

What stops you from cycling regularly?



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Campaign Diary

As a very nervous cyclist, I am not inclined to get on my bike, even to do a simple journey into town or to visit the doctor's surgery.

This isn't due to laziness (well, yes, this could play a part), but due to the state of the roads.

My husband managed to persuade me to go into town for an event by bike. I hadn't sat on my bike since before the first Lockdown, so was a little worried about what would happen.

The first thing that struck me was the potholes. They had definitely got worse since 18 months ago. Some were like abysses, and usually situated in the most inappropriate places for cyclists.

I also noticed some of the manholes covers had sunk to create a hazard. Also the sleeping policemen designed to slow down traffic had disintegrated where they met the road, and the painted markings on roads had faded to be almost non-existent.

What stops you from cycling regularly?

We purposefully chose to go via the side streets, to avoid the traffic on the Oxford Road. Not all of them had been resurfaced, but I noticed a regular cyclist could easily learn where the worst bits were and form a strategy to avoid them.

However, it was the routes with the most traffic, e.g. Oxford Road (and Tilehurst Road), where the roads are at their worst. Here you can't move into a better position if you have a very large and impatient car trying to overtake you at the same time.

I also noticed the pinch points in Oxford Road, something to which a motorist wouldn't even give a second thought. How is it that whenever you approach one of these, the car behind you suddenly accelerates? Or the car in front of you decides to slow down to squash you into a tiny space?

And, of course, there are the hazards from the parked cars. I have learned to keep one eye on the road, and one eye on the cars with occupants in them, just in case they decide to open their door or swing out into the road without looking or indicating.

Many a time the road narrows, particularly where there are crossing positions in the middle of the road. Here frustrated cars need to slow down behind you, unable to pass, revving their engines and tailgating you unnervingly close to your heels.

And don't get me started with the pedestrians. I certainly regretted not replacing my knackered bell on my bike to warn people glued to their phones as they stride out unaware into the road.

Maybe it's because a bike is relatively silent compared with a car, and their subconscious isn't trained to think 'bike', even when crossing the road.

I know Reading's roads were designed for cars, not cyclists, which is why cycle paths suddenly disappear at junctions or pinch points. Why not give cyclists a right to be on the road for a change?

I remember the last time Oxford Road was 'renovated', with widened pavements and extra car parking. When what was really needed were cycle lanes and an off-road parking lot to keep parked cars off the road.

They managed this in Tilehurst, so why couldn't this be done here? The Council could even increase its revenue by charging people to park there! I reckon this would certainly incentivise people to cycle instead...

Our AGM in August was a most exciting affair, taking the form of a Question Time with Councillors. You can read all about it in the Chairman's letter.

The age-old subjects of potholes and appalling surfaces were raised, as expected, but it was interesting to find out which political party focuses on 'alternative' methods of transport apart from the car.

The Council was very keen to promote the buses, since they own the company, but this still involves large vehicles which can be a hazard to nervous bike riders like myself.

And they churn up the road to make the mess which puts off so many would-be cyclists from automatically thinking cycling is the best method to use.

Alice Elliott
Newsletter Editor

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Once again my sincere thanks for your kind assistance and courtesy in dealing with this claim and bringing it to a successful conclusion.

Jean Cronin, Kent

Campaign News



Reading Borough Council (RBC)

Autumn Report 2021

I have not noticed any improvements for cyclists in Reading over the last few months, although the Council has completed some re-surfacing and white-line renewal.

CAST (Cleaner Air and Safer Transport)

A CAST meeting on 19 August had Jon Burke as guest speaker; he was the former Lead Councillor for Environment and Transport at the London Borough of Hackney.

The actions and schemes implemented in Hackney would put most places to shame, and certainly showed up Reading as being light-years behind. Maybe it is not too late to set up a proper Emergency Transport Plan?!

