



CHAIRMAN'S ARTICLE

When we did the review of the organisation last year it was felt that we were not communicating sufficiently with members so we decided to have regular issues of the Newsletter. I strongly believe communication is a two-way process so I would urge you to come back to us with comments on what we are and more importantly what we are not doing in the Highlands for cycling.

Also the strength of an organisation is the level of participation of the members and the review also identified that we were not involving the membership enough in cycling campaigns or issues. In the last Newsletter I asked for assistance from members in taking a more active part in planning applications and I am pleased to indicate some came forward. In this Newsletter I am requesting members to participate in Bike Week 2011 in June [details p.4]. However limited your time may be we do need volunteers to assist with these events otherwise they cannot be organised. So please e-mail or telephone me [see p.3] offering your assistance.

Finally, I note that petrol has now reached the £6 per gallon figure for the first time and has the prospect of going even higher. I find on speaking to people a greater interest in alternative forms of transport and what better than to cycle? This means we must continue to build on our work and years of experience in prompting the benefits of cycling. The committee are working on promoting the HCC but would welcome your ideas on how this may be accomplished.

Hamish Wood

AGM: see p.12 for date, time and place.

OUR NEW WEBSITE IS NOW ON LINE

www.highlandcyclecampaign.com

The site is very basic at the moment but it does contain:

- our aims
- our e-mail address
- our newsletter
- cycle news
- membership application details
- meeting dates
- road fault reporting information
- links to other cycling organisations
- link to our FaceBook page
- our Twitter feed

Facebook and Twitter are of increasing importance. Our Facebook page is not currently well known so please have a look, “like” and comment on it. It’s a great way of publicising our campaign and encouraging involvement. Large companies are currently receiving up to twenty times more visits to their Facebook page than to their “proper” websites. Our Twitter feed is already quite popular with 58 people or organisations following our “Tweets”. It is also a great way of keeping up to date with cycling campaigns, news and events, locally and internationally. If you’re new to Twitter have a look at the feed on our website and click a few links; you’ll soon see what it’s all about. If you’re already “Tweeting” please follow us at @HighlandCyclist.

Those following our tweets include:

- Planning Aid Scotland
- Friends of the Earth Scotland
- Northern Police
- Transform Scotland
- Scottish Accident Prevention Council

- Journalists
- Cycle businesses
- Local cyclists

Feedback, news, articles and suggestions are very welcome or if you see any mention of our old “.org” web address please inform the website owner and copy me in on:

info@HighlandCycleCampaign.com

Lindsay Mackinnon

ONLINE COMMUNITY MAPPING

Cycling Scotland are continuing to seek expressions of interest from community groups who are involved, or would like to be involved, in electronically mapping cycling infrastructure in their local area.

Through funding as part of the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, CS is seeking to support groups to become engaged in mapping local cycle routes and infrastructure. They will provide the equipment and expertise to advise and orientate local groups with an interest in this sector.

Hamish Wood

LETTERS - OPINIONS - ACTION - PARTICIPATION

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BIKE WEEK

(FORMERLY NATIONAL BIKE WEEK)

18TH - 26TH JUNE 2011

It has been a few years since we organized any activities for National Bike Week. This year we are considering a few ideas and would welcome further suggestions from all parts of the Highlands. So far we are considering :

- A Family Cycling-Picnic at North Kessock combined with cycling along the road to Redcastle and back. This would be for all ages with participants cycling as far as particular abilities allow. Childrens' activities would also be available at North Kessock
- Cycle to School days
- Cycle to Work days

Apart from the Cycle to School/Work the activity is based very much in the Inverness area and as a Highland organisation we are keen to see a range of activities throughout the entire area. This will require us to have an active member in an area who would be prepared to run an event however large or small that may be.

So the bottom line is :

- Would you be prepared to help with any of the events currently being considered ?
- Have you another suggestion for Bike Week in the Highlands?

