

Cyclenation Conference, Bristol. 13th October 2012 Workshop Notes

1. Using the media
2. Street interventions (infrastructure)
3. Successful campaigning
4. Building alliances
5. Developing strategy
6. Building political will

Notes from workshop table 1: Using the Media

Take Away Lessons
1. Figure out how your campaign will improve people's day to day lives and tell that story. Make use of case studies or examples. Have a good photo that tells your story
2. Social media can be an effective way of rallying support but requires a regular time commitment. The press generally has bigger reach.
3. Tell your story in plain English. Be direct, Make it fun where appropriate.

- Why is local media so negative about cycling? So, need to engage
- Old and young need different messages, how to represent?
- Tone should be punchy, straight
- How to use new social media? Get involved
- How to maintain interest? Topical news and information
- Distinguish campaigning from advocating getting about on a bike
- Supply good photos (no photo puts you at the bottom of the list for publication)
- Social media – you need to engage with it and get involved, not just read.
- Befriend pro-cycling journalists. May take time but the best way is to feed them good quality material they will want to use.
- Need good human interest stories.
- Understand that local print media gets significant revenue from advertising from cars, and most targeted readers are car drivers
- Understand the network complexity of Twitter. If you have 1000 followers they all might have 1000 followers
- Consider which media format has the biggest reach. Newspapers? Radio? Social media?
- Work out the group you are trying to influence, e.g. young/old etc
- Work out areas of broad concern and link them to cycling, e.g. Health,
- Message must be attractive. Make use of fun and humour.
- Invent an event of interest and then advise the media e.g. Commuter cycle challenges
- Seek out a skilled press relations officer!
- To make initial contact, hold an event and invite specific journalists and photographers

Notes from workshop table 2: Street Interventions (infrastructure)

Take Away Lessons
1. Participate in the paperwork and processes. Demonstrate why engaging with you will benefit them. Give the local authority credit when they do a good job.
2. Get early influence in the design process through strategy, policy or relationships. Responding to consultations will have only limited effect.
3. Emphasise the needs of children, elderly and disabled (including cyclists) to feel safe and comfortable in using infrastructure

- Often take space from pavement rather than from road. Reluctance to restrict car traffic flow
- False dichotomy - effective cycling – mixed up ideas. Should think in terms of 'experienced' and 'inexperienced' cyclists. Not 'Dual provision'. Pavement cycling just as unsafe as road
- A network should come first. Co-operation between adjacent LA's is needed.
- Campaigners used to attend meetings with individual problems. Now campaigning for policy and sustained commitment to cycling and have become a real force. (from a council officer)
- Create a Vision Pack to set out what best practice looks like.
- Need to participate in processes. Many reports to council are not worth the paper or effort, however in the end council (Hackney) looked at the reports and have been implemented since.
- Remember Dutch still have accidents' but less than 1/4 'accidents' per head. Are there also different interpretations of Dutch casualties
- Paperwork! How can the public understand published plans? On the ground they appear different from what they said.
- A Bike Forum can be useful between council and campaigners in working through plans, increasing trust and confidence, and influencing strategy.
- How does a council know what is successful? Often, it appears, they don't.
- In working with the council you may need to bring an alternative to the table.
- If a council does something right then praise them.
- Work to expand the council's list of consultees to be representative and relevant
- If involved too late in design process consultation responses will be ignored and no changes made. If the strategy is already decided (and is not pro-cycling) the consultation will have limited effect
- Are you known to your authority? Can you make a case for why engaging with you will benefit them?
- Policy consultations are not followed. Most success comes when the consultation is on a specific project
- If you can, point out problems with infrastructure in terms of: 'safety' and/or 'children'. Issues concerning safety, children and vulnerable people are much more likely to get **action**.
- Things have got worse because much work is contracted out to consultants with much less potential for influence and less interest in consultation.
- Consultation is often just a box-ticking exercise
- Carriageway narrowing makes cyclists into a traffic calming measure
- Advisory cycle lanes where loading of vans etc is allowed can introduce danger and obstacles.
- If cars are overtaking on the blind bend, the road needs to be redesigned.
- Disability groups such as the blind want segregation of pedestrians and cyclists. Removal of a centre line in some cases has improved the situation. Influenced by width, volumes and the type of cycling (commuter/recreation)
- Any solutions to rural speed danger? 'Quiet Lanes' legislation exists
- Pick a project (not a controversial one) and work with the council and learn from them.
- Positive approach from campaigners is most effective.

