

MINUTES OF THE GREAT YARMOUTH CYCLE FORUM
Assembly Room, Town Hall, Great Yarmouth
6.30pm Wednesday 18 November, 2009

Present:

Tom Andrews (TA)	Caister-on-Sea Parish Council
Barbara Brett (BB)	Gorleston cyclist
Claire Blamey (CB)	NMAS
Paul Donnachie (PD)	Norfolk County Council
Dean Foden (DF)	Filby resident & cyclist
Jo Foden (JF)	Chair, Filby resident & cyclist
Norman Harlow (NH)	Great Yarmouth Cycling Club
Nigel Seago (NS)	Norfolk County Council
John Shaw (JS)	Bradwell Parish Council & cyclist
Stephen Shepherd (SGS)	Vice Chair, GYBC
Graham Smith (GS)	Great Yarmouth resident & cyclist
Cllr Mike Taylor (MT)	Gt Yarmouth BC Councillor & cyclist
Neil Turner (NT)	Great Yarmouth Cycling Club
David Wardale (DW)	Norfolk County Council
Hugo Westvear (HW)	Norfolk County Council
Anthony Wright (AW)	Sustrans Area Manager

Apologies for Absence

Penny Bailey
Grahame Bygrave
Kevin House

Minutes from the Great Yarmouth Cycle Forum held on 19 August 2009

It was noted that the item on Southtown Road and Haven Bridge contained an inaccuracy. Sarah Slade had reported to the Forum that NS had inspected the scheme but had not found any issues – the email from NS had actually referred to trench reinstatement works on Southtown Road and not the Matalan to White Horse Roundabout scheme.

Warren Road Scheme – Update

PD reminded members that this scheme had been running on for a couple of years now and had become mired in controversy. There had been a meeting between Cllr Collins representing Gorleston, Cllr Cook representing Hopton, Martyn Francis of Motts and PD. From a survey of residents, 27 were opposed and 16 in favour. As it was obvious that there was lots of misunderstanding and misinformation about the scheme, a meeting of residents was held at the Golf Club. About 42 residents against the scheme attended the very vociferous meeting. It was accepted that cyclists already use Warren Road and that rights have been established over the route. The point that the Cycle Forum, Borough Council, Sustrans, the Golf Club, Cliff Park schools and various other bodies, were in favour of the scheme was put to residents but they argued that children should be directed to the path adjacent to the A12. The counter argument to that was that parents didn't want to send their children along a route next to a busy dual carriageway. Taking on board comments, Cllr Collins was

firmly in favour of the residents and Cllr Butcher, Chair of Hopton Parish Council spoke supporting the scheme.

PD added that they had subsequently investigated upgrading the A12 route and it was significantly more expensive than the Warren Road scheme and would create a more circuitous route. The County Council wanted the scheme to go ahead and were arranging for Councillors Collins and Cook to attend a meeting to try and agree a way forward, with the Cabinet Member (Cllr Adrian Gunson) watching the outcome very carefully. PD said he wanted a fast resolution on this matter as he had programmed construction towards the back end of next year and any delay in a decision could cause the construction to slip. He added that Hopton Parish Council had cleared a huge amount of vegetation on the route which had helped reduce costs. He also added that the Yarmouth Mercury had been reporting on the scheme and NCC had received emails from members of the public expressing concern that the project was being held to ransom by a relatively small number of people. AW asked what the residents were objecting to – PD replied that they had safety concerns about cyclists using the route when residents are manoeuvring out of their driveways. TA asked who made the decision on whether the scheme went ahead, PD replied that the County Council was sponsoring the scheme and would make the decision – this may ultimately be decided by the Cabinet Member if Councillor Collins doesn't come on board. AW asked if anyone from School Travel Plans was present at the meeting, PD said they weren't but that their views were put across. He added he had requested the School Travel Plan Officer to ask the school how many pupils who travel by different means would switch to foot or bike if they went ahead with the scheme. AW added that, potentially, the route could be eligible for Safer Routes to School funding from Sustrans of up to 40% of the scheme, but the width and surface of the route would have to be constructed to the latest standards. JF added that, anecdotally, she and Dean cycle the A12 route and notice plenty of Cliff Park students using it during the summer months, but it is poorly used in the winter because of the glare from headlights and the fact that the path is lower than the carriageway. She felt that those students would certainly switch to the new route if it were constructed.

DF asked what the legal designation of the path was – PD said the County Council's view was that it was a restricted byway, which allows passage by cycles, pedestrians and horses. Although it wasn't a recorded restricted byway, NCC's legal section felt there was sufficient evidence of historic use over 20 years to demonstrate rights exist over it, and also 3 out of 4 landowners on the southern section support the proposal, which is the majority they need to progress with the scheme - the only issue they needed to overcome were the objections from the residents on Warren Road. MT asked what the next stage was; PD said it was to arrange a meeting with Cllrs Cook and Collins, if Cllr Collins was still opposed it would have to go to Adrian Gunson for a view.