I would be more than happy to discuss with you any offers of assistance or suggestions you may have. [For contact see p.3]

Hamish Wood

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN NEWSLETTER

ATAG	Active Travel Advisory Group	NCN	National Cycle Network
CBD	Cycling By Design	SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
CTC	Cyclists' Touring Club	THC	The Highland Council
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund	TEC	Transport, Environment, Community (Services)
HITRANS	Highlands & Islands Regional Transport Project		

BEAULY TO INVERNESS CYCLE ROUTE

For the last six months Kirkhill & Bunchrew Community Trust (K&BCT) have been holding monthly meetings with Inverness Consulting Engineers Mott MacDonald and receiving updates on the progress of the cost and design study for two important sections of this route. Bob Hemingway and Ged Church have attended on behalf of HCC as local representatives. We have been impressed by the thoroughness of the study and also the complexity of the tasks involved.

BUNCHREW – CLACHNAHARRY (INVERNESS)

At the eastern end (i.e. Clachnaharry) this 5 km section was always going to be a costly project. It was thought that, because some of the route was close to a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would be needed. This would have meant the study could only partially be completed due to the high costs of an EIA. However, it transpired that THC Planning Authority did not deem this to be necessary and the study has largely been completed. There is still the requirement for a Habitats Regulation Appraisal in the next phase of the works for Section 2 which includes an Appropriate Assessment along the foreshore. This work is to be done in consultation with SNH. Despite this a number of required ecological assessments have been completed for both eastern and western sections.

The major part of this section, Bunchrew to Delmore, has been costed and designed, to the point at which planning permission could be applied for. From Delmore to Clachnaharry the design involves major works regarding the existing sea wall and a piece of design involving the rise up towards the Clachnaharry over-rail bridge remains to be completed. Aileen Armstrong and Tom Patterson of K&BCT have reached agreement with land-owners and managers on a number of sections where the route impinges on private land.

LOVAT BRIDGE – BROCKIE’S CORNER

This is the 3km western end of the route. In design terms it was more straightforward than the eastern end although sight-lines proved a

problem at the Kirkhill road junction. We had hoped that this valuable section, linking Cabrich, Inchmore and Kirkhill to Beauly, would have been relatively easy to achieve and indeed the cost has proved to be very close to that which we had anticipated. However, there remain two issues with regard to land owners' consents which, at the time of writing, have not been resolved.

At the last meeting Aileen Armstrong thanked Tracey Darragh of Mott MacDonald for her thoroughness, communications and hard work during the project. The final report is due at the time of writing this article.

Ged Church

LOVAT BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS

Highland Council are carrying out an important piece of work which forms part of the Beauly - Inverness route and will assist cyclists and pedestrians in crossing Lovat Bridge. The project itself – the signalisation of the bridge to create alternate one-way traffic flows – is being carried out for general road safety purposes and for the protection of the bridge structure.

Mott MacDonald liaised with TEC Services throughout and we saw a drawing of the proposals for the bridge early this year. The drawing raised a number of questions and Ged Church spoke to Colin Ross of TEC Services at the beginning of February. It was agreed that we would meet with TEC Services when the design was ready, about a fortnight from then. Unfortunately no meeting was arranged and in the first week of March we noticed that works had begun. We tried to arrange a meeting for the week 7th - 11th March but this proved impossible. Communication has been by e-mail but we have been unable as yet to discuss fully all our concerns.

Quoting from one of Mr. Ross's e-mails the design is as follows:
“cycle lanes on either side of the bridge will be 1.2m wide when they are installed, which allows for a central traffic lane of 3.2m which is entirely appropriate for the nature of traffic and the A-road status. The lanes will have a coloured surface finish and the line marking will be in ‘Vibra-Line’ to provide added awareness to motorists. The

layout allows cyclists in both directions to bypass the signals into their designated lane and removes the need to cross the carriageway at either end of the bridge that a single cycle lane would require. It also avoids cyclists getting caught up with traffic at the start of the signal changes at the Stop Line.”

Whilst supporting the principle of the signalisation (Lovat Bridge was seen by many as a major obstacle to cycling especially by families and less confident cyclists) we had and still have some concerns regarding the above analysis (particularly the length of the section), the design and the anticipated effect on motorist behaviour.

