

WCA Transport Topic Group meeting 24th June 2021

Attendees: AN (Chair), MW, JWi, MB, JJ, JB, JG, and AD (Amy, notes). Another newcomer joined for part of the meeting (Wiltshire Animal Rights).

1. **Apologies:** received from DK.

5) **Notes from 27/5/21** - approved

6) **GENERAL – ACTION UPDATES (Actions Brought forward from previous meeting notes)**

'Cycle Path' for Wiltshire – ongoing, also see below.

Green Paper – part of the above vision map for cycling in Wiltshire for off-road. Drafted and circulated with agenda for comment. DK has given feedback via email. See 8 (c).

Sustrans – DONE. AN has been in touch with new contact Max Longley, who is in post as South Central Development Manager but yet to relocate. AN has given Max a heads-up that as a group we want to promote safe routes (away from A-roads) throughout the county. He has asked for the typical costs per typical mile of greenway, and average yield (users) / mile of greenway and other stats to arrive at estimates of cost of investment vs. congestion saved etc. **[Post meeting note: Max has replied. Report, "Typical Costs of Cycling Interventions" obtained. Information about Bathampton K&A Canal Towpath Improvement received from B&NES Council's Cycling Officer]**

Discussion – NCN routes are Sustrans priority, and they may not be willing/able to support further initiatives. COGS (Salisbury) are 'rangers' who look after a couple of routes. Sustrans decommissioned the ['Wiltshire Cycleway'](#) as one of its routes. It's thought this decision was made as it's partly on road, and they are looking to make all their routes safe (= off-road). This means gaps in the routes though in some areas (e.g. Amesbury).

E-Bikes Report (with Spindles Bikes co-op, Corsham) – yet to do report but AN has been in contact and has bought an e-bike himself! **Action: AN**

Road Scheme Carbon Impacts – Awaiting data for this (ACA are helping). Idea to use in lobbying more climate active neighbouring councils / WGSTB who may be impacted by WC's proposed expansions along the A350.

Bikeability – AD to ask JWa if he had enquired with his contacts after last meeting. **[Post meeting note: AN has emailed to enquire what the provision is for adult training in Wiltshire]**

Cycle & E-bike Shop List for Wilts, Swindon & beyond – AD to recirculate Google Drive link soon and ask for more updates. **Action: AD / ALL**

7) **MAJOR ISSUES DISCUSSION**

a) **BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLANS**

Agreed the picture / progress is different in different areas.

[This WC briefing note](#) had been sent to town / parish councils showing that WC are currently (re)consulting on the allocation of a previous government funding grant (£671,000) suitable for small scale improvements to existing services. The note introduces 'Bus Back Better' and the £3bn to be available but does not comment on how WC will consult on this.

MW has been in touch with Lee Fletcher at Option 24/7 to share the leaflet produced in Salisbury about a new route to the Five Rivers centre. Lee agreed on the approach to try to get endorsed by City Council.

Chippenham – not sure if anyone looking at it directly. MB has asked Town Council to look at improving routes to essential services (e.g. doctors) and cheaper fares. Calne – A Councillor

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has been collecting information. Trowbridge – Need better bus access to the train station. 'BBB' strategy aims for better links between bus and train services.
Malmesbury – MB reported that the Town Council have two online surveys for suggesting improvements – one for bus users, one for those who don't use the bus. Seems a useful approach – one to replicate elsewhere?
Melksham's online survey is more general and about transport needs / preferences.

b) CYCLING – TOWN CYCLE NETWORKS

No-one who attended had completed the comparison of the WC maps with what's on the ground now, using the sheet circulated, although some have made enquiries.
Agreed that in places with dedicated local cycling groups, this may not be necessary. Salisbury is too far on to have input as LCWIP is imminent. In Chippenham and RWB maps have been developed, and groups in contact with WC over them. AD and MB have asked Nick M for the Chippenham map, for reference.
JG is passionate about safe cycling, her son having recently been seriously injured in a collision – 'paths should be wide enough for a toddler to be considered safe'. Suggests RWB town centre could be one-way to make room. Commented about the huge delay (12 yrs) in the Swindon-RWB link, and the paths proposed but not put in around Junction 16. WC promised a route they didn't have permission for and are still trying to deal with this issue. Need to accelerate massively. Onus on activists to campaign locally to see change happen.