Action – JF and Nigel Brigham (Sustrans) to write to Adrian Gunson (cc Cllrs Butcher and Cook and Shelagh Hutson (Cabinet Member for Children Services)) reiterating support for the scheme

Vauxhall Bridge – Update

DW explained that there was currently a project to provide a link off Acle New Road to the railway station. However, the key area is the bridge and he was currently trying to find funding streams to do something with it. There was currently the opportunity to use some Fair Share lottery funding, which has been ring fenced until June, to enable NCC to search for match funding. They were also looking at European funds,

which they were currently discussing and hoped to apply for before Christmas, and they were also investigating Heritage Lottery funding. He explained the ambition was to refurbish the bridge as a public transport link, using one span for pedestrians / cycles and the second span as a lane for taxis or buses linking to the train station. He added it was difficult to know what could be achieved until the results of the funding applications are known. He was encouraged by Network Rail's commitment to invest in their railway station infrastructure, and there was also the fact that the bridge was within one of 1st East Urban Regeneration Company's intervention areas, and he would be talking to them. There wasn't too much detail at the moment, and if they are successful with the European funding it would enable them to do a wider study of the area and look at linkages. However, they had carried out a feasibility study of the bridge looking at costings and options which would be fed into the wider study.

HW explained they had a brief to create a safer journey from Acle New Road Toucan crossing to the railway station entrance. He explained that currently it consisted of a small mud 'slide' down from the Toucan crossing and then a near vertical path. It was proposed to create a direct route from the crossing past the car wash to a new raised table crossing at 90° to the road. HW explained the land was owned by Network Rail, and although the cycle lane would be built to the latest legislation and specification, any signage etc. would be advisory and not enforceable. They also proposed to narrow the entrance to the car wash as it was very large. He pointed out the possibility of erecting a feature in an area illustrated on the drawing as a feature tree and bench. NS suggested contacting the Highways Agency as they had carried out a consultation a couple of years ago on gateway signing and features into Great Yarmouth. GS mentioned that Network Rail were sending a representative to meet Waveney MP Bob Blizzard regarding the lack of investment – he felt this may make them more open to ideas than they were a while ago. DW highlighted the fact that Network Rail are investing £3b in their stations and have a 3 month consultation period with an on-line questionnaire which allows people to say what sort of facilities they would like at their stations. JF said she had received HW's proposal drawing and had replied on behalf of the Forum as the deadline was before the Forum meeting. She had felt the paths looked nice and wide, and where it crossed the road was very obvious, so her feedback was positive. She picked up on a cycle marking directing cyclists off Acle New Road and wondered if it could be moved and a broken line added to direct cyclists to the facility. JF also picked up on the narrowness of the cycle lane running south past the entrance to the station – HW said this could be widened. JS asked if the route would be segregated. DW said although it works in certain environments they wouldn't segregate the path here for a number of reasons, which included its appearance and the fact that not many people take any notice of the segregation. AW suggested that cycle parking should be provided in the 'island' adjacent to the raised platform and that thought should be given to extending the cycle path along to Vauxhall Bridge. DW said they could look at additional cycle parking, but explained that a retaining wall made it too narrow to construct a link to the bridge and that the budget wouldn't extend that far. However, he added they would look to making the scheme as 'future proof' as possible.

Action – SGS to circulate the link to Network Rail's on-line questionnaire to members.

AW mentioned that the Forum had been critical of the gaps in the deck of the bridge for many years. He added he had reported the concerns on many occasions and passed on the suggestion of caulking, but Sustrans' bridge engineers said the gaps were necessary for expansion. However, he informed members that a cyclist had ridden across the bridge on skinny tyres and had had a serious accident when the

wheel of their bike fell into one of the gaps. To prevent an further litigation Sustrans had used approximately 24 metres of softwood to fill the largest gaps, however he felt that this wasn't adequate as there were still gaps of up to 3/4 " in the deck. He felt that a warning sign suggesting cyclists dismount should be erected. TA described the process of caulking and AW said that if he could produce a technical specification he could pass it to Sustrans' bridge engineers, but added there was no guarantee they could afford to carry out the works.

Action – TA to investigate if any local businesses have the expertise to caulk the bridge deck.

