



Chairman's Report

Jon Spencer
20th March 2014

It is vital for any body that seeks to influence decisions in a democratic government to show that it represents more than a niche interest. Cycling is not a niche interest. Cycling is one of the few safe, fun and socially responsible ways to navigate a crowded city and to explore the green hinterlands beyond. Cycling is accessible to nearly everybody and has massive benefits to health, wealth and well being. To bring this home to opinion formers, policy makers and city leaders we must show that there is hunger for cycling that is not being satisfied.

The key achievement this year has been the success of our last two public meetings, held to a packed room at the University of Portsmouth student's union. The first of these meetings focussed on how the Dutch got their cycle infrastructure and the standards they have developed. PCF member David Brown made the presentation that led to a lively debate with Cllr Ken Ellcome and Simon Moon - PCC head of Transport and the Environment.

We followed in February by looking at how other cities in the UK are developing their infrastructure. We had visiting speakers from CTC head office and Bristol Cycle Campaign and a very positive contribution from Dr Janet Maxwell - Portsmouth's new director of public health - who sees cycling a central tenet of her job. This time PCC leader Gerald Vernon-Jackson joined us, and took part in a Q & A session and pledged that if PCF developed a proposed cycle route along the same lines as that done in Bristol he would support it.

This startling increase in support for our public meetings and the public statement of support from the leader of Portsmouth City Council didn't come about by accident of course. A huge effort went into organising and promoting those meetings and it proved more than worthwhile. Behind the scenes PCF members have given up time to attend numerous meetings with council officers and councillors laying the ground work. For example John Holland and I had a private meeting with the leader in advance of the last open meeting - briefing him on our aims and building his confidence that cycling is a cause worth supporting.

To give you a flavour of what PCF has been doing for cycling we have:

- Attended several meetings about the City Centre North developments and made a detailed response to the consultation;
- Worked with PCC to ensure that the new Northern road bridge would provide good cycle facilities;
- Responded to planning requests for Tesco on Fratton way;
- Engaged with PCC with respect to the changes in Palmerston Rd and Cosham to ensure cyclists are catered for;
- Attended most Traffic & Transportation decision meetings making deputations where necessary. We have responded to numerous TROs and successfully headed off a proposal to break the cycle route near South Parade Pier, which is part of the national cycle network, with new car parking;
- PCF undertook a cycling tour of traffic lights with Cllr Fazackarley and PCC Network Manager Simon Brownlie. This proved to be a very positive event and is continuing to

result in improvements - with changes expected at Victoria Rd / Albert Rd and Milton Rd / Velder Ave in the near future;

- We have had an on site meeting with PCC's parking manager - Michael Robinson - on Albert Rd to discuss the problems posed to cyclists by parked vehicles. Several changes to loading restrictions are being developed as a result of this. Similar changes are afoot on Goldsmith Avenue after this discussion.
- We worked with PCC on the development of the Shipwright's way which we are very pleased with. We regret this route stops short of the dockyard, due to objections in Old Portsmouth and we would have preferred a genuine seafront route but it is a positive development nonetheless;
- PCF has continued to monitor PCC's execution of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund project. This has been important as PCC has found it difficult to find sufficient resources to execute this programme;
- We have supported the Lord Mayor's bike ride;
- PCF has 'sponsored' the Langstone Harbour Route and the Sustrans network is now complete in Portsmouth.

That is not to mention our attendance at numerous fairs and conferences, minor consultations, meetings with PCC officers and so on. Suffice to say we have been busy.

To further develop in the coming year it is key that we build on the increased support to build our membership. In a democratic system numbers count and we need more to really bring home the message that biking matters. A secondary, but important point, is that with our current level of paid members we cannot afford to keep campaigning even at the current level - and we want to build our campaigns, not back off. A key challenge for the incoming committee will therefore be to convert more of our large Facebook and mailing list subscribers into paid members.

There are some key opportunities coming up that we cannot afford to miss. For example:

- The coastal defences programme which could improve access for walking and cycling along our shoreline.
- Developing a plan for a cycle network and building popular and political support for it - following the example presented by Eric Booth of Bristol Cycle Campaign;
- Large developments on Fratton Way, City Centre North and at Tipner will continue to progress. These development must be capitalised upon to improve cycle infrastructure.

Finally - I would like to thank one outgoing committee member. Jayne Rodgers - who many of you will have known - has moved out of the area. She was a tireless worker for cycling and we thank her wholeheartedly for all her efforts.