[Post meeting note: Richard Moulton of Spindle Bikes has returned the table for Corsham]

c) CYCLING – OFF ROAD GREENWAYS

AN explained the proposals covered in the draft paper. These lay out an ambitious, 'doing everything possible' approach. It will be expensive if implemented well, including cost to hard surface and modify paths in many places, including all the Kennet and Avon canal towpath. Railway line paths can be fenced, away from the tracks. Wilts & Berks canal is being reconstructed. Hope is to influence design of tow path in early stages.
There are usually arguments against hard surfaces - 'cyclists will go too fast' - so we need to counter with the right arguments: make it wider/segregate, work on cyclist's behaviour (code of conduct), signage etc. Hard surface better than gravel for stopping.
Discussion about using hard surfacing – doesn't this commit us to more carbon / biodiversity loss? Definitely a trade-off, but hope is it will lead to less cars/roads. We should ensure that offsetting projects are introduced alongside paths to promote wildlife. Bristol-Bath cycle path is a successful example.
Idea for TTG to lobby WC for the paper to be taken as a basis for a Wiltshire-wide off-road active travel network. AN to finalise a version. Contact needed soon with Network Rail and others.

Action: AN, DK

AN has also been in touch with Bob G of Sustainable Calne / Cycling UK's Cycle Advocacy Network (CAN) in Wiltshire, and has joined the network himself. Bob hopes to join TTG meetings in future.

Noted that Sustainable Calne & WC are conducting a consultation on the Chippenham-Calne path. [Link here](#) to take part.

JG asked how the use of existing routes is measured. WC could use GPS tracking. Strava (exercise monitoring app) has a 'global heatmap' which shows popular routes in brighter colours.

Also talked about the need to identify and reclaim lost bridleways and Rights of Way. Campaign called '[Don't Lose your Way](#)' by Rambler's society. Identifying lost routes is the first stage of restoring, and any that aren't restored before the cut-off date in 2026 will be lost.

ROADS – A350 MELKSHAM BYPASS

Went to Melksham Area Board tonight. WC now consulting on only one route (10c) – the longest – new link [here](#). Suggestion to object at your local Area Board if you are along the A350 corridor. Traffic congestion eased by the bypass is likely to build up at Westbury, other places will feel effects. Discussion - AN asked - can we agree that as a group we all oppose the building of new roads, dualling single carriageways and bypassing? All present agreed. Although also need to make all infrastructure work well for everyone.

ROADS – A303 STONEHENGE

Court hearing (judicial review) happening at the moment (23rd – 25th June). AN sent his evidence on rubbernecking causing traffic delay (not congestion) to the Court, but it was rejected for legal reasons. Solution could be to block view of stones from road with a natural barrier (e.g. line of trees).

Unfortunately cycling and walking to the stones is not encouraged enough, improved right of way was never finished, though a planning condition - they probably prefer paying visitors! Stonehenge Alliance represents groups with diverging opinions – some archaeologists suggest a longer tunnel will avoid damage to sites, but this will have far worse carbon/ecological impacts. Hopefully the current hearing (funded by an £80K Crowdfunder) will be successful and climate arguments can win out later.

A WCA member has contacted some TTG members for feedback on a leaflet she's designed aimed at local residents. MW has commented that it's likely to be very difficult to influence the community now against the tunnel as it's been presented over years as the only solution to traffic problems in the area. But probably no harm in trying. **[Post meeting note: AN contacting her about rubbernecking and possible lobbying for trial of a roadside screen/barrier]**

d) ROADS – CHIPPENHAM HIF UPDATE

A report on the consultation is now expected to go to the WC Cabinet meeting on 13th July. Chippenham Town Council has reaffirmed its opposition to any road scheme and associated development ('Future Chippenham' project), and the CEO has written to WC, copying MHCLG, Homes England and Michelle Donelan MP to recommend the HIF award cannot be made, as this was contingent on a premise of local support, falsely evidenced.

Meanwhile AN has received a file of all the road scheme consultation responses as a result of an FoI request and appeal. This can be used by campaigners to ensure that the WC report presents the balance and strength of opinion fairly and accurately. Lots of opposition is evident - and there was inherent bias in the design of the questionnaire as route options were given but not an option for no road.

[Post meeting note: update and consultation responses now available on WCA website [here](#)]

8) GROUP ISSUES

Area Boards – progress? Seem to vary in approach - in some places only influence small changes /budget allocations via CATG. RWB Area Board is forming an environmental sub-group. In more major settlements (Chippenham, Salisbury, Melksham) there may be more potential to push things. JG (a former councillor) says it's important to keep reminding to keep items on agendas – don't let agreed actions be forgotten, be persistent.

9. Date of Next Meeting – Thursday 22nd July 7.00pm* – 8.30pm (*6.45 to welcome new members)

10. AOB

Zoom - Need to revisit the ability to host our own meetings on Zoom!

Events calendar – JJ shared that it's possible to download WCA's upcoming meetings to your Google calendar.