 7 on a particular day, teams of three

scour Berkshire counting different species of bird. The rules are simple, each member of each team must see or hear a species for it to count, and you mustn't be late back.

Berkshire is a long and thin county stretching from the M25 in the east to Hungerford in the west. To visit the Queen Mary reservoirs in the east and Hungerford Marsh in the west

takes a lot of driving. Not to mention all the places in between: Windsor Great Park, the Thames, the Kennet Valley, Dinton Pastures, the Thatcham gravel pits, the Downs at Aldworth, Snelsmore Common and Greenham Common. To cover all that in a day also means a lot of driving.

I would not condone anything so frivolous as driving 200 and more

Bird Racing

miles just to see a few birds. A few years ago two people, both very good birdwatchers, wanted to do it by bike. I was co-opted to their team, as I could ride a bike. We did well that year, and had another cycling team for competition. We got 95 different birds. Last year we did it again, and got 92. This is pretty good, when the car drivers get up to 120.

This year there were only three of us, so we had no direct competition. We were never going to beat the car teams, but, well, could we do 100 species?

At 2:30am my son came home from a night out, to find me sat outside my house with my bike and my binoculars and telescope. He was bemused to say the least. My friend arrived and we bundled our bikes into a van and drove to Snelsmore Common above Newbury. At 3am we were on our bikes in the freezing May dawn, as a Tawny Owl hooted. One down! Within a few minutes we heard Woodlark, Nightjar, Woodcock

and Nightingale. Starting on the common here gave us some elusive species, and once we heard a Tree Pipit we were off down the hill through Newbury, spotting Collared Dove, Jackdaw, House Sparrow, Coal Tit, Blue tit and many more. At the canal we got Mallard, Mute Swan and Swallow.

By the time we arrived at Greenham Common we had 40 species but things were now getting quite hard. The common birds were all on our list. The rarer more obscure ones are what take the time and the hard work. A lucky Bullfinch as we cycled along, a Kingfisher flashing by as we stood by a pool; these can be hard to get. We appreciated seeing these birds much more than on any other day.

As the day wore on, and we wore out, we got into the low 90s. Now it became really hard. One by one we added a new find, those really difficult birds, a female Wigeon, not normally found here in May, asleep on an island in a gravel pit and

shortly after three Oystercatchers - common enough on the coast but not 60 miles inland - called loudly as they flew over. We were up in the high 90s, and we had not found a Kestrel or a Sparrowhawk. We pedaled off to where I had seen Kestrels nesting. It was a long way off our route and the nest was empty. We scanned the motorway verge from a bridge and as we were about to give up we saw one. 99!

Earlier in the day I spied a Sparrowhawk, but it was a fleeting view, not shared. It didn't count! With 99 species we retired to the pub, elated to have a new record, but disappointed to be so close to the magic 100.

I set off to cycle home and nearly crashed as a Barn Owl flew up from a post. For me that was 101 species. An amazing day's cycling and bird watching, my two favourite hobbies rolled into one!

Adrian Lawson

The Reading Cycling Forum

"More People On More Bikes More Often"

The Campaign have agreed to hold a Cycling Forum, for all cyclists in Reading. The purpose of the forum was agreed at the AGM back in May: More People on More Bikes More Often.

The first meeting will be at 7:00pm on 16 September at the Coley Community Centre, in Wensley Road, Coley. The idea is a simple one; we can all do something to get people cycling.

To be honest we have always relied on other people to make changes,

but we are not making much progress. Other towns are way ahead of us, and we have thought at our meeting that perhaps we could do something to improve things ourselves. Already people have come up with some suggestions; beginners rides, commuter tips, cycle training, maintenance training, lobbying, fundraising, this list could be a pretty full one!

I bet you have a good idea to get more people cycling, well now is your chance to share it.

The list could be a really long one, and everyone can go away and do a bit. Or a really short one where we

all get together and make something happen.

Although the campaign is going to organize and fund the forum it will happen on the basis that everyone has an equal role. And it is open to everyone, *you* are welcome, and if you want to bring your friends, do so.

It will of course be free, and there will be some awesome handmade biscuits, but it would be good to have an idea of how many people are coming, so just email Adrian at chair@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk so we know you are coming, (and get enough biscuits baked!).

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Next newsletter copy date: 31 October 2011

The newsletter is now available electronically, so if you'd prefer to go paperless contact the newsletter editor at newsletter@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Campaign Diary

Help Out at the Farmers' Market

If you'd like to volunteer for the RCC stand please contact our Events Coordinator Jeanette Jeans (see above). Our stand at the Farmers' Market at Great Knollys Street will be on the first Saturday of each month from 8.45-11.30am:

*Saturday 3 September 2011 • Saturday 1 October 2011
Saturday 5 November 2011 • Saturday 3 December 2011*

Want to get more involved and meet more cyclists?

If you can spare an hour or two why not help us out with our local campaigning? Contact the Events Coordinator and she'll let you know when there are opportunities to help out.

It's great fun and we won't commit you to anything.

Council Contacts

Please let the relevant campaign officer know of anything you've reported.

Reading Borough Council

General cycling queries: 0118 939 0900 x 4881; parking: parkingservices@reading.gov.uk; traffic lights: 0118 939 0611; potholes 0800 626540

Wokingham Borough Council

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250 1 Colour £30.00 500 1 Colour £34.00
250 2 Colour £52.00 500 2 Colour £58.00
Letter heads on 100gsm bond
250 1 Colour £30.00 500 1 Colour £34.00 1000 1 Colour £45.00
250 2 Colour £55.00 500 2 Colour £58.00 1000 2 Colour £69.00
all of the above are subject to VAT.

Full Colour A5 Leaflets
printed on 130gsm gloss or matt 1 sided
1000 £105.00 5000 £130.00 10,000 £160.00

Full colour A4 Leaflets
printed on 130gsm gloss or matt 2 sided
1000 £140.00 5000 £210.00 10,000 £330.00 50,000 £925.00
Ex VAT on leaflets

Printers of the R.C.C. Newsletter
www.purcprint.co.uk

1a Upper Redlands Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5JJ
Tel: 0118 9663145 Fax: 0118 9352759
Email: salma@purcprint.co.uk Web: www.purcprint.co.uk

Published by Reading Cycle Campaign, 24 Curzon Street, Reading RG30 1DB; Tel: 0845 330 2543
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