

Cycling UK Oxfordshire Annual General Meeting 2018

Reports (Draft)

Chairman's report – Steve Swanton

At last year's AGM, I described 2016/17 as a year of transition for the Oxfordshire Member Group. We had developed our strategy, adopted at the AGM, completed our rebranding to Cycling UK Oxfordshire, rolled out our new website and launched into social media. We reflected on a highly successful Vote Bike campaign, running a number of successful rides and events, the continuing success of the Wallingford Informal Group, and the continuation of the Witney group. The one downside was the fizzling out of riding activity under the umbrella of Cycling UK Bicester following an unfortunate split of the group.

The challenge for this year was to build on the foundations laid in 2016/17 and, in particular, to build participation in and recognition of the role of Cycling UK Oxfordshire. It has been something of a make-or-break year.

In line with one of our key objectives of "Helping our members to organise and participate in rides and events with a county-wide appeal", the approach we adopted was to build on the success of our Annual Century Ride by putting on a series of longer group rides. This filled a clear gap in the offerings of other member groups in the county. Promoted as Couch to 200 miles, the series consisted of five rides of increasing distance over a 4-month period culminating in a repeat running of the 200 mile, 24-hour Oxfordshire Boundary Ride in July.

While this series of rides was a success and highly enjoyable in its own right (as I will outline below), it has not met its wider objectives. Buy-in was patchy and as a result the rides were not widely publicised and attendance was not as high as we had hoped. This has brought into sharper relief the limitations on what we can now do as a separate group to add benefit to cycling in Oxfordshire. Cycling activity has developed significantly since CTC's reorganisation of its District Association/Member group structure around 2010. The active member groups, Oxford City, Wantage and Oxfordshire Midweek (which were all formerly sections of the Oxfordshire DA), have all grown considerably and are thriving and many new groups have started outside of CTC (such as Abingdon Freewheeling, in which we played a part). The Oxfordshire Cycling Network coordinated by Robin Tucker now provides a county-wide umbrella for campaigning activity. All of our current committee are active in one or more of these other groups.

So the question has arisen as to whether there is a continuing need for a strategic, Oxfordshire-wide group? And so this is the focus of discussion at this AGM, with a closure motion being tabled. I will come back to this after reviewing our year.

The Couch to 200 mile series

The series started with the Nifty Fifty (50-mile) Ride from Witney on 25 March, the first day of summertime. A deliberately hilly route, which took us north through the Oxfordshire Cotswolds to Wyatts Farm café for lunch, was enjoyed in early spring sunshine. Due to the long winter and resulting lack of cycling beforehand, I found this the toughest ride of the whole series. Nine riders from four different Oxfordshire groups rode all or some of the route.

Robin led the 75-miler from Grove into the Chilterns on 29 April, which took us as far as Henley and attracted 10 riders. It was a cold day and lunch was taken in the Barn, Turville Heath which seemed just as cold as the surrounding beechwoods! A welcome stop in Wallingford did help us to warm up on the way home.

My favourite ride of the year and even of the decade was the Annual Century Ride on 20 May (the 9th since these rides started in 2010). The conditions were absolutely perfect, glorious sunshine and abundant spring colours along a beautiful and varied route. We started from Eynsham, traversing the Cotswolds and heading deep into Warwickshire, riding below Edgehill and on to the excellent Touchdown Café at Wellesbourne airfield for lunch. The return brought us back into the Cotswolds through the Evenlode gap with an impromptu refreshment stop at the village stores in Kingham, which we reached with just a few minutes to spare. A lovely group of 11 (from 4 groups) completed all or some of the ride, with 2 completing their maiden centuries.

Robin led the 125-mile Follow the Thames ride, starting from Wallingford on 16 June, which attracted 9 riders. This was the flattest and quickest of the series, ridden at a faster pace than our usual century rides. As the name suggests, we worked our way up the Thames through Abingdon, Oxford, Lechlade and the Cotswold Water Park to Thameshead. There we ventured off-road and then on foot to the site of the dry spring that marks the furthest source of the river. We found our scheduled tea stop at Kemble station closed, but after a quick sprint we reached the Cotswold Gateway café just in time for cakes and cold drinks. The Fox and Hounds at Uffington provided a very welcome stop for dinner at the 100-mile mark and we were back in Wallingford just before 10 pm. A hard but great day's riding.

The Oxfordshire Boundary Ride over the weekend of 7/8 July was an epic, with seven riders up for the challenge (the same as in 2013) on one of the hottest weekends of a hot summer. Starting from Grove at 3:30pm to give us extra slack to reach our essential dinner stop at Hook Norton, it soon became clear that we were not going to be able to achieve the target time of 24 hours in the heat and we only just made it to the Pear Tree before the kitchen closed. The route essentially followed the old Oxfordshire Cycleway route around the county boundary, with a number of diversions to extend the distance to 200 miles. The night sections through North Oxfordshire were as enjoyably quiet as before and it was a great feeling riding into Cherwell Valley Services with 100-miles under our belts at 3:45am. Setting off again was hard and there was a distinct nip in the air as dawn approached, but it wasn't long before the day warmed up. Our four refreshment stops on the second ton were much needed as tiredness, fatigue and the heat took their toll and it was with a great sense of triumph coupled with relief that we all made it back to Grove after 26¼ hours. Well done to everyone.