Active Travel Pop-up Cycle Schemes Tranche 1

By the time of printing RCC should have been sent a list of changes needed to the Tranche 1 schemes. Most of the schemes seem to have settled down and (with the exception of the removed unpopular Gosbrook Road one-way system) there are no campaigns to remove or curtail the remaining schemes. If you have comments on any scheme they would be appreciated. Feedback to RCC is useful as well as to the Council.

Tranche 2 Schemes

The Council has announced that the chosen Tranche 2 scheme is the Shinfield Road. A CAST (Cleaner Air and Safer Transport) meeting on 19 August gave RCC and others some information and reasoning on the chosen scheme.

The choice appears to be based purely on the survey responses regarding which scheme was most popular. Apparently, no cycle flow counts had yet been taken, which could have been useful supporting

information regarding scheme choice.

See the separate article on page 4 for further information on the consultation survey.

John Lee
RBC Campaigner for RCC



West Berkshire Council (WBC)

Autumn Report 2021

The next cycle forum meeting is scheduled for 21 September.

There has been an allocation from the Active Travel Capability Fund for West Berkshire of £88,127, but nothing officially has been said about what it will be spent on.

Rob Hill
WBC Campaigner for RCC

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Campaign News continued...

Christchurch Bridge - Berkeley Appeal Planning Rejection

Berkeley Homes' proposed redevelopment of the former SSE site off Vastern Road was seen as a 'missed opportunity' to provide a quality southern connection from Christchurch Bridge to Vastern Road.

In March this year RBC refused the planning application as it did not meet the requirements set out by the Council for this important active travel corridor. Berkeley Homes has appealed this decision; let's hope the Planning Inspectorate also think that sustainable travel should be a material factor in planning decisions.

New Segregated Cycle Facilities, And The Winner Is... Shinfield Road

At the end of 2020 RBC was awarded £1.2 million through the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund to support the implementation of walking and cycling schemes in the borough.

The Council undertook consultation on concept plans for four schemes which asked a number of questions on each of the individual schemes. In terms of supporting or opposing segregated cycle lanes (this being the major element of each scheme) the results broke down as follows.

Scheme	Support	Oppose
Shinfield Road - from Christchurch Green to Shinfield Rise	62%	19%
Bath Road/Castle Hill - Southcote Road to the IDR	61%	22%
London Road - Cemetery Junction to Kendrick Road	61%	29%
Southampton Street - Pell Street to Bridge Street	57%	26%

Based on the above the Council decided at the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport committee meeting in June that it will progress the Shinfield Road Scheme as it had the most support and least opposition.

RCC responded to the consultation with our opinion that the schemes that connect with the town centre

(i.e. Bath Road/Castle Hill and Southampton Street) are likely to have a greater impact on encouraging more bike journeys, with the Bath Road scheme top of our list.

In fact the consultation asked a myriad of questions which can be sliced and diced in a number of ways. In terms of which schemes would encourage people to cycle more often the results were as follows:

Scheme	Would Cycle More
Shinfield Road - from Christchurch Green to Shinfield Rise	47%
Bath Road/Castle Hill - Southcote Road to the IDR	50%
London Road - Cemetery Junction to Kendrick Road	50%
Southampton Street - Pell Street to Bridge Street	50%

So, in terms of encouraging cycling, Shinfield Road was the least favourable scheme!

In terms of individual elements of the overall schemes (segregated cycle lanes being one element) the most strongly supported element (at 72% support) was improved crossing facilities both at Cemetery Junction and at the Oracle roundabout.

What is evident from the consultation is that for all the schemes far more people support them than oppose them; even where that involves reallocation of road space from motor vehicles. All of the schemes need implementing and we have heard that RBC has received indication that it will be allocated further Active Travel Fund money and that this will be used to fund the Bath Road/Castle Hill scheme.

According to the Council detailed design for Shinfield Road is now underway with implementation scheduled from Spring 2022 onwards. Our challenge to the Council is not to let this timetable slip.

