



CycleReading

WORKING FOR A CYCLE FRIENDLY READING

www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Winter 2023/24 No 160

RCC Awarded Community Fund Grant for BikeRegister Membership Plus Kits

The Thames Valley Police Community Fund supports voluntary and community groups that help to prevent crime and keep communities safe.

Money for the Community Fund

is created from the proceeds from the sale of items seized from criminals that cannot be returned to their rightful owners.

On 10 October, Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley Matthew Barber, and Chief Constable Jason Hogg, awarded voluntary and community organisations £199,548 in the second round of this year's Community Fund. And we are delighted to announce that RCC is one of the successful recipients.

RCC has received funding to purchase 400 **BikeRegister** Membership Plus Kits.

We will be organising free Bike Marking events in the next few months where a highly durable tamper resistant QR Code label is attached to your bike to give it a unique BikeRegister ID.

<https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/rcc-awarded-community-fund-grant/>

The RCC Membership will be informed of these events, and these will be published on our website and Facebook page.

We're hoping these kits will both deter bike thieves and help recover bikes and re-unite them with their owners.

If you are interested in hosting a joint event, please email publicity@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Susan Children
Publicity Coordinator



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Campaign News



Reading Borough Council (RBC)

Winter 2023/24 Report

Quite a few things have happened over the last few weeks, with some useful interactions with RBC.

A number of the meetings highlighted the need to add any cycling problem areas to the RCC list and map (see <https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/campaign-information>). Please let the committee know of problems.

Cycle Forum

A Cycle Forum meeting was held on 18 September. There were a number of wide-ranging discussions including School Streets, crossings and cycling on footways. The issue of cycle route closures was raised again, with Kennet Side as well as Greyfriars Road being problems.

RBC gave updates on the active travel schemes and the station subway shared use which should become legal soon. Links to the subway at both ends need to be provided.

Town Centre Signing and Routes

On 25 September RCC and RBC representatives met to check over the signs that had been erected following our years long campaign. About half the signs requested had been fitted, but the key ones in Town Hall Square and Market Place were still missing.

Traffic Management Sub Committee (TMSC)

Cllr John Ennis is the new chair of the TMSC, the committee that approves road and cycle schemes. The last TMSC was on 13 October, but I did not attend as there appeared to be no cycling issues.

John Ennis was the main speaker at our Annual General Meeting on 18 October, which included a lively Q&A session. See AGM report and Chairman's Letter on page 5.

Lower Henley Road Cycle Lanes and ASL

Following discussions at the AGM on 27 October, RCC met with the three Caversham ward Councillors to review the problems caused by the removal of the cycle lanes and Advanced Stop Line.

Apparently, RBC had removed them because of criticism from RCC in 2015 about possible dangers of car doors opening into the narrow cycle lane.

We also highlighted the safety problems at the mini-roundabout by the Coop. RBC agreed to take action on these matters.

Shinfield Road Active Travel Scheme Tranche 2

Site works are still in progress and look as if they will take many months.

Despite reminders and promises, RBC has yet to provide us with the statutory signing proposals which are legally necessary and essential for road users to understand the scheme. These should have been an integral part of the scheme design.

A site cycle visit was held on 4 November with RCC members and Cllr John Ennis. This highlighted a number of issues, many of which we have been raising over the last year.

Redlands Road Area Traffic Calming

Despite RBC's agreement to make some improvements there has been no action that we are aware of.

Cycle Hub

The Cycle Hub in West Street has fallen through because Primark decided against letting the shop unit that was proposed. RBC are now looking for alternative sites.

John Lee
RBC Campaigner for RCC

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Campaign News continued...



West Berkshire Council (WBC)

Winter 2023/24 Report

The last West Berkshire Cycle Forum was on 12 September 2023, and the next Forum will be on Wednesday 20 December. A report of that meeting will appear in the next newsletter. If there are any matters about cycling or active travel in West Berkshire you would like raised at the Forum, please contact Rob Hill via wbc@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk.

National Cycle Network route 4, towpath and related matters

Work has been taking place at several locations.



