



Harrow going backwards on cycling

A view from Tony Levene, Harrow Cyclists co-ordinator and LCC Board Member

Three years ago members of Harrow Cyclists, in common with the other 12,500 members across London, lobbied prospective councillors in the May 2014 borough elections for the Space for Cycling campaign. Many councillors signed up to our six point programme.

This included:

- Lowering vehicle speeds
- removing through motor traffic on minor or residential streets
- installing physically protected space for cycling on main roads
- opening up our green areas for cycling
- creating safe cycle routes to schools
- improving London's town centres to make them easier to visit by bike.

Three years on, Harrow's current administration made little if any progress, going backwards in many respects.

Bus lanes (far from ideal) have been grubbed up. The Heart of Harrow bike route (not ideal but progress) has been torn up. Wealdstone regeneration and other developments ignore cycling needs.

The council flouts TfL guidelines including cycle exemptions on "no-entries".

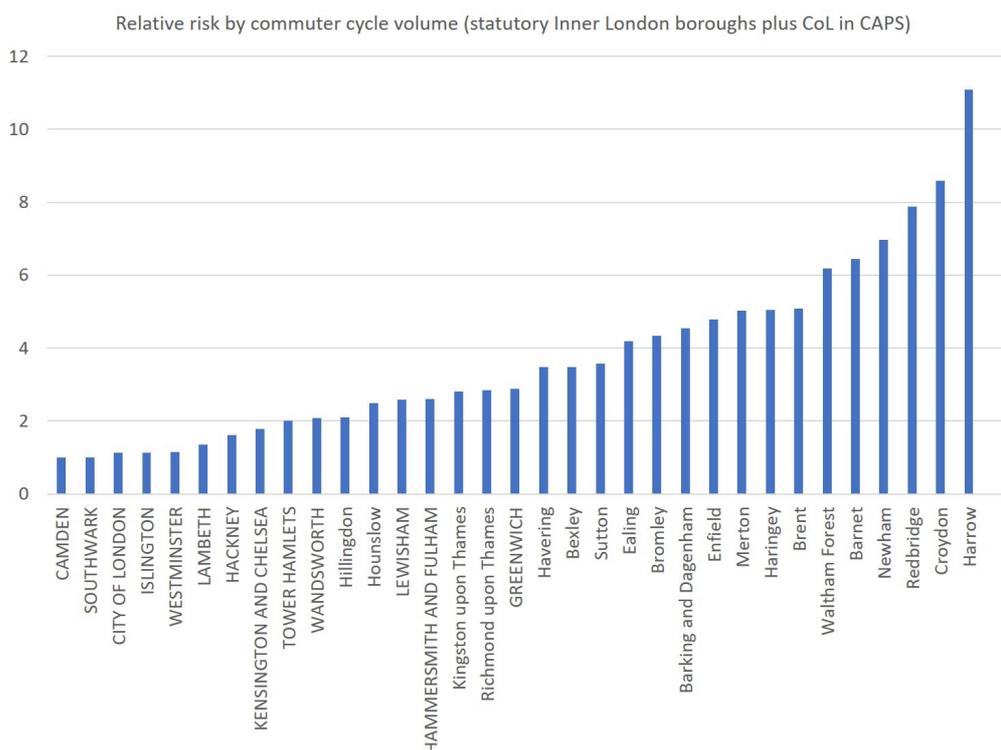
This time last year, I met Councillor Barry Kendler, who leads on cycling. He pledged action - the more so if (as happened) Sadiq Khan become mayor. Harrow Cyclists are still waiting.

It gets worse. The Evening Standard reported (17 February), quoting Will Norman, the Mayor's new Walking and Cycling Commissioner, that "London was safe for cyclists" – despite three riders dying over the previous seven days. He said more pedestrians had been killed than cyclists – true by a factor of seven. But pedestrians outnumber cyclists by a far greater number.

These thoughts are dangerous as they will give the green light to Harrow councillors to ignore cycling even further. Recent research from Rachel Aldred of the University of Westminster shows cycling casualties per distance travelled are higher in Harrow than in any other London borough, and 11 times higher than in the safest borough, Camden.

We are now one year away from the next elections in a borough which swings from one party to another. We have made no progress with the present administration. Now we are now holding talks with others who could potentially control Harrow from May 2018.