A Reading Cycle Hub

Reading Borough Council has been awarded £0.25m from the Active Travel Capability Fund. The Council's plan is to use this for the development of a town centre cycle hub, offering secure cycle parking, cycle maintenance and a cycle loan/donation scheme.

Such cycle hubs have popped up in other towns and cities and can take several forms, but generally they need to be staffed to be successful. The challenge will be to establish a cycle hub that has a funding mechanism which allows it to be self-sustaining in the long term - we know what happened to Reading's cycle hire scheme, which folded after the initial funding ran out.

Ethical Reading has been pushing to establish a cycle hub in the town and has had initial discussions with the Council on opportunities and viability.

Local Transport Plan Gathers Moss

Reading's Local Transport Plan (LTP) to 2036 is still in draft over a year since the consultation period ended. The Council's current intention is to pause further work on the LTP in order to establish a new baseline in 2022/23.

At the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport committee meeting in June it was announced that the Council would undertake *"the development of detailed LTP sub-strategies ...alongside monitoring of the new normal to inform an update of the draft LTP to commence later in the year. This will require at least a year to understand how workplace and shopping habits have changed ..."*

The draft LTP proposed demand management measures to help a modal shift to more sustainable transport. The draft LTP did not contain firm proposals for demand management but stated that the Council was investigating options including Workplace Parking Levy, Road User Charging, Clean Air Zone and Emissions Based Charging. From the Council meeting in June there is now a hint that the Council is getting cold feet on demand management.

The draft LTP also proposed to create a network of Strategic and Local Cycle Routes, but the timetable for these is now in doubt.

The delay in adopting the LTP is attributed to the change in travel habits due to the COVID pandemic. However, the reduction in traffic in the early days of COVID is clearly over - did anyone mention a climate crisis?

Keith Elliott
RCC Secretary

Chairman's Letter

Dear RCC members,

At our AGM on 18 August, Reading Cycle Campaign invited Councillors from each of the four political party groupings on Reading Borough Council to discuss questions about improving cycling provision in the town. We were pleased to welcome:

- Jane Stanford-Beale - Conservative, Peppard Ward
- Ricky Duveen - Liberal Democrat, Tilehurst Ward
- Paul Gittings - Labour, Minster Ward and Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee
- Rob White - Green Party, Park Ward

We sent out three questions in advance that we wanted them to discuss, which were:

- What in your opinion is the main reason why many people do not cycle in Reading?
- What would be the most effective way to get more people cycling?
- What is the biggest obstacle to doing this?

It was good to listen to a debate where there was not a lot of political point scoring and where the issues

were actually addressed and there was a surprising level of agreement among the panel as to why people do not cycle more.

They all seemed to agree that encouraging cycling was a good thing. What was stopping more people from getting on a bike was the feeling that it was not safe due to the high volumes of traffic and congested roads. Jane pointed out that Reading was quite hilly for easy cycling and Ricky pointed a finger at the poor state of the roads.

Paul made the important point that Reading's road and transport infrastructure had grown up around the needs of motorists and other road vehicles. This meant that major changes could not become effected overnight, but that the Council have provided a bus service that is one of the best in the country.

On the point of what should be done there was less agreement. Jane was for making better use of existing provision via shared use pavements such as the Kennetside path. Rob and Ricky were for much more investment in dedicated cycle routes which would separate cyclists from other traffic. Both of them felt that an enforced town wide 20mph speed limit would make a difference. Ricky went as far

as suggesting that we do away with on-street parking and provide secure bike parking in the town centre.

Rob wanted to see travel audits used to show who goes where and why and also much more consultation before plans are drawn up. He felt that we needed a major change in the

behaviour of motorists with a campaign to reduce close passing of cyclists as well as a reduction in speeds.

Paul's view was that, yes, we needed a better cycling infrastructure, but we should get better at putting over the message of the benefits of cycling; that would be a great help.

On the question of what was stopping these changes from happening, there was less agreement. Rob was of the view that there was a lack of ambition at both local and national levels for tackling these issues and that a change of attitude towards all transport and travel policies was needed.