Notes from workshop table 3: Successful Campaigning

Take Away Lessons
1. Be persistent. Accept that you are in in for the long haul.
2. Plan campaigns carefully. Make them easily understood and easy to support.
3. Support your activists and allies, including those in the council and media.

- Social networking (Facebook group) can be useful in mobilising support
- Accept that you are in for the long haul. Be persistent
- Use a Pledge or launch event as a focus for support. Swansea got all 5 parties at their launch of a Pledge
- Make use of e-petitions to spread word and support but take care in formulating them.
- Work hard to make it easy to support a campaign. Both in what the campaign is about, and the process of getting involved or supporting.
- Make use of sport cycling to boost supporting
- Support like-minded people in the council. Give encouragement and recognition
- Sow seeds. Create building blocks. Talk to many different people
- Build relationships with reporters
- Don't be elitist. Take care to not exclude those with less knowledge or experience. If you want a campaign to grow you need to find lots of ways to involve different people.
- Make space and time to nurture new campaigners and activists
- Be aware that the campaign is not the campaigners
- Find and support local champions
- Make intelligent use of the 'provisional wing' of campaigners i.e. Reclaim the Streets, Critical Mass. Working together can enable you to become the voice of reason on a topic. Or your role may be to make the 'unreasonable' demands to create space for officers, politicians or others.
- Spend time on finding good photographs, images and visualisations. The picture really is worth the thousand words. It's also much quicker at getting a message across.
- Make links with wider issues and use them to forge alliances
- Schools should be a priority area. Children want to cycle, parents are not so keen.
- Post card campaigns are quick and easy

Notes from workshop table 4: Building Alliances

Take Away Lessons
1. Working in alliances makes you more effective
2. Identify mutual benefits with potential allies: what's in it for me/you
3. Be polite, reasonable and respectful

Why do we need alliances?

- Extending influence. Make clear that the issues are wider than 'just cycling'
- Income generation or funding, esp health promotion
- Shared actions and workload and costs
- Bringing together expertise
- Involving future cyclists
- Seeing mutual benefits
- Learning from others
- Benefit of numbers

What might alliances be about?

- A shared Vision, for example through a Charter.
- Green spaces
- Climate action
- Sustainable transport
- Active Travel
- Healthy cities/towns
- Alliances are easier when responding to a threat rather than finding a programme for change

Who are our allies?

- Don't pre-judge. It's possible to find a common agenda with almost anyone
- Some allies may be politically aligned. Be aware
- Public Health (now within councils), and NHS – clinical and treatment
- Schools, Women's Institutes, youth clubs, sports clubs
- Workplace commuter clubs. Bicycle User Groups in businesses
- Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Partnerships, local democracy
- Disadvantaged groups – those discriminated against by current system through restricted mobility and access: children, young people, old people, disabled, social exclusion, poverty.
- Civic Trust and built environment
- Environmental organisations

How can we make our alliances work?

- Find a common agenda. Be clear on mutual benefits, “What's in it for you/me?”
- Work at different levels within partnerships
- Share the glory of successes
- You need to be an open organisation, seeking to work with others
- Join other organisations, alliances are not always formal
- Good communication between allies, Work through 'gatekeepers' who understand the alliance
- Be polite, reasonable and respectful. Don't be defensive or aggressive
- Have clear targets
- Sometimes the process is as important as the outcomes

Notes from workshop table 5: Developing Strategy

Take Away Lessons
1. You and your Council should have a vision and a concise strategy to get there. There must always be an Action Plan.
2. Strategies and policies should be working for consistent outcomes for cycling across transport, health, education and planning.
3. Political and officer determination to deliver is essential. Implementation is what matters.

