



Cycle Kirklees: Kirklees Cycling Campaign Report for 23-24

1. Overview of Year (Chair, Chris Knight)

Last year we reported a lack of progress in the provision of cycle infrastructure in Kirklees. This year has not only seen zero cycle infrastructure schemes completed by Kirklees Council but in addition we have also had many greenway closures as well as extensions to the closures currently in place.

Kirklees Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority have both run or supported behaviour change campaigns in the last year to promote walking and cycling but progress on change is hampered by a lack of safe routes. WYCA had to make a late change to their programme of behaviour change interventions ('Walk it Ride It') as their targeted area of Ravensthorpe suffered through the closure of the Calder Valley Greenway at Scout Hill for Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) works.

Current greenway closures include the Calder Valley Greenway at Scout Hill which is to remain closed for another 4 years; Birkby-Bradley Greenway at Deighton – closed for at least 5 more months; and the Colne Valley Greenway (Towpath) at Longroyd Bridge which we hope will be reopened at the end of the summer.

In October 2023 we held a small rally at Longroyd Bridge to highlight the extended closure of a whole section of the canal towpath route. We drew attention to inaction in making repairs to a route which had been opened to great fanfare by the Mayor of West Yorkshire less than a year before. This had positive feedback. We had coverage and photos in the Huddersfield

Examiner and in the Huddersfield Hub, which helped to raise awareness of the need for safe cycling routes.

Over the last year, despite these past criticisms, we have been able to strengthen relationships with both Network Rail and Canal River Trust. We have contributed to the work of Network Rail on their First Mile Last Mile plans to improve cycling to and from railway stations. We have also promoted the idea of a long-distance route between stations to complement the Transpennine route and explored with TRU ways of supporting active travel projects. This is a positive step as we need better recognition of the importance of multimodal journeys which need improvements to the facilities for cycling.

In February this year we spent a day cycling the Huddersfield Narrow and Broad canals with the Canal & River Trust. We discussed proposed improvements to the towpaths and access to it, as well as aspirational plans for improvements towards Brighouse and Wakefield. Work is expected to commence by the end of summer this year.

We continue to attend quarterly meetings of the Kirklees Active Travel Partnership (KATP). As we have seen little progress in development of either new infrastructure or an overall plan for cycling within Kirklees, there has been limited opportunity for substantial initiatives. This arises partly from the reduction in funding, but there has also been limited political support from the Labour Cabinet for active travel. This means that all major infrastructure schemes are on hold. There has also been an absence of decisive action to establish high-quality, small-scale infrastructure changes.

We attended the Growth & Regeneration Scrutiny Panel on the 15th January 2024 as the transport plan was on the agenda. We asked questions about schemes that have been funded but not built, the absence of an Active Travel strategy, and the lacklustre way cycling is design has been applied in small schemes – all of which are hindered by the lack of an ambitious strategy.

2. Consultation Responses

Following a busy couple of years engaging in consultations over major schemes, there has only been one major infrastructure project that has

been out to consultation this year: Dewsbury-Batley-Chidswell (3rd round). This consultation concentrated on the part of the route between Dewsbury and Batley. There were many changes made following the previous consultation to improve the infrastructure plans for cycling - one of the most significant being the removal of the Saville Street Greenway. Directing people cycling off Bradford Road on to this potential greenway route would have resulted in reduced access to many of the shops and residential areas. 2-way cycle tracks have been used to squeeze high quality cycle infrastructure into a small space. However, we are concerned when the dedicated cycle tracks end to allow for on street parking spaces. In practice, Kirklees Council has chosen to prioritise private vehicle storage on a main road over the movement of cycles. We had a positive meeting with Kirklees officers going through the designs and look forward to seeing final plans and shovels in the ground.

We have been consulted on smaller scale works since being added last year to the 'G-List,' (a list of organisations that are consulted on all new highway projects). Some of these smaller scale works that have been under construction in the past months continue to be built using outdated design concepts and without learning from the mistakes made on the Leeds Road Smart Corridor project. It appears that our responses have had little effect on the final designs.

'Gear Change' and LTN 1/20 both require people designing schemes to cycle the roads before and after implementation or better yet to be people who frequently cycle on roads. We have little faith that this is being done and a lack of design experience in cycle infrastructure is apparent within the Highways team.

3. Committee, Membership & Communications

The Executive Committee has met mainly online. Its membership: Chris Knight (Chairs); Chas Ball (Secretary); Daniel Little (Treasurer); Rutger Clarke and Andrew Dunlop.

Newsletters published monthly apart from Jan/Feb since our AGM in July 2023 are all on www.cyclekirklees.org.uk . The content of our website has developed over the year and has been maintained by committee members, supported by Wrathweb (Hepworth). There are over 200 members and

although we currently have no membership fee the committee will be tabling a proposal on funding our work.