Burgh Road Scheme – Phase 2

PD circulated details of Phase 2 of this Safe Routes to School scheme. DW explained that Phase 1 picked up the two school entrances on Burgh Road and that this phase continued the scheme up to the roundabout near the Rainbow supermarket. He confirmed it proposed to convert the existing footway to a shared use path. AW added that Sustrans were critical of the first phase as it didn't go far enough and that funding had been approved on the basis that the whole of Burgh Road was completed, adding there was the possibility of receiving extra funding for Phase 2. Sustrans had also been assured allowances would be made for additional crossings for residents who lived on the other side of the road, although these weren't shown on the plan. JF enquired about the width of path – DW said it was generally around 2.5 metres wide, but did vary between 3.4 metres down to as little as 2.0 metres at certain pinch points and also near to the roundabout due to differences in levels. AW pointed out that if the path didn't meet with Cycling England standards (minimum 2.5 metres wide) Sustrans wouldn't be able to award any grants as they couldn't be seen to be approving sub-standard facilities. JS, DF and CB wanted it put on record that they objected to the scheme being constructed on the pedestrian footway.

Action – DW to revisit the scheme.

Maintenance issues and updates

SGS mentioned the surface condition of the cycle lane along Lawn Avenue, especially heading towards Caister, which had cracks which cause 'tramlining' if your wheel drops into them. He also mentioned the markings on the shared use surface outside the Royal Bank of Scotland and Barclays had now virtually disappeared, and he also pointed out that there were no signs or markings to indicate that the path from Malthouse Lane, Gorleston, to Bollard Quay was a shared use facility if approached from the Beccles Road direction.

Action – NS to investigate

JS mentioned that nothing had been done to the potholed surface on the A11 as you head towards Breydon Bridge from the Vauxhall roundabout. NS reminded members that this was the responsibility of the Highways Agency and he had reported the defects after a previous meeting, but any more than this was beyond NCC's remit.

Action – SGS to contact the Highways Agency on behalf of the Forum

NS reported that the issue with the temporary 'ramps' on Northgate Street had been resolved.

Any Other Business and Items for the next Great Yarmouth Cycle Forum

Councillor Mike Butcher joined the Forum for a few minutes to explain how he had been campaigning for the Warren Road Scheme, and the problems he had encountered. He also described how unpaid workers (Community Service) had cleared the track, which had helped reduce the construction costs. The Forum thanked him for all his hard work championing the scheme.

NT explained that the Great Yarmouth Cycling Club (GYCC) had been in existence for over 100 years; however it had almost become 'dormant' in recent years, with very few new members joining and remaining with the club. He felt that traditionally the club had kept itself to itself and had not been promoted, nor did it attend meetings such as the Forum – which was something that he was hoping to address. However, over the last 9 – 12 months they had gained some new members who were very energetic and passionate about the club. They had also secured some sponsorship from local businesses to purchase clothing and safety gear, so the club was now on the up. They were keen to develop the GYCC as a 'community club', looking at health and fitness, community and cycling together with sport and personal challenge. They were also in contact with Bike It officer, Kevin House. The GYCC were looking at developing a 3 year plan for the club with British Cycling to get youngsters into cycling. Priorities were to build up membership and to get some affiliation with British Cycling, which would open up lots of coaching, ranging from how to ride to cycle maintenance. They would also look at what funding is available and would be talking to local authorities and Sports Development. They were also looking to establish some cycling facilities and venues in the town, as it is felt the biggest problem to getting kids on bikes are the parents. NT believed parents would feel more comfortable bringing their kids to an off road venue such as a grass track or off road mountain biking circuit, and he felt finding such venues was going to be critical to the success of the plan. PD explained that NCC were embarking on a new transport plan, which has themes about tying health and fitness to transport, and a lot of what the GYCC proposes connects with that. He suggested that NT contact NCC transport planner Emma Kinsey, who is responsible for the cycling strategy, to talk about the issues, especially the connection with schools. The County also have a School Travel Plan Officer and there may be opportunities to tie things together there. NT stressed that there was a lack of specific cycling venues in the area, but pointed out that they had used the Yarmouth Stadium and the Hewitt School in Norwich successfully in the past. He felt that there were suitable venues in the area but that the GYCC didn't know how to engage with the right people. DW felt that looking at some of the routes for European funding that GYCCs plans fitted well with some of the concepts, as a lot of it is linking out from the station. They were looking at Cyclepoint, with cycle routes and paths, but he also thought it related well with 96K Talkback, a Great Yarmouth borough-wide community website. NT mentioned several sources suggested that the Tour of Britain would be coming to Great Yarmouth and this could be an opportunity to raise the profile of cycling in the town, incorporating family cycling events. CB mentioned that NCC were employing a Tour of Britain Development Officer and that they should be contacted once in place.

NT asked if he could attend the next meeting to engage with the Forum to find out what a cycling club should be about.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 17 February 2010