The others, especially Paul, felt that funding was a major constraint. He pointed out that the fallout from the government's austerity measures has left a huge hole in the Council's budgets and that they were now reliant on funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) for each specific project.

He told the meeting that time scales were often so short that in order to get any funding full consultation could not be carried out. It was not in his opinion a lack of ambition, but the budgetary and time constraints imposed on RBC by the government, especially the DfT, that made major improvements difficult to achieve.

So what did we learn from the debate? We learned the Greens and the LibDems are keener to spend money on dedicated provision than the other two parties.

We also learned that improvement schemes are often decided on the basis of which cause the least objections rather than which contribute the most benefits, and we learned that the Council really does have one hand tied behind its back where funding is concerned.

Joe Edwards
RCC Chairman
chair@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

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Unpopular Cyclists

Why Do Cyclists So Often Get Criticised?

Is it our behaviours, or attitudes?

Is it others' green guilt or what?

Whatever, it affects our pleasure or otherwise on the road, and often spoils conversations.

Jumping red lights and riding on footways are frequently mentioned as reasons to target bad feelings towards cyclists.

These misdemeanours can then 'justify' their (motorists') speeding etc.

Criticism of cyclists for not wearing helmets or bright reflective clothing is also common, but cyclists themselves are likely to be the losers for not doing so.

Holding up motorists for long stretches on roads may not be that different from pedestrians walking on cycle tracks, legal but annoying to the faster mode.



Also, we expect motorists to give us 1.0-1.5m clearance, but how often do we pass closer than this to pedestrians!

Signalling, or lack of it, seems to be an unnecessary extra to many motorists and some cyclists, as well as having correct road positioning to make our signals visible.

As cyclists we sometimes tend to feel superior by helping save the environment but setting ourselves on pedestals often rebounds.

Following the Highway Code, giving consideration to other road users, including waving or saying thanks when appropriate, may help our image.

John Lee
RBC Campaigner for RCC

Cyclists' Collisions Update

Vastern Road Is Still Bottom

The website www.crashmap.co.uk is always a useful source of good but unwelcome information.

The latest 2020 injuries are now shown, with Vastern Road Roundabout still taking top spot, albeit with only two injured cyclists, one serious, the other slight.

Still two too many.

The only death was the unfortunate accident in Addington Road.

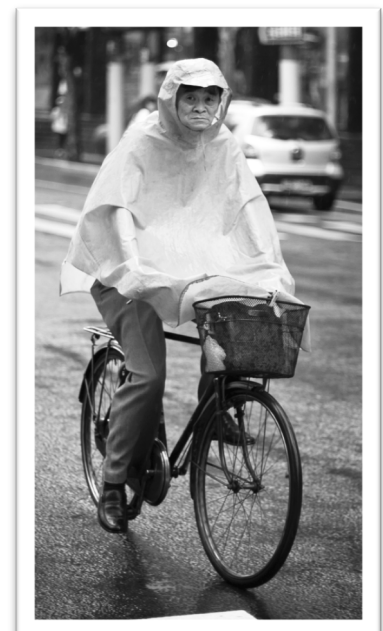
Other injuries were spread around Reading with Kings Road and Oxford Road again featuring.

Collisions and injuries appear to be less than in previous years, but that was probably a benefit from Covid restrictions.

Now, as we are aware, traffic and drivers' poor driving seem to be returning to the 'bad old days'.

Check your routes to see the problem areas, which are not always where you expect.

John Lee
RBC Campaigner for RCC



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Next newsletter copy deadline: 1 November 2021

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

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

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West Berkshire Council

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Oxfordshire County Council

Roads and Transport: 0845 310 1111

RCC's Monthly Meetings

7.30pm on the third Wednesday of each month

Wed 20 Oct 2021 - open mtg

Wed 17 Nov 2021 - cttee mtg

Wed 15 Dec 2021 - open mtg

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