

Cycling Embassy of Great Britain – minutes of the second meeting

Saturday 21st May, Manchester

Present:

Jim Davis (chair)
David Arditti
Sally Hinchcliffe (minutes)
Amy (*part*)
Chris Page (aka MR C / MCR Cycling)
Suzy Lewis
Lorenza (Naturally Cycling)
Mair Hughes (Sheffield Cycle Chic) (*part*)
Kevin Hickman (Inclusive Cycling)
Mark Ames (I Bike London)
Joe Dunckley (Steinsky – At War With The Motorist)
Richard Aldeson
Jonathan Fingland

Apologies:

Geoff Rone
Kim Harding
Tim Lennon

Introduction

Jim opened the meeting with thanks to everyone who attended and specifically to Chris and the Manchester contingent for organising the venue and the infrastructure safari before hand. He felt it was important that the Embassy met in Manchester because of the good support there had been for it from the area and in order that people around the country didn't feel it was just going to be too London dominated. He explained that after the initial meeting, things settled down, the website was gradually developing and the accounts currently stood at around £300.

The profile of the organisation had been raised by Carlton Reid's article in Road.cc and Jim's response and he felt that the founding of the Embassy – as well as work by other bloggers and campaigners – was leading to some shifts in attitudes among cycle campaigns, particularly at the local level. For instance, the flash ride across Blackfriars bridge in defence of the 20mph speed limit and against the downgrading of the cycle lanes seemed to signal a sea-change in the LCC's (London Cycle Campaign) approach. David added that Mustafa Arif of the LCC had expressed that the LCC was currently undergoing a listening and consultation exercise with its membership and that one of the options under consideration was 'going Dutch.' Mark also felt that the LCC's new chief executive was shaking up the organisation. However as many at the meeting had found through their own experience, although many local campaign groups

were (and always had been) pro good infrastructure, and council officials were often sympathetic, there was a limit to what could be achieved locally because national guidelines and norms held them back. For example TfL's (Transport for London) interpretation of the law as requiring them to 'keep traffic flowing', and as Chris noted, the fact that when the costs of delays were calculated, only those to motor vehicles were counted, not delays incurred by pedestrians or cyclists, for example waiting for lights at crossings. Similarly, cycling might not be included within traffic budgets but under health or the environment because it was not considered primarily a transport activity. Richard noted that Trafford had reduced its car parking fees at a total cost to the council of £0.5 million whereas the entire safety budget was only £200,000. Meanwhile there was money for large road-building projects such as the Hindhead Tunnel on the A3, the M74 motorway extension in Glasgow and the widening of the M25.

As David summarised, this discussion made it clear that the focus of the Embassy should be on changing policies at a national level. Transport is a local issue but also strategic and tends to cut across authority boundaries meaning that it can fall through the gaps. The DfT (Department for Transport) says what should be policy, in consultation with cycling organisations, and local authorities have to work within those frameworks so we should be pressing to ensure those frameworks are the right ones, working with the government in Westminster, and also the devolved parliaments and assemblies. Sally added that we should be aiming towards operating in some way as a think tank. Jim pointed out that we need to counter the belief that we are in favour of the existing poor cycle infrastructure that is being built.

Study Tour

Jim announced that he needed firm commitments for the study tour to the Netherlands, departing in the week beginning Sept 21st, for 3 days. The cost depended on the level of accommodation but would be between €300-450, however if more than 10 people booked the cost might come down. He needed final names by Thursday (26th May).

Constitution / Governance

Constitution

After the following amendments, the constitution was ratified unanimously:

1. Page 1: Add a para between 'Name' and 'Purpose' defining the bicycle inclusively as follows:
'The Bicycle: by bicycle we mean any form of cycle including tricycles, handcycles, recumbent, cargo bikes or tandems'
2. Page 2: change 'Co-ordinator' to 'Chair'
3. Page 2: change 10th para to read 'Up to seven additional Elected Committee members without portfolio'

Governance

Jim clarified that although membership fees could be charged in the future, for the first year at least the membership fee would be zero, although members would be welcome to make a donation to support the work of the Embassy. For now, becoming a member will entail simply signing up to the website, and all existing subscribers to the website will be notified of this, and reminded annually. It was agreed that we would have to move to a more formal membership structure eventually and that in the medium term having a strong fee-paying membership base would increase the Embassy's influence with politicians. It was further agreed that all members would be known as 'Ambassadors'.

Nomination of Officers

The following nominations were made:

1. Chair: Jim Davis
2. Press Officer: Mark Ames
3. Secretary: Sally Hinchcliffe
4. Additional Member without portfolio: Chris Page
5. Treasurer: Geoff Rone

As none of the posts were contested, all officers were elected by default. As Geoff had been nominated *in absentia*, his post will be subject to his confirming that he is willing to take it on.

Mission Statement and Manifesto

It was agreed to add 'other cycling organisations' and 'disability groups' to the list of people / groups we will work with (page two). There was also some discussion about the details of the wording, particularly the paragraph that starts with 'And finally, we believe that this is worth it...' but there wasn't time to get into redrafting it then and there and wanted to avoid something that sounded as though it had been written by a committee. **Action:** all changes to the manifesto wording to be submitted via the forum by the end of next week(29th May) after which it will be finalised.

