

LAF Report

21/06/2022

Windsor Cycle Hub

*The **object** of the CIO is the promotion of community participation in healthy recreation in Windsor by the provision of facilities for cycling.*

*The **aim** of the Windsor Cycle Hub is to help raise awareness of cycling for everyone throughout the Windsor community through activities to encourage residents and visitors into, or back into cycling. This includes recycling affordable bicycles, teaching mechanical skills, sharing knowledge and resource, and running events and rides. In doing so, WCH will help make Windsor a better and more sustainable place to live. (08/2021)*

1. Background and context

1.1 *The impetus to create a cycle hub in Windsor came initially from the example of Maidenhead Cycle Hub which was shared regularly in discussions with the RBWM Cycle Forum (CF) over a number of meetings by CF member and MCH founder chairman, Luke McCarthy. A combination of affordable bicycles, sound advice and straightforward servicing coupled with regular Led Rides and valuable training opportunities proved to be a practical and valuable model for **making cycling as “accessible, positive and visible” in the community.***

1.2 *CF discussions concerning MCH’s activities and progress also coincided with the start of work in 2015/16 on the RBWM Cycling Action Plan (CAP 2018-28) led by the then Principal Transport Planning Officer, Gordon Oliver. Undertaken over a period of approximately two years, the CAP process involved CF members including residents, Councillors and Officers as well as community groups in an extensive study of ten main areas of the Borough in order to understand existing infrastructure and emerging needs in the wider context of transport, planning and natural environment considerations.*

1.3 *The completion of the CAP in May 2018 and its adoption as official RBWM policy in January 2019 constituted a major milestone for cycling in the Borough, with close to 120 researched, consulted, costed and prioritised schemes now available for implementation. In April, CF members were advised that the Forum would be disbanded and cycling matters absorbed into a new general Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel to be formed following local elections in May 2019. There was strong encouragement, nonetheless, for members to form a new group with a specific cycling focus. Through engagement with the Climate Change Stakeholders’ Workshops, this would eventually come together in March 2020 as the Windsor & Maidenhead Cycling Action Group (W&MCAG).*

1.4 *While the CAP had been being finalised in 2018, a community effort was simultaneously being launched in Clewer Village (Mill Lane Conservation Area) to save a former 18th-19th c. NDHA former pub building from demolition for renewal as a community hub, including as a Sixth Form base for the nearby Green Room School in Windsor. One of the key mechanisms in this process – Asset of Community Value Nomination – provided an unexpected opportunity to initially raise the idea of a cycle hub informally. When ACV Status was subsequently granted for the building and The Swan Community Interest Company was formed, the cycle hub took its initial steps as a potential entity.*

1.5 *Two years later, as W&MCAG rapidly engaged with the challenges of Covid and climate change in 2020, Cycling UK had already rolled out Dr Bike repair opportunities through its “Big Bike Revival” which RBWM was successfully promoting via the Maidenhead Cycle Hub. Through W&MCAG, a request was made to MCH to consider running a Dr Bike session at The Swan, the first formal activity associated with the emerging “Windsor Cycle Hub” and a crucial stage of its engagement with MCH, RBWM and Cycling UK as well as local individuals and organisations including Abri.*

1.6 WCH's early development was a slow process of lengthy discussions, research into best practice of similar organisations, brainstorming, seeking professional advice and engaging with local individuals and groups, and forming a small "steering" team of individuals a few of whom had been involved in the CF and development of the CAP. With vital support from MCH, by early 2021 the hub was a registered charity (CIO) and had reached a stage where it could be formally launched, appropriately on 31st May at the start of Cycling UK Bike Week.

1.7 This important step was, notwithstanding, still a very small one at the start of the complex process to understand what the organisation could realistically provide for its surrounding community, including the Green Room School, without firm expectations but with clear aspirations and a great commitment to cycling, summarised in its application for a start-up grant from RBWM (Submitted 06/08/21, granted 10/21):

"As seen in the Borough generally, Windsor has experienced exceptional demand for affordable utility and leisure cycling over the last year during the pandemic. Following clear evidence of the need for such a facility in the town, the Windsor Cycle Hub was set up at the Swan in Clewer Village, a site which meets many important criteria:

- 1) *The Swan is located on/near several Borough and national cycle routes, including NCN4 and the RBWM shared-use path along Maidenhead Road (A308).*
- 2) *This site already incorporates a community "hub" and the Green Room School Sixth Form and Graduate Programme campus for which bicycle mechanic and other relevant training is planned, and is also developing a kitchen to support a café for the general public including cyclists.*
- 3) *WCH provides a weekly opportunity for cyclists of all ages and stages to meet socially, have their bicycles undergo minor repairs (free of charge) and other services, and enjoy regular Led Rides.*
- 4) *The site has hosted regular Dr Bike sessions organised by Maidenhead Cycle Hub which are also supported by Windsor Cycle Hub.*
- 5) *Previously an inn, this 18th-century building in the Mill Lane CA stands across from a former YHA site and has rooms which could eventually be used for hostel-style accommodation for cyclists.*
- 6) *WCH will provide a new community facility in the east of RBWM, expanding the number of specific cycling focal points in the Borough as a whole and helping deliver local and National objectives for "active travel", healthy communities, and important environment and climate response.*

We are planning to develop the number of organised bike rides we lead and deliver at least 5 times more bike safety checks and related events which are free for Windsor and Maidenhead residents.