We had asked for lanes of 1.5m width (CBD standard minimum). It must be remembered that cyclists will be expected to cross a very high bridge in a road position much closer to a low parapet than most would feel comfortable to be in. Also, at the start the bridge climbs steeply. From a standing start cyclists will be moving slowly with an increased tendency to weave. Traffic will pass quite close either from behind or head on. Motorists approaching the bridge and seeing a green light may now feel confident to accelerate given that there is no oncoming traffic. Even with the old two-way system I regularly witnessed traffic moving at speeds close to 40mph on this bridge. Our fear is that this is now likely to be a more common occurrence and that artics, buses and other vehicles will pass too close, too fast and, especially in the head-on case, be unaware of cyclists’/pedestrians’ presence.

Mr. Ross does not share this view and believes that the design features will control speeds. His e-mail in response to our concerns continues:

“We have to consider all users and the constraints on the Bridge. HGV use is frequent on this structure with the Quarry proximity being a good example.

Cycle By Design (CBD) 2010 lists that 1.5m is the absolute minimum width for a cycle lane however it allows for widths down to 1m in exceptional circumstances. I would argue this is an exceptional circumstance due to the width constraints on this historical structure. When you consider the bridge length in the context of a cycle journey along the A862 then the provision is a short length. 1.5m lanes either side of the bridge would provide a traffic lane of 2.6m

which is wholly unacceptable in this circumstance and, in our opinion, would create a more unsafe situation. This is little more than a standard car parking bay width and therefore demonstrates its unsuitability.

The 1.2m width is considered satisfactory and certainly provides an improved and enhanced provision than the existing situation. Interestingly, this meets with the ‘Limiting Width’ of 1.2m as stated in CBD 1999 and therefore has merit, although I appreciate the revised document has sought to increase standards.”

Given this response we asked for a maximum speed limit of 20 mph but this has been refused. It would be interesting to know what speed limit Mr Ross considers safe in these circumstances (there is guidance in a CROW* diagram in CBD). Because of the nature of the communications that have been made available to us we have little option but to wait and see who proves to be right. I hope it is Mr Ross. Lastly it is not clear to us how east-bound cyclists on the north side of the bridge will access the cycle path. We consider it vital that traffic speeds and behaviour be monitored for at least a six month period.

A pedestrian might be quite happy with this provision but cyclists might be advised to take up a priority position in the centre of the main traffic lane, in line with government guidance on safe cycling, until such time as they are assured of the safety of the lanes.

Ged Church

* CROW is an acronym, possibly Dutch, for a justly celebrated graph beloved of cycle campaigners and hated by many road engineers with which one can derive the safest cycle provision with reference to traffic speed and volume in any situation.

ACTIVE TRAVEL ERDF PROJECT

HITRANS and THC have developed a series of Active Travel Masterplans and Audits for all the main towns within the area including Inverness, Nairn, Dingwall, Fort William, Thurso, Wick, Tain, and one covering Alness and Invergordon.

The purpose of these plans is to improve walking and cycling facilities by identifying a core network and prioritised action plan for each location which will serve as a framework for future investment and

new development.

These studies have already been used to support the case for projects benefiting from Sustrans match funding in the form of their Short Links fund, including schemes at Alness, Balloch and Dingwall. More recently they have helped form the basis of a successful application for ‘Green and Active Travel Improvements’ from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The bid includes match funding from a number of partners (THC, HITRANS, Sustrans and the Inverness Common Good Fund) contributing towards a project total of £560,000 to be developed and implemented over the next 3 years.

The initial project will consist of developing, upgrading and promoting some key cycle routes. A number of potential schemes were identified as priorities in the application including:

- Inverness City Centre to Culloden inc. links to UHI Campus
- Alness - Invergordon
- Fort William – Corpach
- Re-routing of NCN into Tain
- NCN links between Thurso and Scrabster
- Cycle parking at key transport interchanges and destinations
- Active Travel maps

Further work will be required to establish what specific schemes can be delivered within the time-frame of the project but it is hoped that the overall impact of the project will create a series of cohesive improvements to walking and cycling networks in and around the main towns in Highland.

Comments on draft audit for Inverness which was commissioned by HITRANS are welcomed. A copy should be available at the following link from the Council website.

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/roadsandtransport/transportplanning/ActiveTravelMasterplans.htm>

Neil MacRae

CRUBENMORE

PART ONE

Transport Scotland is standing firm against calls for a safe crossing point for cyclists, walkers and horse-riders across a stretch of the busy A9 road where an upgrade is currently taking place.