Sustrans have channelled funding to restore a dilapidated section of the Kennet & Avon canal towpath, approximately 2.4 km in length, used by NCN4 between Aldermaston Wharf and Ufton Lane. The works in this section are virtually complete, significantly improving access for walking and wheeling as well as cycling.

Hambridge Road crossing: with significant input from WBC and using DfT funding, Sustrans have now completed the feasibility study for a potential future signalled crossing at the canal bridge.

Ham Bridge to Bull's Lock, east of Newbury: Canal & River Trust's application for match-funding to The Good Exchange/Greenham Trust (GT)

remains live, with a view to upgrading this 250-metre section.

Scouring/undermining of bank - Victoria Park to Northbrook Street, Newbury: Problem with water winnowing away the sand underneath the towpath in this section, Public Rights of Way (PROW) team has the lead on pursuing remedials, working with the Council's Structures team.

Cycle Training and events

[Bikeability in West Berkshire](#) training delivered to 86% of secondary schools.

Over the summer approximately eight Family Cycling courses were delivered, although with people again going overseas for holidays, the level of engagement was lower than immediately post-pandemic.



Bikeability Trust has moved towards ensuring that 80% of Year 6 students receive Bikeability Training before they move on.

85% of West Berkshire schools involved with Bikeability in 2022-23 - hoping to extend to 94% in 2023-24.

Schemes for construction

Stockcross Linkway Stage 1: Works are due to start on 18 December to construct Stage 1 of a shared pedestrian and cycle path, running along the north side of B4000 and connecting Stockcross Village to the existing footway at the A4 roundabout.

A4 Crown Mead, Thatcham: Due to constraints and exorbitant utilities cost, this scheme currently envisages on-carriageway lanes. Current intent is to carry forward the scheme to construction in 2023-24.

School Street, Francis Baily School, Skillman Drive, Thatcham: For further information on School Streets, visit:

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/school-street-schemes> and watch the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6gWsrHvNjM>

A ProGen speed indicator device has been installed on the A4 eastbound approaching the crossing near Francis Baily School.

An update was provided on the pioneering School Streets Driver Education Programme which has been developed as a bolster to the School Streets scheme initially introduced in Calcot, using money secured by WBC from Active Travel England.

Schemes in development and the Linkways network

Stockcross Linkway Stage 2: Feasibility Study underway for section from A4/B4000 roundabout to Speen Lane, using ATF4 funding.

Old Bath Road, Speen/Newbury: outline design underway for section from A4 Western Avenue to eastern junction of Speen Lane/access to Goldwell Park, intention being to better connect Western Avenue Stage 1 cycle facilities to the shared path on the west side of Goldwell Park.

Western Avenue Stage 2, Newbury: concept design underway for section from Waitrose roundabout through to Chestnut Crescent estate, mindful of potential for onward connections to east and north.

Robin Hood Active Travel Improvements: modelling commissioned of impacts of proposals for at-grade crossings of A339 and A4.



Theale-Calcot Connector: A Feasibility Study is underway for potential future replacement of pedestrian bridge west of M4 Junction 12 with a replacement structure suitable for cycling as well as walking.

A4 London Road/Newbury Manor Hotel: this scheme remains contingent on completion of legal discussions for

Campaign News continued...

land transfers, coupled with resolution of utility issues.

Extension/s to the Eling Way

This relates to potential extensions of the Eling Way multi-user path which currently connects Hermitage with Hampstead Norreys.



Proposed Phase 1 extension: Outline design work continuing for a 1km extension within Hermitage village itself.

Wider activity: WBC wrote to landowners throughout the section from Hermitage to Newbury along or immediately parallel to the former railway alignment, offering the chance to meet and discuss potential scheme.

Nil or negative reaction led to exploration, with PROW team, of scope to upgrade/restoration of existing bridleway and footpaths in the area south of Hermitage, as an interim measure.

However, the bridleway is very undulating, with some sensitive sections, and an ongoing landowner issue. Another potential alignment, using an existing PROW, has been identified. However, this could only form one part of a potential route

south from Hermitage and further landowner engagement would be needed for a roadside section.

Regarding a potential northern extension towards Compton, WBC had asked again about scope for a path to run alongside the proposed Hampstead Norreys flood alleviation scheme but is still seeking a response. Favoured alignment identified but would cross multiple landholdings.