Below: graph from Rachel Aldred's blog where she tries to measure relative risk of cycling in London boroughs by combining numbers for all reported casualties with census data for commuting journeys. It is seen that Outer London boroughs (with lower cycling levels) come out badly from this comparison, both Brent and Harrow in the bottom 7.



‘Quick Win’ consultations in Brent

February saw a slew of consultations from Brent on minor changes that have been suggested by Brent Cyclists. We first proposed a list of ‘Top Ten Quick Wins’ to the council two years ago (you can find them on the Brent Cyclists website under ‘Campaigns’), and now we have some progress.

February’s tranche included:

- A proposal to create a cycle gap in the traffic island at the Christchurch Avenue and Brondesbury Park junction. This was one of our ‘Asks’ in the Space for Cycling campaign. It should particularly help children at Malorees School use routes on quieter roads.
- Twyford Abbey Road: improvements in the access to the canal towpath
- Neasden Lane North: a dropped kerb and cycle lane to aid access to the shared pedestrian and cycle subway

These represent small changes and not necessarily optimal solutions (at Neasden of course we really require a totally different scale of intervention – see below) but we asked our members to support them (using the new Brent Cyclists monthly news e-mail) because they are some help and a positive sign that Brent is trying to do more for cycling. (If you don’t get the Brent Cyclists news e-mail you can sign up to it here: <https://tinyurl.com/j3xtu6w>. You can sign up even if you are not a member or don’t live in Brent.)

Response from the Mayor on North Circular crossing

When Sadiq Khan visited Brent Civic Centre for a People’s Question Time in November we submitted the following written question:

Will you support the building of a safe crossing of the North Circular Road for cyclists in Brent?

A response has now been received, as follows:

Following the publication of Transport for London’s (TfL) Business Plan in December, TfL is in preparing a detailed plan for all of the programmes within the Healthy Streets portfolio (including Quietways). In the coming months, TfL will be prioritising which Quietway projects to take forward based on key criteria, including cost and the benefits that projects deliver for Londoners.

Crossing the A406 in Neasden is clearly a major barrier to walking and cycling, as well as to the communities that are separated by the North Circular and A4088. Any new crossing at this location is likely to require a significant level of funding. TfL has undertaken some analysis to assess the likely level of cycling demand and will be sharing this with the borough shortly when they meet to discuss how the project could be taken forward.



Visualisation of what a new cycle bridge at Neasden could look like, from a report commissioned by Brent and TfL

This reply, though-obviously non-committal, seem encouraging at least in that it acknowledges how bad the barrier for walking and cycling at Neasden is. We intend to take the subject up now with Will Norman, the new Commissioner who will oversee the £770 million budget earmarked by Sadiq Khan for walking and cycling projects over the next five years. This crossing would surely be a good expenditure of money in view of the extent to which it could unlock cycling in Brent and Harrow.

Forthcoming events

Sun 12 March: Central Superhighway Ride Meet 11:00 Gladstone Park railway bridge (foot of Parkside) for a ride to experience the latest cycle infrastructure between Brent and Southwark. Easy ride, 18 miles round, bring lights.

Wed 5 April: Brent Cyclists Meeting 7.00pm Atrium of the Clayton Crown Hotel, Cricklewood Broadway

Sun 9 April: Ride to the Heath Robinson Museum Meet 11am outside Pret a Manger, London Designer Outlet, Wembley Park Boulevard for a short, family-friendly ride to Pinner to view this newly-opened attraction. 12 miles round mostly on minor roads and paths. (Charge for museum.)

Wed 3 May: Brent Cyclists Meeting 7:00pm Pret a Manger, London Designer Outlet, Wembley

Sun 14 May: Ride from Chesham to Luton Meet 10:50am Wembley Park Station to get 11:03 train to Chesham (calls at Harrow-on-the-Hill 11:10) for a moderately hilly ride 20 mile ride mostly on minor roads and cycle paths, returning on the Thameslink Line.

Wed 7 June: Brent Cyclists Meeting 7.00pm Atrium of the Clayton Crown Hotel, Cricklewood Broadway

Harrow Cyclists meetings check the Harrow Cyclists Yahoo! group, Facebook group or harrowcyclists.org.uk.

Brent and Harrow Cyclists Contacts

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