The two mile extension to the existing dual carriageway at Crubenmore between Perth and Inverness is due to be completed this year and crosses the line of General Wade's Military road which is used as a leisure facility by various groups, including cyclists.

With construction already under way, there will be no provision for people to cross the carriageway either using a bridge, underpass or even a break in the central reservation barrier, at a point that is said to have been used for the past 300 years.

Transport Scotland, the Scottish Government's transport agency, has indicated to www.road.cc that there is simply no alternative crossing point for the public nearby. Further information and comments are available on the same website.

Hamish Wood

PART TWO

Last summer we discovered a new footpath to enjoy with the help of public transport. It runs between Kingussie and Dalwhinnie. Although new to us it dates back to the Eighteenth Century for almost all of it is along a Wade Road. When Sustrans enquired among local members as to its suitability as a cycle route we responded positively as it could be easily cycled and would make a round trip using NCN 7 as the other half of the loop or an alternative for long-distance cyclists.

Unfortunately the consultation part of the planning process for the road-works described above was over prior to our walk so we did not realise its potential when we saw the plans.

We had had to take care on the walk at Crubenmore for there the Wade Road was cut by the two-lane A9. Now the route is to be truncated by a dual carriage-way with two lanes either side on which the cars can legally travel 10 mph faster than previously and with a barrier between

the carriage-ways. That is surmountable by walkers, not impossible to cyclists but conjures up a worrying picture in the case of horses crossing. A Newtonmore Riding School is concerned about this as is a caravan park for their slow-moving customers will be coming out of their facility close to the end of the dual carriageway; a similar problem to the recent Moy overtaking-lane fiasco.

As yet Transport Scotland has a blinkered attitude to the situation. They regard each section of the Wade Road, east and west of the A9, as independent rights of way but maintain there never was a right of way between them! They are not prepared to link the two despite splitting a community, discouraging people from undertaking healthy exercise and undermining their remit to improve facilities for cycling and walking when undertaking work on Trunk Roads. They won't consider a simple and relatively cheap underpass leave alone a footbridge for people to cross safely as at Daviot and Aviemore and thereby prevent costly accidents such as occurred at Inshes and North Kessock before modifications were made.

Public opinion is however bubbling up over this. Recently, half-an-hour of "Out of Doors" (Radio Scotland) dealt with the situation. Ramblers and the CTC and local and national newspapers are involved and it's possible that heritage will prevail over damage.

Mary Langridge

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS ON CYCLE PATHS:

For overgrowing vegetation or track defects contact Transerv:

- freephone **0800 0281414**
- or **www.scotlandtranserv.co.uk** and complete a defect reporting form.

For litter, broken glass etc. contact TEC Services:

- Inverness e-mail: **Inverness.tecsadmin@high-land.gov.uk**
- Ross and Cromarty Tel: **01349 868440**

HIGHLAND CYCLE CAMPAIGN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM of the HCC will be held on **Thursday 12th May** at the Spectrum Centre, Inverness (off Farraline Park) from **6.30 - 8.30**.

At 7 pm. after the business part of the meeting Andrew Fraser from Scott Wilson, the Consultants behind the work on NCN78 (Fort William to Inverness), will describe the current situation on the project.

All members are urged to attend to find out more about the activities described in this Newsletter. Enclosed with the Newsletter is a list of proposed changes to the constitution which will be on the agenda.

CYCLISTS: COOL, BUT ARE THEY HAPPY?

Results from a YouGov survey commissioned by the Bristol Social Marketing Centre at the University of the West of England found, amongst other things, that: 42% of the British public (cyclists and non-cyclists) think that ‘cycling has become cool nowadays’; 43% agreed that ‘When I’m stuck in a traffic jam I sometimes wish I were cycling’; and that 28% agreed and 50% disagreed that ‘roads are for cars not bikes’.

While the findings suggested that cyclists see themselves as independent minded and free spirited, environmentally aware, adventurous, and even somewhat rebellious, non-cyclists generally think that cyclists as not nearly as happy as they report themselves to be. Maybe a campaign for the better integration of cycling and smiling is in order?

For inquiries about the research, contact: Alan.Tapp@uwe.ac.uk

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