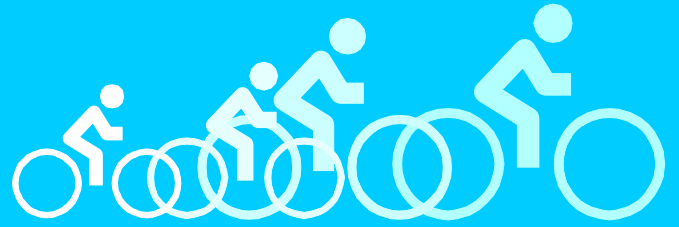


CYCLING Wakefield

Wakefield District Cycle Forum

Promoting and campaigning for cyclists



– **Annual Report 2015/16**



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New Look Annual Report

As you will have noticed this year's Annual Report is in the style of our quarterly newsletter. Who knows this brighter style of presentation will encourage more of you to take a wee look at what we were up to in 2015.

We can't give you a comprehensive rundown of all our activities without rivalling War and Peace in length but we hope this report will give you a flavour of our volunteers' activities.



A. G. M.

Get yourself along to the most important meeting of the year.

Tuesday 22nd March

6.45pm

Town Hall, Wakefield

Old Court Room

Guided Cycle Rides Programme

140 Guided rides

The programme of rides which the Wakefield District Cycle Forum runs throughout the year remain the most popular of our activities. From humble beginnings, we ran 15 rides in 2010 with around 8 participants on average, we now run a year-round rides programme. So in 2015 140 rides were completed with an average attendance of over 17, over 2,400 participants in total.

2408 Participants

518 different individuals participated in our rides. This is a little less than last year but still way more than in the early years of this decade.

Most encouragingly we still attract 'new' cyclists. 380 of these individuals had not been on our rides in previous years. Part of the attraction for these 'new' cyclists is that we lend bikes at nearly all of our venues. This year our bikes were borrowed 247 times, which is an increase on last year.

Just as encouraging is the 43% of women who attended our rides. In our early year only around 1 in 4 riders were women. The most popular venue for women, and overall, is Pugneys (followed by Nostell). This may be partly because we run easy rides from these venues. It may also be the result of having two excellent women ride leaders at Pugneys, Sandie Wood and Sharron Goulding (or is it the charm of Jeff Kitching that is the attraction).



We also continue to attract family groups and 57 individuals coming on our rides were under 16 years old. This trend may increase in 2016 as we initiate a programme of 'pedal in the park' at Thornes Park and Nostell Priory and Parkland. These are very short, under 5 miles. The rides are totally within the park in a safe and traffic-free environment so even the most timid can join us and kids of all ages are welcome.

**New for next year
Pedal in the Park
Entry level rides**

On top of our own rides programme the Cycle Forum run the Wakefield Hospice annual Santa Ride. 68 people took part in the ride which was split into 4 groups and lead by a dozen of our ride leaders.

**Over 2,000 Miles
Cycled in the
programme**

Our thanks must go to our dedicated volunteer ride leaders, around 20 of them, who have cycled over 2,000 miles on our rides programme in 2015. Without their support a lot of people would never have got back on their bikes.

Events Programme

Since our events all take place outdoors and do not involve the kind of active engagement of our guided rides to keep you warm, they continue to be a summer attraction. The backbone of our activities are at Nostell Priory and Parkland where our partnership with the National Trust continues to benefit both parties. Holiday Wednesdays take place throughout the spring and summer school holidays and attract large numbers of family groups. We have also participated in events at South Kirby, Pugneys, Anglers and Wakefield City Centre.



804 practised their Cycle Skills

All in all we attended 17 events this year where we offered information, maps and cycling advice. At 12 of these events we had our ever popular skills course which attracted over 800 participants. Our chief course designer, Warren Miller, does a great job in making the course a doable challenge to children of all ages. We are grateful to all the volunteers who assist and make these events happen but at the holiday Wednesdays we particularly depend on Angie Boyd and Carole Gregory who hardly missed a day in 2015.



Bike Doctor

It is only a few years since the Cycle Forum started to organise Bike Doctor Sessions. Thanks to our great Bike Doctor Team, Graham West, Dennis Bell and Steve Valentine, bike maintenance has become a regular feature of the Cycle Forum programme.



In 2012 when a member first asked if we could run a bike maintenance class we wondered if there would be sufficient demand. That year we ran two basic cycle maintenance courses which attracted around 20 people in total.