Website

It was agreed that the website needed to better reflect the aims and ambitions of the Embassy, especially those parts of it that were open to unregistered users. The following actions were agreed:

1. Change the site so that all registered users can edit the wiki, without necessarily having access to other site administration function. Users who signed up and then abused the wiki would be blocked. Pages which had been sufficiently developed would be 'crystallised' and moved out of the wiki into more prominent (and un-editable) positions. **Action:** Jim to discuss with Anthony
2. The 'claims and canards' section of the wiki needs to be filled in, perhaps in skeletal form for now. **Action:** Joe and the Manchester contingent to coordinate.
3. The cycling infrastructure pages need to be expanded to include Danish, German and other examples of good practice such as New York and the Dutch page needs to be finished and illustrations added. Delft would also be worth looking at in more detail. The UK's own guidelines

for cycling infrastructure are in fact quite good (albeit only guidelines not standards) and need to be included for contrast. **Action:** Sally and Mark to coordinate

4. We need to identify those areas where changes to the UK guidelines would have the greatest impact (for example, priority over side roads for cycle tracks) and use those to prioritise our lobbying efforts. **Action:** Sally to investigate further, in consultation with people on the forum, particularly existing traffic engineers. Possibly need to contact continental traffic engineers (Danish Cycling Embassy? Fietsberaad?) for input.
5. The Embassy should collaborate with CycleStreets in providing examples of good and bad infrastructure design to their Cycling Sorted website project. **Action:** Jim and Anthony to liaise with CycleStreets over how best to collaborate on this.
6. Update the look and feel of the site so that there are more pictures, preferably aspirational photographs of happy-looking cyclists of all ages and abilities on decent but obviously British infrastructure, with every page to have a (possibly random) image on its header. We also need examples of infrastructure – even not formally great infrastructure – that has worked in terms of attracting cyclists. **Action:** Mark to get more photographs together, Jim to discuss updating the website with Anthony, everyone to look out for suitable photographs and add to the flickr group (but see point below)
7. Merge the two existing Embassy flickr groups into one. Where photographs are to be used for the website, even if submitted under a Creative Commons licence, to check with the submitter before using. **Action:** Mark and Chris to merge flickr groups
8. Add an official CEoGB blog to the site, to keep people coming back. For now, any existing members who've written something particularly relevant on their own blogs can repost content as guest bloggers. Ultimately, some sort of semi-automated aggregation around the #CEoGB tag might be achieved, but this would have to be moderated. **Action:** Jim to liaise with Anthony, everybody to get writing on their blogs! (possibly Mark/Sally to coordinate this)
9. In general the forums need to be kept ticking over, particularly the public ones. Much of what is discussed on the private forum could be in the public ones. We also need a 'Launch' section to the private forums to keep discussion of launch events in one place. **Action:** Jim to liaise with Anthony about setting this up (although it looks like I have access to do this myself – not sure I dare...), everyone to consider putting their posts into the public groups where possible.

Launch

It was agreed that there be two launches: a soft, virtual launch in June (as planned) to build membership and interest in the organisation, and a physical launch in London in August/September to get press interest.

Virtual Launch

This will be a viral campaign, using blogs to spread a striking poster-style image or images plus slogan – to be agreed – around the internet. It should be done the Friday before Bike Week (17th June). As time is tight, this will need to be quite limited in its scope. The image could be used on t-shirts, stickers and mugs (via Cafe Press or similar) to raise funds and raise awareness. **Action:** Jim to coordinate, in liaison with members on the forum.

Physical Launch

This will be an event, designed to catch the eye of the media and bring our campaign to the attention of the wider world. It is most likely to be around the first week in September, with the theme of 'back to school', capitalising on the 'silly season' and the London media's need for stories to fill their pages. At the moment it looks as though it will take the form of some kind of 'demonstration' flash ride, but on 'practical' bikes, including riders of all ages, down Whitehall and around Parliament Square, possibly handing out Ferrero Rochers. If resources permit, a similar event could take place in Edinburgh (and other devolved capitals), depending on the membership levels in those cities. Otherwise we concentrate our resources on London for now. The ideal date in terms of press coverage would be the first Tuesday of the month (1st September) but if not enough people can make it to the capital on a weekday then the nearest suitable weekend would be preferable. **Action:** Mark to coordinate, everyone to update Mark with any press or other media contacts they have. Sally to dig out post on lobbying MPs / MSPs / Assembly members in relevant transport groups so they can be approached as part of the launch

Other Events

It was agreed that after the main launch, we should keep on planning events. Suggestions included the 'flash cycle track' idea, or a promotional film of the quality of *Beauty and The Bikes* (for example, 'Getting Zoe to School' about how difficult it is for even a willing mum to take her two children to a primary school just a couple of miles away in London by bike). **Actions:** none formally assigned, but everyone to consider whether a suitable school for a flash cycle lane could be found, or if they know any film makers who want to make a documentary for free.