Rob Hill
WBC Campaigner for RCC



Wokingham Borough Council (WoBC)

Winter 2023/24 Report

A329 Consultation

The second part of this consultation is now live and is consulting on plans for improvements to cycle infrastructure between Winnersh and Wokingham town centre on the A329 Reading-Wokingham Road.

The consultation can be found on the WoBC public consultation page under A329 consultation. There are five phases to the consultation, and we are currently in Phase 2.

A big obstacle to journeys between Winnersh and Wokingham town is the Woollahill roundabout, and we have had a useful meeting with the Council to discuss ways in which plans for this could be improved.

Tanhouse Bridge

Work on the Tanhouse footbridge bridge over the railway from the new Carnival leisure development to Ormonde Road and the south of the Borough is going to start in 2024. The current two bridges are due to be demolished between Christmas and New Year and the new bridge is due to be up and running by March 2024.

Despite a campaign and attendance at several Council meetings, the bridge will be stepped and not ramped as we had hoped. But the fact it will be a single bridge replacing two separate bridges is an improvement, and there will be a 'cycle wheel gutter' at the side to allow cyclists to more easily traverse. Also we have been promised the bridge has been designed to allow for future easy retrofitting of ramps.

Woodley Cycle Scheme

This is now on its third consultation, and nothing has happened yet, however this news is due soon and hopefully in the next newsletter I will be able to provide some concrete updates with possible good news on these proceedings.

Kidical Mass

Continues to grow. The most recent Reading ride on 26 November 2023 attracted 70 riders (and one runner) despite the rain and freezing conditions and we are hoping that in 2024 we will break the 100 people mark, which would be fantastic.

The next Wokingham ride will be starting at Elms Field on Saturday 16 December at 2pm. Future Kidical Mass rides, including more information about the group, can be found here: www.kidicalmassreading.co.uk.

Alex Cran
WoBC Campaigner for RCC

The Reading Cycle Campaign 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, Cycling UK (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.

Remember To Update Your Details

If you move house or change your email address, please could you let the RCC know.

We can only work with the latest information you have given us, which involves delivering this newsletter to you.

Campaign News continued...

Castle Hill Cycle Lane

The tidal flow traffic lane that used to wash up and down the foot of Castle Hill on a daily basis has now been removed. The erstwhile central traffic lane used to change its direction for the morning rush hour, producing some level of confusion amongst drivers, who would need to check the time whilst avoiding oncoming traffic. Part of the road space that has been freed up has been replaced with a short section of cycle lane on the inbound (downhill) direction.



Artist's impression of proposed Castle Hill cycle lanes

Climate Strategy and Transport earlier this year. John emphasised his commitment to reducing the carbon footprint of transport in Reading and then took questions from attendees.

Questions touched on a number of issues and concerns, ranging from how active travel schemes are selected and evaluated, to whether cycle routes will be provided for the new River Academy School on Richfield Avenue.

In particular we were pleased that Councillor Ennis gave an under-taking to consult with the RCC on the Council's proposed travel schemes. Early involvement will help ensure the best outcomes are achieved for cyclists, as well as helping RBC to realise its aim of increasing the proportion of journeys made by sustainable travel modes.

Reading's Transport Strategy Out For Consultation

RBC's new Transport Strategy to 2040 is out for consultation. Take a look back at our Autumn 2023 newsletter (<https://readingcyclecampaign.org.uk/readings-transport-strategy-2040>) for a summary of the document. The consultation closes on 11 December. <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/dens/reading-transport-strategy-2040-statutory-consulta/>

Keith Elliott
RCC Secretary



But this cycle lane is just an interim measure, and a relatively short one we hope. RBC intends to introduce segregated cycle lanes along both sides of Castle Hill and Bath Road as part of the next scheme to be constructed through the Active Travel Fund (ATF).

The Council has now just about completed the Shinfield Road ATF scheme, and in November members of the RCC rode the route accompanied by Reading's Lead Councillor for Transport, John Ennis. We were keen to identify what elements work well and what elements could be improved; the objective being to make sure that any lessons are learnt before the Council finalises its plans for the Castle Hill/Bath Road scheme.