We are currently working with the Borough's Embedding Community Response project in Clewer and Dedworth and have been supported by the services and free business consultancy provided by the Maidenhead Cycle Hub charity, based on its well-established and very successful business model.

Once fully in place, the WCH charitable incorporated organisation will provide new learning opportunities for young people and support the RBWM's environment and climate change agenda through low cost and sustainable transport. It will also encourage healthier lifestyles and support low-cost family exercise and travel options in an area identified as experiencing some of the highest deprivation in the Borough."

2. Early development phase

2.1 *In its efforts to address the unprecedented impacts of Covid-19 on Borough communities, RBWM sought to identify and support, in particular, those areas of greatest deprivation and most significant need. The project, known as Embedding Community Response, was first applied in Clewer and Dedworth. With support*

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM REPORT – Item 3F – 7th JULY 2022

from MCH and organisations including Abri, local Councillors along with other groups and individuals in the community, WCH was able to establish important support links and begin developing its community engagement strategy. The cycle hub has also been successful in receiving grant funding from The Prince Philip Trust Fund to help purchase additional tools for use in their Bike Kitchen.

2.2 Based on this experience and in a specific delivery and implementation partnership with MCH and Abri, WCH volunteers are now undertaking professional standard training being provided by MCH mechanics and already being applied in Bike Kitchen sessions and tutorials for Green Room School Sixth Form pupils, as well as Dr Bike sessions in due course.

2.3 WCH volunteer Ride Leaders have undertaken and completed guided rides almost every weekend of the year to help residents and others, including Councillors, to explore local routes, build cycling confidence, knowledge and skills. Volunteer mechanics have kitted out one of the former stable buildings at The Swan as a basic workshop area which will be expanded in coming months.



Photos: D. Bonney

2.4 Working with the Green Room School, during the summer term (April - July 2022), WCH will be integrating 8 x 1-hour training sessions for between 3 and 6 Green Room students into their normal timetable. Each session will be a combination of both classroom and practical work.

2.5 The purpose of these sessions is to provide these students with basic bike safety checks and adjustments, in an environment that they are comfortable with. As their confidence builds, for those that wish, the aim would be assist these students with some or all of the following opportunities:

- to integrate them into the Windsor Cycle Hub Bike Kitchen sessions;
- to offer them the opportunity to attain Cytech qualifications that would ultimately enable them to seek employment in the bike industry;
- to organise and run their own Bike Kitchen sessions offering free bike safety checks to pupils of schools local to the Green Room School.

2.6 Later in the summer term, the Green Room School and WCH will review the success of these sessions and plan for next year's cohort.

3. Moving forward

3.1 Cycle hubs can now be found in a growing number of locations around the country as the popularity of cycling expands and its importance as a "low-carbon"/"Active Travel" mode of transport continues to rise against the backdrop of climate and environmental change. The health, physical development and well-being implications of exposure to CO₂ and other pollutants raises unparalleled urgency for the need to reduce traffic congestion on all roads and within residential, commercial, health and educational centres. While each cycle hub differs in its relationship with factors and conditions specific to its location and geographic context, all will share the common goal of **making cycling "accessible, positive and visible" in the community.**

3.2 This variety is clearly demonstrated in the examples of the Windsor and Maidenhead cycle hubs where the nature of their geographic locations, buildings and other physical provision including proximity to other facilities and existing cycling infrastructure differ greatly. What is notable is the way in which both are successfully achieving among other goals:

- embedding cycling in their respective communities
- expanding the popularity and uptake of cycling by a growing range of individuals
- supporting valuable social, recreational and educational opportunities for residents living in and outside of RBWM
- raising the profile of "Active Travel" locally at a time when national transport policy is putting a high focus on the delivery of cycling and walking improvements in all LAs

3.3 We believe the benefits of cycle hubs are clear on many levels and that comprehensive support for the development of cycle hubs across the Borough will assist the RBWM Local Transport Authority to achieve these goals in line with the LCWIP, Environment and Climate Strategy, emerging Local Transport Plan, and Borough Local Plan and associated policies and SPDs.

Report with contributions from WCH volunteers compiled by

Susy Shearer,
Trustee, Windsor Cycle Hub