



Campaigning for Better Cycling

(Formerly SHEPWAY CYCLE FORUM)

Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 October 2012 at the Civic Centre, Folkestone

Present: David Taylor (Chair), Shane Record, Jean Baker, Rhona Hodges (Secretary), Paul Rees (Sustrans Ranger and Spokes Liaison), Alan Joyce (Treasurer and Sustrans Liaison Ranger), Jeff Lyle, Joe Grey, Mark Tuson (RMCP), Dave Kesby, Hugh Robertson-Ritchie, Jane Braine and David Young (Sustrans)

- 1 Apologies for absence** were received from Cllrs Carole Waters, Roland Tolputt and Rory Love, together with Gemma O’Grady, Steve Fawke, Frederick Miller, Sue Dinsdale, Simon Allum, Si Ralph, Keely Spicer, Mark Biddis, Peter Wallace and Colin Tomson.
- David Taylor welcomed attendees and David Young, Regional Officer of Sustrans. DT reported recent events, including successful stands in Folkestone promoting the Folkestone-Dungeness Cycleway Petition, the revamp of the website and development of Facebook, the completion of the survey of the proposed coastal route from Folkestone to Dungeness, and a meeting with Cllrs Robert Bliss (Leader) and Hugh Barker and Wilbert Greaves of SDC. Cllr Bliss had agreed to receive the petition on behalf of SDC at a special photo presentation with Damian Collins. He was generally in favour of the project and acknowledged that it could help the economy of Hythe and Romney Marsh, especially involving the light railway, and in view of the abandonment of the nuclear option. He was also in favour of the dual use signage for the seafront. Cllr Barker made the point that the so-called seawall was the de facto route anyway – and he personally used it rather than NCR2 through the Lower Leas Park. Cllr Bliss said SDC would investigate the legalities of siting the signs between Folkestone and Hythe. In fact, that was tasked to Wilbert Greaves, the sports development officer. David Taylor considered that the meeting represented a start to more cordial relations with SDC and progress on the cycle path project.
- 3 Minutes** of the meeting held on 18 July 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- 4 David Young** briefly described the organisation of Sustrans, and admitted that little of the organisation’s funding had reached Shepway. He advised members to obtain the necessary planning permissions and landowners’ consents for projects, and that in the long term funding would be found.

Specifically for the seafront path, his advice was to request KCC to carry out a safety audit of the route, to pay for an estimate of the cost of the engineering required, and to commence negotiations with the landowners. He pointed out that permissive agreements would not be enough to attract funds. The route should preferably be traffic free (with a hard surface suitable for buggies and wheelchairs) rather than off-road, and suggested that the surface used on the Hastings – Bexhill route might be suitable for use on the SSSI at Greatstone. He was working to develop the canal-side route from Hythe to Rye, which could be funded on the basis of it becoming a recreational route similar to the Camel Trail, producing jobs in tourism.

Members pointed out that the seafront route could similarly be justified as a tourist attraction, but would also be close to 80% of the Shepway population for everyday use. It might be possible to attract funding from the Coastal Communities Fund or small lottery grants, but David Young suggested that KCC would probably prioritise tourist routes. He suggested that it would be advisable to include some alternative routes at “difficult” points along the path, and also advised the group to set up third party liability insurance. He wished CySy well with the coastal path, but warned that progress would be very difficult.

Jean Baker asked for advice on what could be done to progress the Shepway Cycling Plan, approved by SDC but not implemented. David Young suggested that a list of achievable priorities be drawn up for SDC councillors, and that the group volunteer to maintain paths, eg by sweeping the stones from the seawall. He advised members to contact Sustrans rangers with suggestions for upgrading bridleways.

5 Funding and membership

Alan Joyce circulated a draft letter to supporters requesting donations of £5 pa. The letter would be put on the website and sent to members, with a deadline of 5 December. Funds currently totalled £2,070.54, of which £2,000 was set aside for signs on the seafront. A meeting would be held on 22 October with the Roger De Haan Charitable Trust, when it was hoped to secure funding for costs incurred in the coastal cycleway campaign.

6 Folkestone to Dungeness Cycleway

David Taylor congratulated Joe Grey and Paul Rees on an excellent survey document, which would be sent to Natural England, SDC, KCC, Environment Agency, MOD and people who signed the petition, currently 1500. It was hoped that the RHDR would become involved, and be asked to provide carriages for carrying bikes on a number of trains.

7 Seafront Signage

The funds for signs along the seafront from the Harbour to Seabrook could not be used until the necessary permissions were obtained. Joe Grey asked David Young if the NCR 2 route could be realigned from the Lower Leas to the promenade, and the reply was that Sustrans would agree if the promenade was kept clear, either by the Council’s contractor or volunteers. The design of the sign was agreed, and Sustrans had quoted £12 as the cost for each sign.

8 Harbour redevelopment

An outline planning application had been submitted to SDC. Details would be discussed at the meeting with the Roger De Haan Charitable Trust, but members were reminded that CySy was a consultant for the development.

9 Events during 2012

A summer of successful events included the bike ride to West Hythe, and a number of publicity stalls in Folkestone Town Centre, to be concluded on 20 October. It was agreed that CySy should have a stall in Hythe in Spring 2013, giving further publicity to the Petition.

10 AOB

- (a)** Paul Rees reviewed recent achievements by Spokes, including campaigns, consultations with SE Trains, route surveys, grants for the disabled and monthly rides. Paul asked for a volunteer to succeed him as representative of CySy at the imminent AGM, and Jeff Lyle agreed to fill the post.

- (b)** Rhona Hodges asked for volunteers to attend a meeting with Natural England on 25 October, and Alan Joyce, Joe Grey and David Taylor agreed to accompany her.

Next meeting - AGM – Wednesday 16 January 2013