Annual General Meeting

In October we held our Annual General Meeting and appointed the RCC committee for the next 12 months. We are pleased to introduce three new members of the committee: Keith Collyer has taken on the vacant role of Membership Secretary, whilst Sam Hatfield and Kat Heath (well known for her involvement in Kidical Mass) join as co-opted members.

At the AGM we were delighted to welcome Councillor John Ennis, who became RBC's Lead Councillor for

Chairman's Letter

Dear RCC members

Reasons to be Cheerful!

With the press and media full of the most depressing news, I feel a real need to find reasons to be cheerful. Perhaps I can find some in the world of cycling if I look in the right places.

Although we have a Prime Minister whose preferred mode of transport is

by helicopter, and who has obviously decided that the car driver vote might just keep him in power, there are more than a few signs of a real change for the better, especially in our local area.

Your committee had originally invited Reading's Mayor, Tony Page, to our AGM, but he declined and sent Cllr. John Ennis in his place, who has taken over from Tony as Lead Councillor for

Climate Strategy and Transport. He braved, what must have seemed to him, a pack of howling wolves at the meeting.

He impressed us by his commitment to Net Zero and his support for cycling. It turns out that he is a regular cyclist, commuting from home to work. He was certainly well aware of the problems faced by cyclists on the Oxford Road, even if he could not

Chairman's Letter continued...

satisfy many of the questioners from the floor. Perhaps they can never be satisfied.

I suggested to him that he might like to come and cycle the new Shinfield Road Scheme with us to see how it was coming on and whether there are any lessons to be learnt for future schemes such as Castle Hill. He readily agreed and we met up at the entry to the University one rainy Saturday morning with three other committee members.

The scheme is far from complete and as John Lee has pointed out on several occasions, the plans for the signage are far from satisfactory. We discovered several worrying things, such as poor or non-existent drainage and raised kerbs at the entrance and exits to the paths.

However, the most significant short-coming was the complete absence of any provision for cyclists at the University entrance. To his credit, Cllr. Ennis has agreed to take this up with the scheme's designers along with a list of other comments from the committee members who took

part. I trust that this will be just the start of a more fruitful relationship with RBC and that we will get to be consulted at any early stage on cycle related issues.

The next reason to be cheerful also came from the AGM, where we welcomed three new committee members on board. Keith Collyer has agreed to take on the role of Membership secretary and Kat Heath and Sam Hatfield have been co-opted as well.

I am especially pleased that Kat has joined us, as her enthusiasm has driven Kidical Mass forward since she arrived in Reading last year. With a full committee and a growing membership, the Campaign feels to be in a good place.

As you will read the beginning of the newsletter, we have secured a grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Fund. We are going to use this to purchase bike marking kits which we will be able to offer to members and others at the events that we attend. Susan Children is to be complimented on seeing the

opportunity and putting in the bid which turned out to be successful.

The final reason to be cheerful is that I have a new bike. OA stands either for old age or for osteo-arthritis and I confess to both. Pedalling uphill was becoming quite painful at times and my first attempt at converting an older bike to electric drive was not a success, so I raided the piggy bank and bought a lovely bright green bike with a step through frame and most importantly a torque sensor.

I think it was the cadence sensor on the conversion that caused me most trouble. It would kick in with full power and I found myself free-wheeling then braking all the time. The torque sensor feeds in the power much more gradually and it feels like a normal riding experience. I dismantled the conversion, gave the bike to the Bike Kitchen to sell, and fitted the kit to my daughter's bike, and she is over the moon with it. 'Chacun a son gout' as the French might say.

Joe Edwards
RCC Chairman



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Kidical Mass Winter Report

Kidical Mass at the Reading Cycle Festival

Kidical Mass Reading joined the crowds at Reading Cycle Festival, running a circular ride through Caversham.

The ride started in the dry, meaning that we had a good turnout - just over 60 riders joined us. However, about ten minutes from the end of the ride the heavens opened. There were a few pauses as people who had remembered to bring them put on waterproofs and rain covers.

One marshal joked over the radio that we would have to stop as it's obviously impossible to cycle in the rain - yet somehow we managed to continue (as we all do when it rains on the school run, etc, etc).