Monthly Bike Doctors

In 2015 we started running these classes on almost a monthly basis with an average attendance of 8. In addition to this the Bike Doctors run a monthly DIY bike maintenance drop-in session. These are now held at Anglers Country Park but the Bike Doctor was in attendance at events in Wakefield, Pugneys, South Kirkby and Nostell Priory.

We hope to continue the monthly session at Anglers Country Park in 2016. Also look out for sessions at other venues throughout the year.

Workday Report

As you travel along Wakefield District's network of traffic-free paths you may have, now and again, thought to yourself 'I don't remember this path being in such good condition the last time I was here'. Well that would be because our team of path repairers/builders had been at work on it in the interim.

Whether it is laying new path, repairing old ones or clearing vegetation, our group of workday volunteers are out every month in all weathers. They were out in just under 20 different days in 2015. Well a day is usually just a morning, which is enough for our aging

labourers to cope with before serious back pain develops.



In the early part of the year most of the work was done on the Nostell Estate where some new paths have been laid to improve the network around Foulby and Nostell. Here, and at other locations, Wakefield Council provided materials for the paths. Latterly work has concentrated on improving the surfaces and clearing vegetation on the Wakefield Wheel and the Trans Pennine Trail. There was a slight hiatus when our workday manager had to leave us but Richard Denbigh and John Harvey have taken over that roll and we now have a regular two days per month when the group are on the job. On average 5-6 volunteers turn up but we could do a lot more if we increased that number.

You can help with this work by volunteering to join the workdays. It is good exercise, you will feel good about your contribution and the friendly banter will keep you going. You can also make suggestion of places which you think would benefit from a bit of attention from the workgroup. Get in touch with Richard at

WDCFpressofficer@gmail.com



Campaign News

As always the heart of the Cycle Forum's activities remains its campaigning work aimed at building a network of cycle paths in Wakefield and we are able to report some success this year.

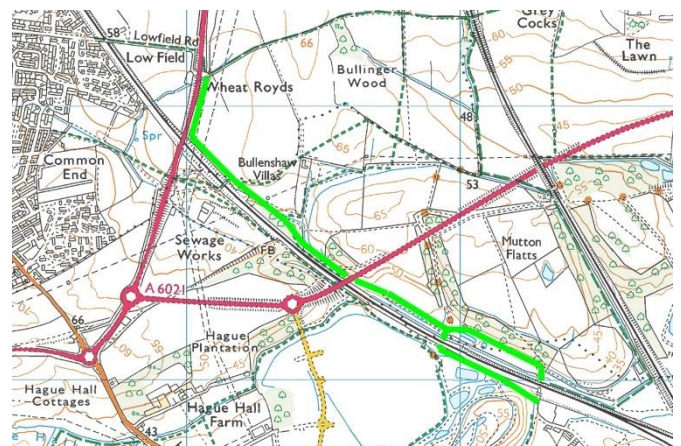
Firstly however on a slightly different note, we can report that our involvement, with many others, in the campaign to keep the popular Squires Tearoom at Anglers Country Park open was successful. We frequently become frustrated by the lack of response from Wakefield Council to proposals which seem imminently sensible. Fortunately, due mostly to the weight of objections, on this occasion the Council listened and acted sensibly in renewing the lease for the tearooms which we can carry on frequenting for a good few years yet.



A campaign that has taken a considerably longer time to reach fruition is the battle to establish a waterways greenway linking Castleford and Wakefield. This route has been at the top of the Cycle Forum's wish list since our formation in 2008 and 2015 saw Wakefield Council at last accept this as a priority project. As a result the council has acquired funding for the project and work will commence later in 2016. We look forward to riding from Castleford town centre to Chantry Bridge in 2017 on an all-weather, traffic-free route.

Another priority for the Cycle Forum is the creation of an all-weather, mostly traffic-free route between Nostell and Newmillerdam. This route is almost complete but a small section in the Nostell Estate near Foulby remains problematic. The Cycle Forum, after 18 months of trying, has now acquired a lease for the land needed to construct a new path which will not be accessible to the farm traffic which causes damage to the existing path. By next winter we hope that an all-weather surface will have been laid and the whole route will be passable throughout the year.

The possibility of a traffic-free cycle track linking Hemsworth to Moorthorpe (near the railway station) has been on the Cycle Forum's back burner for some years, mainly because other projects have been occupying our time. We are now in the process of building a partnership with Wakefield Council Countryside Department, who manage most of the land where the path would go, which we hope will finally bring this project back to the forefront.



2016 looks like being a busy year for Wakefield District Cycle Forum's ambitions to build a comprehensive network of cycle routes serving the whole of the district.

Membership

Our membership continues to grow, albeit at a much slower rate than the giddy heights of previous years. At the end of February it stood at 1,077.