Very Good

- Strategy should provide an overall vision
- Sign-off and formal adoption at senior officer and political level
- The Local Plan has a statutory basis, so important to get it right
- There should always be an Action Plan with: 1. Targets, 2. Timetable, 3. Funding, 4. Responsibilities
- Joined up working between Council departments: Transport, Leisure, Education, Planning. Each to include action commitments in their own plans, not just support general policies.
- Funding from Health. Not only an improved budget but ring-fenced for cycle positive outcomes
- Political will. When the difficult decisions come up (or are avoided) someone needs to give direction.

Good

- Strategy can be a framework for when funding becomes available, esp developer funding (S106)
- Strategies may be good but it's implementation that makes a difference. Concentrate on what is needed to deliver good outcomes.
- Stakeholder buy-in and commitment to a strategy helps credibility and delivery.

OK

- Where there is a mismatch between County and Urban strategies can be an opportunity
- Commitment to spend x% on cycling – the problem is how to make this happen each year.
- Council officers ignore strategies and policies. This is usually negative, but as strategies and policies are usually weak it can be positive where there is a creative officer with a wider picture.
- Strategy should be for all cyclists. Devon used 8 archetypes in their strategy.
- Smarter Choices as well as infrastructure
- Integrate with public transport
- Walking and cycling strategies combined can have more clout, but can also marginalise cycling.
- Focus on infrastructure to avoid distraction from health/education etc

Poor

- Strategy documents so large that no-one reads them
- Conflicts between different policies, for example transport and health, or education and planning
- Council officers should not write strategy documents which merely set out what they hope colleagues in other departments or other organisations might be persuaded to do.

Notes from workshop table 6: Building Political Will

Take Away Lessons
1. Always advocate for a vision that has political support, and that support for cycling will help deliver.
2. Use evidence based arguments that can be used to support political action (=funding)
3. Get to know and understand local political structures and the key players influencing them.

- Make the link between local MP and local politicians – networking
- Use evidence based arguments to overcome prejudice
- Stand as a local councillor. Support councillor who share your aims
- Find a balance between short-term actions verses long term planning
- Celebrate achievements, however small.
- Challenge the perception that 'there are no votes in cycling' and 'cyclists can't afford a car'
- Work for co-ordination of council departments linking strategies
- Don't get aligned with any political party. It's not about left or right wing politics, a compelling case can be made for cycling from the values of either.
- Persuade politicians to ride bikes (but make it a positive experience)
- Understand local political structures and attitudes and who controls transport policies
- Use smaller groups to focus on individual issues
- Look for connections with other policy issues – health etc
- Work to overcome the 'lines of least resistance'
- Need to be prepared to risk unpopularity sometimes. There must be a vision of a better outcome in the future.
- 'Political will' should usually mean 'spending money'
- Take advantage of the things like The Times campaign which can provide 'air cover' for political action.
- Work at making luke-warm political will hotter
- Invite councillors and officer to meetings and events. Show them you've got them in mind.
- Work on a pincer movement to link up National and Local campaigning.
- The All-Party Parliamentary Cycling Group is becoming influential.
- Make use of positive PR – 'get seen by your constituents'. Bikes bring media profile.
- Use the economic case: reduce congestion; promote leisure and tourism; health benefits
- Stakeholder engagement helps with bids for funding. Use this influence.
- Give politicians something they can sell to electorate. Advocate for shared interests.
- Detail is important in knowing how funding is to be spent. You will know more than politicians, who may have been given different information by officers, but your information must be clear and trusted.
- Target cabinet members and portfolio members. Don't forget other councillors and those on Scrutiny committees.
- Local Enterprise Partnerships may offer some opportunities for interaction but access is harder than for councils. Make sure you know what they're up to.
- Overall need to play your part in galvanising central government. Be involved in national campaigns and get access to locally based players such as MP's and NGOs
- Personal contact is important. Make use of surgeries, forums, and local area meetings.