For the first time in Kidical Mass Reading's history we had a police escort! Fortuitously, they had the stand next to us at the festival (for bike marking against theft) and - I'm not sure how as I wasn't party to the



conversation - two of them were persuaded to join us. By all accounts they enjoyed the ride, even if they did peel off near the end to take shelter under a tree until the rain died down.

Back at the festival, Kidical Mass attendees got closer together than ever as everyone who didn't leave immediately huddled under the gazebo to eat cake (thanks Kat!). The rain didn't last long - it often doesn't

- and our kids enjoyed an afternoon of riding on the ramps, watching the amazing stunt show and playing with their friends.

It was great to see so many of our cycling friends at the festival, from Reading Cycle Campaign to WATCH (Wokingham Active Travel Community Hub) to Avanti. We'd love to see you too at any of our future rides.

Hilary Smart

Glowing For A Ride



If you were paying attention in early November, you may have seen local news coverage of a 'Light up the Night' bike ride where over 30 cyclists rode through town together after dark. We were all lit up like Christmas trees (figuratively in some cases and literally in others - several bikes were sporting fairy lights).

The point of the ride was threefold:

1. To highlight the benefit of being well lit.

2. To highlight the need for cycling infrastructure which is well lit (it's a double whammy for female cyclists if cycle paths feel dark and deserted).

3. To have fun!

To further ensure that aim No. 3 was achieved, the end point for the ride was the Fisherman's Cottage.

The ride took in some important landmarks, including the Oracle riverside (where we rode at walking

pace around pedestrians who gave us lots of waves and smiles) and of course the completed parts of the new bike lane on Shinfield Road.

The ride was co-organised by Reading Cycle Campaign, Avanti and Kidical Mass Reading. I was grateful to the riders who helped us to hold the lane where it wasn't safe for motorists to pass the group. Of course, most motorists were calm and friendly and waved as the group passed them. I think we were quite a festive sight!

At one point on the ride we heard a siren and saw blue lights behind us. We had managed to get all 30+ of us to the side of the road and out of the way before the cars behind us had managed to do the same. The ambulance breezed straight past us with a wave to the ride leader.

At the pub, we set the world to rights by chatting all things bikes. Many thanks to everyone who joined us - I hope we see you again next year!

Hilary Smart

Cycle Parking Stands: The Good, Bad and Ugly

In the previous newsletter we looked at cycle security. Being able to park your bike and know that it's still going to be there when you come back, is an important factor in encouraging people to cycle. The fear of having your bike stolen is enough to put many people off cycling completely.



The good news is that cycle parking provision has improved dramatically over the past ten to fifteen years. We now accept the 'Sheffield' or hoop new style parking stand as being the new standard, previously bike parking tended to be 'wheelgrabber' designs that held a bike by the wheels only. The worst of these were designs that were simply slots in concrete blocks that held a front wheel.



Whilst these stands were incredibly popular as they packed the maximum number of bikes into the minimum space, they were simply not secure as it was impossible to lock a bike frame to anything immovable. Also, by knocking a parked bike, it was much too easy to damage a wheel that was jammed into a stand.

Generally, it looks as though most of such obsolete stands have now gone, although some do still exist and surprisingly they are still being supplied by various manufacturers today.



I'm aware of wheelgrabber stands at B&Q Reading (I'm sure that I can't be the only person that cycles to B&Q...). But, if there are more of these dinosaur parking stands out there, please let us know.

The main types of stand that we now have are variations on inverted U-shaped metal hoops, known as a 'Sheffield' stand. These stands were developed in Sheffield with a simple yet brilliant design, originally made using sections of old gas piping, with two bends, concreted into the ground.

Ideally, stands should be around the height of a bike top tube, generally around 750mm high, with the sides of the stand around 700mm to 800mm apart, matching the seat tube and forks.



This enables the bike to be supported by the stand and the bike can then be securely locked to the stand. Both legs of the stand should be firmly fixed into the ground. Parking stands should also be placed on level ground, otherwise a bike will be running away from you whilst being parked.

Stands should be spaced between 800mm to 1m apart to allow a bike to be securely locked to each side and for anyone to get easy access to their bike.