Last year's AGM voted to keep the membership fee at £2 for life membership. So if you know anyone who is thinking of joining tell them to do so soon just in case the next AGM decided to increase the membership fee.



Christmas Dinner

Every year our Christmas dinner seems to get bigger and better and 2015 set a record with more than 50 diners. This year we have to thank Sandie Wood and Adele Lawton for organising everything and making it a great evening and great fun. As well as organising the dinner they entertained us with Irish Bingo and assembled a raffle which raised nearly £150. We also have to thank those who donated prizes for the raffle. The main prize, a turbo trainer, was donated by Halfords and Dan at Cycle Technology gave a load of cycle related prizes. A number of members also generously gave individual prizes.

A couple of years ago we decided to have an awards ceremony. It was really meant as a kind of joke particularly since the only prize on offer was a laminated paper medal. It is still not meant to be taken too seriously but it has become a fixture at our annual dinner and this year, again thanks to Cycle Technology there were other prizes. Our volunteers give a lot to the Cycle Forum, and the wider community in Wakefield District, and receive little in return other than the knowledge that they are making a difference to cycling in the district. So even if it is tongue-in-cheek any chance to recognise our volunteers is welcome.

This year's awards went to:

Male Rider of the Year - Jeff Dobson (right)

Lady Rider of the Year - Joy Lloyd

Silver Cyclist of the Year - David Keighley

Newcomer of the Year - Sharron Goulding

Volunteer of the Year - Bike Doctor Team (Graham West, Dennis Bell and Steve Valentine)

Faller Off of the Year - Sarah Furber (right) (this was a highly contested category)



Latecomer of the Year - David Leigh (left in his reindeer suit)

Special Award: Faceless Trophy (two awards) – Bike Doctors and John Harvey (below) (on behalf of our workgroup)



Working with Wakefield Council

As one of the main aims of the Cycle Forum is to improve cycle infrastructure in the district it is crucial that we work in partnership with Wakefield Council to influence highway design. To this end our representatives meet with council officers on a regular basis.

It has to be acknowledged that reductions in Government funding for local transport infrastructure restricts the progress that can be made, but unfortunately it also seems that most highway engineers continue to display a blindspot towards the needs of cyclists. As a result the road network in the district couldn't be described as cycle friendly. For example the recently constructed northern relief road in Pontefract has a welcome separate, joint-use path but no assistance is given to cyclists when they have to join or cross the main carriageway. At the other end of town the new Townend roundabout system has no provision for cyclists. Instead cyclists are directed on a circuitous route, intended to avoid busy roads, which doubles the length of their journey to the town centre and has them crossing a busy road with no assistance.

Many hundreds of thousands of pounds were spent on improving the infrastructure for motorists in Pontefract. When we asked for a walking/cycling path to be included in the Townend project to allow cyclists to avoid the busy Wakefield Road we were told there was no budget for that. The path will cost around £35,000. Our representative have however continued to press for this path and are pleased to report that work will start on it in March.

The next major highways construction, being built as this report is written, is the Wakefield Eastern Relief Road (WERR). Dedicated cycle paths are proposed for this road. Unfortunately the design shows the north-side path only going half the distance of the road and has no provision to give cyclists priority at junctions and roundabouts so those using the cycle path would have to give way at these points. The Cycle Forum have asked for both these issues to be rectified. We await the completion of the project to see if we have been listened to.

As we have reported elsewhere we have developed a good working partnership with the Council in maintaining the off-road network. Cycle Forum volunteer labour combined with Council surfacing material help keep our paths in good repair.

We look forward to the completion of the £2.8 million Waterways Greenway route from Castleford to Wakefield and the extension of the Castleford Greenway to Methley, on which preliminary work is currently taking place. A new £1million cycle route from Knottingley to Pontefract is being designed by the Council and funded by developer contribution. Go:cycling, a funding stream which sadly comes to an end on 31 March 2016 has allocated Wakefield Council £25,000 for "missing links" in the cycle network.

Following representations from the Forum the Council are now proceeding with the prohibition of vehicles on Lawns Lane in Outwood (part of the Wakefield Wheel) and two other quiet roads nearby. The Council are producing a new Wakefield Cycle Map which will be available shortly. Once again the Pontefract Grand Prix will be held this year on 12 June.

On a final positive note we can report a very productive partnership with the public health department. They are enthusiastic about promoting cycling in the district and value the work that our volunteers contribute to this. They have therefore been very supportive of the Forum.

We look forward to a continuing productive partnership with Wakefield Council in 2016.

