

Chair's Report – Bradford Cycling Campaign

Introduction

It's over a year since we held our last AGM. It's been a very difficult period for many reasons as the Covid-19 pandemic has brought a lot of things to the surface. Brexit has been rolling on. Transport has been brought to the fore via several issues on the local and global stages. Cycling as a form of transport doesn't seem to be gaining the coverage that electric cars or rockets have, although it's still acknowledged as a sport!

Locally, as in many parts of the country that haven't made successful interventions, we're now in a situation where driving styles and motor traffic congestion in Bradford is as bad, if not worse than before the pandemic, with even fewer using buses. There were some interesting happenings such as practically empty roads during the first lock-down, followed by very mixed quality interventions from the Council (mandated nationally) in the form of 'pop-up' cycle lanes which we reviewed here:

www.bradfordcc.org/bradfords-pop-up-cycle-lanes-a-brief-review.

We await a clean air zone, HS2 looks like it won't be coming this way, and a range of larger scale public infrastructure schemes are on the horizon. Cop 26 has been and gone and we're still in a climate emergency, although my own definition of emergency seems to differ from many local politicians and planners. Cycling UK has pointed out that cycling remains one of the key tools in our fight against climate change – as well as against local problems like childhood obesity, ill-health, congestion, green-space loss and poor air quality. As before, cycling offers an important part of the solution to some of Bradford's problems. Low levels or patchy public knowledge and concern about how the issues interrelate locally is arguably the biggest issue we face in campaigning for cycle-friendly change.

Within the local authority and without, we don't see the "joining of dots" or the kind of brave and radical thinking in terms of design/development and the public interactions we need to get ourselves out of the messes we're in – in several instances car-centrism in planning is getting worse (Drive Thrus etc.) More positively, several large, segregated cycling lanes are planned for the district along with *some* positive changes to road layouts.

Campaign Media Coverage

In terms of the Cycle Campaign's Media coverage – we've continued to grow slowly and organically on social media. Our Facebook group has 564 members (this is probably where most public interaction occurs), our Facebook Page has 296 followers. Twitter, which we use less often has 469 followers. Our website contains useful contact details (e.g. how to sign up to mail list – for which there are 158 subscribers). As mentioned in previous meetings, we could do with some additional help with promotion, online and other media campaign activity.

We've had a few appearances on BCB, mentions in the T&A around Clean Air Day and other activities, including our review of Bradford Pop-up Cycle Lanes.

We've worked with and contributed as individuals to other campaigns that have highlighted issues with Air Quality (www.cleanairbradford.uk) and road development schemes like the Bradford-Shipley Travel Alliance (www.bsta.org.uk), as well as Baildon and Shipley FOE

(<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/groups/baildonandshipleyfriendsoftheearth>). We also have had long-running support for the Queensbury Tunnel and the community campaign to save it. We've also interacted with Living Streets in Saltire. Also a campaign to reduce Speeding outside Beckfoot School in Bingley.

Local Authority Interaction

We have succeeded in our campaign to get an Active Travel Officer installed within Bradford Council, in the form of Emma Young. We have had little or no interaction with our elected Cycling Champion, Taj Salaam. We have recently met with Emma and John Davis, her boss in the Dept of Place. This felt like a constructive meeting, but we still have no progress on restarting B-Spoke – the cycle forum.

This is very disappointing – we have had informal agreement that something would replace this and have been asking for well over a year. This means there is no formal communication conduit that we're aware of between cycling related groups and providers and Bradford Council. A lot of the issues we're facing and FOIs we've felt compelled to put in have resulted from this lack of a two-way dialogue. We want to work constructively with the Local Authority but it's difficult not to get angry with the nature of tone of some of the interactions we've had.

Phrases we find ourselves repeating include “The just don't seem to get it,” “It's fine but seems very top-down” or “There's no sign of this climate emergency”!

More positively, a range of larger scale infrastructure schemes are proposed which we have done our best to input either as individuals or as a group:

Transport Schemes:

- Transforming Cities – city centre improvements and a proposed Thornton Road Cycle Lane
- Canal Road Widening (4 lane traffic likely) and Manningham Lane cycle lane
- Cutler Heights and Roundabout redevelopment
- Wharfedale Greenway?
- School Streets (frustratingly small scale)
- 20 zones, Area plans such as the Shipley plan etc.
- Active Travel Neighbourhoods (BD3 etc.)
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

Much of this interaction has been frustrating and frustrated by a very 'top-down' approach from the Local Authority which doesn't meaningfully consult with cyclists in an ongoing fashion. There are exceptions to this – the Cutler Heights schemes, led by planner Andy Brown seemed positive and our site visits appreciated.

Infrastructure Frustrations:

- Numerous problems on Canal Road Greenway (lack of Leeds Road crossing Aldi entrance etc.)
- A wide range of junction changes across the district which either ignore cyclists, make it worse for cyclists or are wholly inadequate - Toller Lane Junction for example (a scheme with very poor provision for cycling)
- Local Plans which embed car-centric housing development
- Planning arrangements alongside things like Drive-Thrus
- Numerous local concerns (e.g. pinch-points and bridleway crossings in Baildon)
- Queensbury Tunnel – Highways England Fiasco

It is in these issues that the lack of 'joining the dots' mentioned in my introduction is most apparent.

Active Membership

We have around 20 paid-up members who contribute £10 annually (you can sign up here: www.bradfordcc.org/join)

It continues to be a small group of people who are active. Committee members, James Craig, Steve Lax and Norah McWilliam have been active in relation to communications, e-mailing and responding to consultations. James is a powerhouse on e-mail, but I share his sense of frustration at the often-inadequate responses. As in previous years, we could really benefit from fresh input.

Jen Barclay has also been active, although not formally a paid-up-member she has done a lot of e-mailing and research around accessibility issues which are very in-line with our inclusive aims for active travel.

Personally, I've been very busy with the Capital of Cycling project (capitalofcycling.org) which now has seven employees and is currently moving venue to Rawson Road (formerly the blood donation unit, behind Oastler Market). We hope to continue to be a resource hub, deliver cycling and maintenance training, bike recycling and to continue to make the practical case for the use of cycling the meet numerous social needs.

Moving Forward

It has fallen to James and others to do a lot of the e-mailing as I have struggled to give the time to the Campaign that I feel it needs. I'm happy to continue as chair for now but would be keen to see if we can expand our active membership with a view to handing over the chair-ship at some point soon.

The Campaign is needed but it needs fresh input and the lack of a regular consultation forum with Bradford Council has made it very frustrating to be a campaigner as it occasionally feels like we're sharing our frustrations with each other rather than getting through to the local authority.

The public at large remain for the main part un-addressed by our campaign, although we have had coverage and interaction with other groups such as the Pass Wide and Slow ride with horse riders, coverage in local press and work with other groups already mentioned.