This allows for six parking stands, or parking for 12 bikes, in the space that



would normally be used for one car. However, whilst this spacing is adequate for most bikes, this doesn't provide for bikes with luggage attached, child seats, tandems, recumbents, cargo bikes, etc.

Therefore, some parking stands should have much wider spacing to allow for these bikes. Current advice is around 5% of total parking spaces should be provided for these bikes.



There are other variations on parking stands. These include M shaped stands that are designed to be more secure for bikes parked using two locks and for smaller bikes. Fin shaped stands don't seem to have any advantage over standard Sheffield stands, other than possibly aesthetics.



Whilst it may seem like nit-picking, the dimensions of cycle parking stands are important. Stands that are too tall, too short or too wide mean that bike locks don't easily fit around the bike frame and parking stand. Stands which are the wrong size just make it that bit more difficult to securely park

Cycle Parking Stands: The Good, Bad and Ugly

your bike; this is annoying when standard sizes and dimensions are available.

Cycle parking for anything other than short stay use should ideally be undercover. This does though need to be balanced against being in full view of everyone that is passing, as natural surveillance is a deterrent to potential thieves. In many places, cycle parking is fitted into tucked away locations or leftover spaces that can't usefully be used for anything else. In such circumstances, it may be worth checking where other cycle parking is available.



It may seem obvious, but avoid any cycle parking stands that are loose or wobble. This could mean the stand is not secure, which would allow a thief to more easily steal a bike. Also, avoid any stands which look damaged. There have been instances where thieves have used an angle grinder to cut through a parking stand, which has then been fixed with tape, which allows the stand to be bent open and for a bike to be stolen easily.

Whilst most parking stands are secured into the ground, it's also



worth checking whether the stand is bolted into the ground, which is far less secure than being concreted in. A recent example from Edinburgh revealed thieves unbolted newly installed cycle parking stands to steal bikes. Although I'm not aware of this happening here, the Oracle and around Reading station have cycle stands which are bolted down.



At the risk of sounding gloomy, the reason for highlighting this is that insurance companies will only pay out for a stolen bike if it has been securely locked to an immovable object. There is therefore a risk that any claim could be affected if the bike stand is damaged or not secure.

For those with time on their hands during these dark winter evenings, Department for Transport cycle design guidance Local Transport Note (LTN)1/20, published in July 2020, has a whole section on cycle parking.... <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

We would be interested in your thoughts about cycle parking around Reading. What works well and what doesn't? Do you have suggestions for new or improved cycle parking? Should there be more single parking stands rather than large blocks of stands around the town? Have you had a bike stolen from somewhere that you thought was secure?



The recently installed cycle parking at Palmer Park sports stadium demonstrates a good example of well designed and implemented cycle parking: the stands are the correct size, they are securely fitted into the ground, there is plenty of space between stands, they are not tucked away from natural surveillance and are undercover. Simple but effective.

Tony Carr

RCC Committee Christmas Wish List

Mr White Van Driver, show some respect for other road users, especially bikes and pedestrians.
Stuart Ward

A Purley-Pangbourne cycle-track as the A329 is dangerous for cyclists.
Duncan Cook

Resurfacing Kendrick Road and take away the horrid road bumps.
Joe Edwards

A decent accessible bridge to replace the Horseshoe Bridge at Kennetmouth.
Sam Hatfield

Oxford Road to be fully resurfaced so that it's fit for cycling.
Keith Elliott

Jingle bells for my handlebars.
John Lee

A year of considerate drivers, who treat me as if I was their own relative on the bike ahead of them.
Karen Robertson

Somewhere secure to park my bike in Reading.
Susan Children

Remove car parking along Oxford Road and create a separate car park, as in Tilehurst. Instal appropriately wide cycle lanes in the remaining space.
Alice Elliott

Hi-viz cycling gloves, reflective stickers and a new pannier rucksack to carry on the tube.
Kat Heath

Some heated cycling gloves and for WoBC to install a piece of LTN 1/20 compliant cycle infrastructure.
Alex Cran

Check out these wishes and more on the RCC website during December.

Take Your Bike On A Train

If you're thinking of taking your bike on a train from Reading, the advice from the GWR website is to check with the train operator first.

Not particularly helpful.

Reading Station is served by Great Western Railway (GWR), CrossCountry, South Western Railway (SWR) and the Elizabeth line (Lizzie Line).

As advised by GWR I checked each of these operators.

GWR:

Cycles can be carried free of charge, although restrictions apply. You need to make a reservation up to two hours before the train leaves the station from where it is starting - or at any time before your train arrives - depending on where you look for guidance. 😊

Of course, spaces are limited, so you should book as early as you can:

- in the booking section of an online account at

<https://myaccount.gwr.com/MyAccount/SignIn>

- when you book your tickets online (you can do this on Trainline)
- by calling 0345 7000 125 (08:00 to 20:00 daily)
- at your local staffed ticket office

If you need assistance, you can message GWR on Twitter @GWRHelp, Facebook Messenger @GWRUK or on WhatsApp at 07890 608043.

<https://www.gwr.com/travelling-with-us/on-our-trains/bringing-your-bike>

CrossCountry:

Bike reservations are again free and should be made before you travel. Bikes can be booked via Twitter (@crosscountryuk), Facebook Messenger (www.facebook.com/CrossCountrytrains) or you can reserve a bike space at a station prior to travel.

On most of the CrossCountry trains there are two reservable bike spaces and one further space for unreserved

bikes. Bikes without a reservation are accepted on a first come, first served basis. If you have a folding bike, they request that you fold these up and place them in luggage racks. Customers travelling with e-bikes (not exceeding 250 watts) must be able to lift and stow their bikes into the luggage racks provided...

<https://www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/on-board-with-crosscountry/bikes-and-cyclists>

SWR:

SWR claim to “love to welcome cyclists and their bikes”, but other than information on the number of spaces per train and a handy map showing restrictions during peak weekday travel times, I couldn't see how to book a bike on a particular train. The only exception to this is the London Waterloo to Salisbury/Exeter train, where you must reserve a space for your bike:

- When you book your ticket online
- At any staffed station

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For ride information visit: www.cyclingukreading.org.uk/rides

Or contact Sel Dixon, the club secretary: secretary@cyclingukreading.org.uk
Phone or text: 07867 442046

www.facebook.com/cyclingukreading

Take Your Bike On A Train continued...

- By contacting our Customer Service Centre at <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/contact-and-help/contact-us>

And to book at least 24 hours before you travel.

<https://www.southwesternrailway.com/travelling-with-us/travelling-with-a-bike>

Lizzie Line:

If you want to travel to London, this is probably your best option, and you don't need to book.

Non-folded cycles are allowed Monday to Friday on trains:

- Arriving at Liverpool Street (from the direction of Shenfield) before 07:30 and after 09:30
- Leaving Liverpool Street (towards Shenfield) before 16:00 and after 19:00
- Arriving at Paddington (from the west) before 07:30 and after 09:30
- Leaving Paddington (towards the west) before 16:00 and after 19:00
- Between Paddington and Abbey Wood before 07:30, 09:30-16:00 and after 19:00
- Weekends and bank holidays: Anytime

You cannot change onto the Tube with non-folded cycles at some Elizabeth line stations:

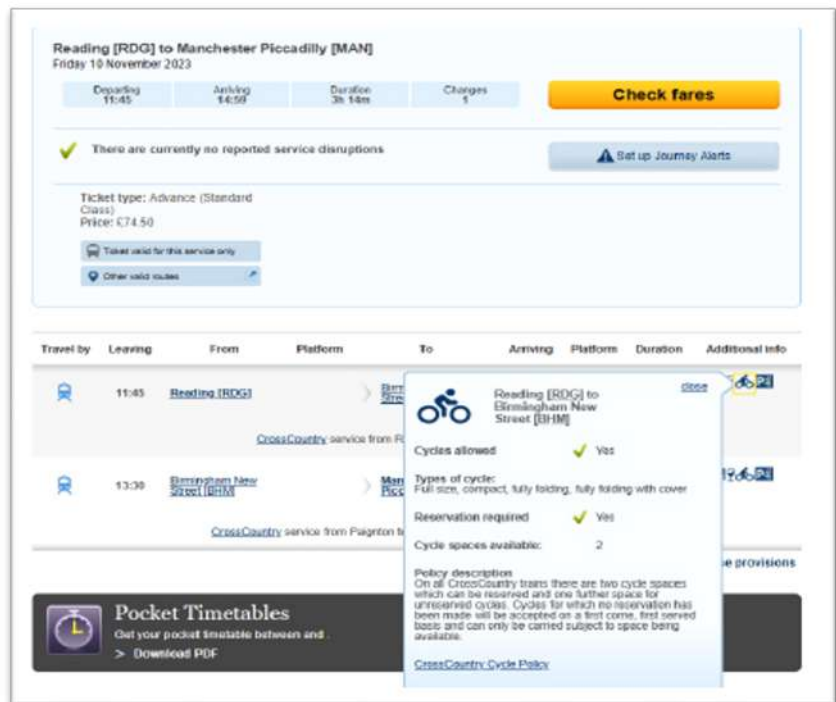
- Tottenham Court Road for the Central or Northern lines
- Bond Street for the Jubilee line
- Paddington for the Bakerloo line
- Liverpool Street for the Central and Northern lines
- Stratford for the Central line

<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/cycling/cycles-on-public-transport/#Elizabeth%20Line>

National Rail PlusBike

After all this jumping about on the train operator websites, I came across the National Rail PlusBike information. This tells you about cycle facilities at stations, the number of spaces at stations and onboard, and other things that will be helpful to know for your specific trip.

PlusBike is available on National Rail's website via the journey planner and as a phone app. Simply enter your plans



into the journey planner and select a specific journey. Information on cycles is then provided. Plusbike claims that all the information is accurate and regularly updated by the station operators.

To see how PlusBike works, I planned a trip from Reading to Manchester (see picture above).

A quick click on the bike icon brought up information on taking bikes on the trip. Plusbike claims to make it easy to see if, and when, you can take your bike on a certain service.

For more details, there is a PlusBike leaflet: http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/static/images/content/PlusBike_Foldout_Leaflet_final_version.pdf

Of course, you still need to book your bike on the train with the operator, but at least you know how many spaces are available and who to contact.

Trainline App

The best option would seem to be to use the Trainline App. Like PlusBike you can search for your single or return journey in the journey planner and then look for the bike icon in the search results. Clicking on the bike icon will show you how many bike spaces are available and whether a reservation is required.

You can reserve a bike space; however you must then collect the train tickets

and a bike reservation coupon from a ticket machine at the station.

You can see Trainline's advice on taking bikes on trains here: <https://www.thetrainline.com/trains/great-britain/bikes-on-trains#policies>

Trainline also has a handy list showing which train companies require a bike reservation.

<https://www.thetrainline.com/trains/great-britain/bikes-on-trains#policies>

Our advice

In summary it's a bit of a minefield - the information is all available, but you need to do your research and book. Trainline seems to be the easiest one-stop source and benefits from allowing you to book your train ticket with your bike reservation online, although you still need to collect a bike coupon from the station ticket machine or office.

Whichever way you book, remember to watch out for rail-replacement buses, which do not allow non-folding bicycles on them at any time.

If you have experience of taking your bike on a train, let us know how you got on. I once jumped on a quiet train at a rural unattended station and came off in Reading. No booking. No fuss. Just lucky!

Susan Children
Publicity Coordinator

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Next newsletter copy deadline: 1 February 2024

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

Council Contacts

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

Reading Borough Council

Highway queries: 0118 937 3797; parking: 0118 937 3767; potholes: 0800 626540

Wokingham Borough Council

0118 974 6302 or www.wokingham.gov.uk

West Berkshire Council

01635 519080 or www.westberks.org.uk

Windsor and Maidenhead

www.rbwm.gov.uk

Oxfordshire County Council

Roads and Transport: 0845 310 1111

RCC's Monthly Meetings

7.30pm on the third Wednesday of each month

Wed 17 Jan 2024 - cttee mtg

Wed 21 Feb 2024 - open mtg

Wed 20 Mar 2024 - cttee mtg

See RCC's Facebook Page or our website for more details. We hope to see you there.

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