Overall, I would consider the series a success, although numbers were lower than we might have hoped for. There were 46 rides from a total of 23 individual riders, 3 of us completing the whole series, and a further 3 completing 3 events. Unfortunately, the spread of riders was more limited than on previous years with the majority (14) being Wantage based; 3 were from Midweek, 2 from Wallingford, 2 from Witney, 1 from Oxford City and 1 from outside the regular groups. The group sizes were ideal from a leading and logistics point of view and it was a most satisfying series to have put on and been part of.

Off-road rides

Robin Tucker has continued to co-ordinate our programme of off-road rides, which this year have been Wantage based and run under the banner Easy on a Sunday morning. Starting in April with a Back-on-your-Mountain Bike Ride, which attracted 10 riders, these were designed as easier, novice-orientated off-road rides. They usually climbed to the Ridgeway

to enjoy some of the great tracks and views across the Downs. The rides have been more successful than in previous years attracting 19 riders in total, many of whom were indeed new to off-road riding, with an average of 7 per outing. However, it is perhaps not surprising to note that riders were drawn exclusively from the Wantage group.

Informal groups

The **CTC Wallingford** informal group has continued to offer a regular programme of at least 2 rides per month, an easy and a moderate half-day rides on the 1st and 3rd Sunday afternoons respectively, with the occasional impromptu midweek ride. No beginners' rides, which had proved very popular in previous years, were staged this year and this has resulted in an overall drop in participation and new riders. In terms of core riders, the level of activity has remained much the same. We thank Peter Wood and Patrick Hardiman for coordinating the group.

A small group of riders has continued to go out each Sunday throughout the year from **CTC Witney** and recently they have also been having the occasional midweek ride. We thank Kevin Arnold for acting as coordinator for the group.

The **Cycling UK Bicester** Informal Group has been in limbo, activity having ceased during 2017. This followed the breakaway of key figures to form a separate club in November 2016 and the subsequent lack of availability of other key members (due to personal circumstances) to maintain riding activity. We have recently approached members within the Bicester area to assess the level of interest in re-starting the group but have received minimal response. As a result, the group will be formally closed at this AGM.

Supporting other cycling-related activities

One of our objectives is to support other cycling groups and initiatives where these are local, non-commercial and non-competitive, where we have the resources to do so. We have considered a number of applications for funding and have agreed to fund the production of new cycle maps for Witney. The committee is currently considering donating a more substantial sum to support the Windrush Bike Project as it moves into new, larger premises in Witney.

The future for Cycling UK Oxfordshire

Following discussion at a recent Oxfordshire committee meeting, it became clear that there was a consensus view within the committee that the Oxfordshire member group is no longer providing sufficient benefit to justify the time and effort required for the additional administration of running a Full Member Group. As noted above, all our committee are active in other groups.

As will be evident from the reports above, the success (or otherwise) of Cycling UK Oxfordshire events has been largely dependent on Wantage both in terms of publicising the events through their website and weekly newsletter and through participation. This has been the case for a number of years but has become more acute this year with difficulties in maintaining the new Oxfordshire website, irregular county-wide emailings and lack of active support from other groups. One result is that the recognition of Cycling UK Oxfordshire as a separate organising body has been significantly eroded. It is a position that is no longer sustainable. The rides and events we have organised this year could have been organised from within Wantage, without the need for additional administration.

So the question arises, should the group continue and if so in what form and with what objectives? It is my view that a new approach is needed, if the group is to continue.

There are downsides to the proposed closure of the group. The committee provides a good means of networking between the Oxfordshire groups and broadens our perspective of cycling activities across the county as a whole. A feature of the old DA was that it furthered an outward looking mindset and co-operation between groups, rather than everyone just doing their own thing. It has to be said that levels of co-operation have dropped significantly since the reorganisation despite our best efforts and are likely to be even more difficult to foster in future.

A county-wide group is better placed than locally-based member groups for both creating and supporting smaller groups, and supporting local non-commercial and non-competitive cycling initiatives. It can be viewed as less partisan. We currently oversee informal member groups in Wallingford and Witney, and these will need to find a new home within other member groups or become stand-alone if the group is closed.

Personal Note

After 3 years as secretary and 6 years as chairman, it is time for me to stand down as an officer of the club. In the last few years, with the continuing demands of my job and increasing family commitments, I have not been able to fulfil the role of chairman in the way that I would have wished. I also think it is time for new energy and a fresh approach if the group is to continue to provide meaningful benefit to cycling and cyclists in Oxfordshire. I am willing to continue actively to support the group, as a committee member if the meeting so decides.

At a personal level I have gained immensely from my involvement with Oxfordshire over a period of nearly 25 years. Many of my most memorable moments, not to mention achievements in cycling have been associated with Oxfordshire events. And I have made many friends across the Oxfordshire groups. So I will be very sad to see it close.

Thank yous

Finally, I must express my thanks to all those who have helped with the running of Cycling UK Oxfordshire and its informal groups over the last year. It has been a pleasure for me to act as Chairman and I thank the committee for their friendship and support.

Secretary's report – Robin Tucker

I have been a bit impacted by having a full-time job for much of the year, but now I am returned to freelancing, things are starting to improve a little. Most of my work as Secretary this year has been keeping the regular business moving. Organising the Committee meetings, this AGM and dealing with correspondence. Most correspondence in the last year seems to be promoting charity cycling events – often in a good cause, but we decided that you probably see enough of these from other places and we should stick to promoting our own events.

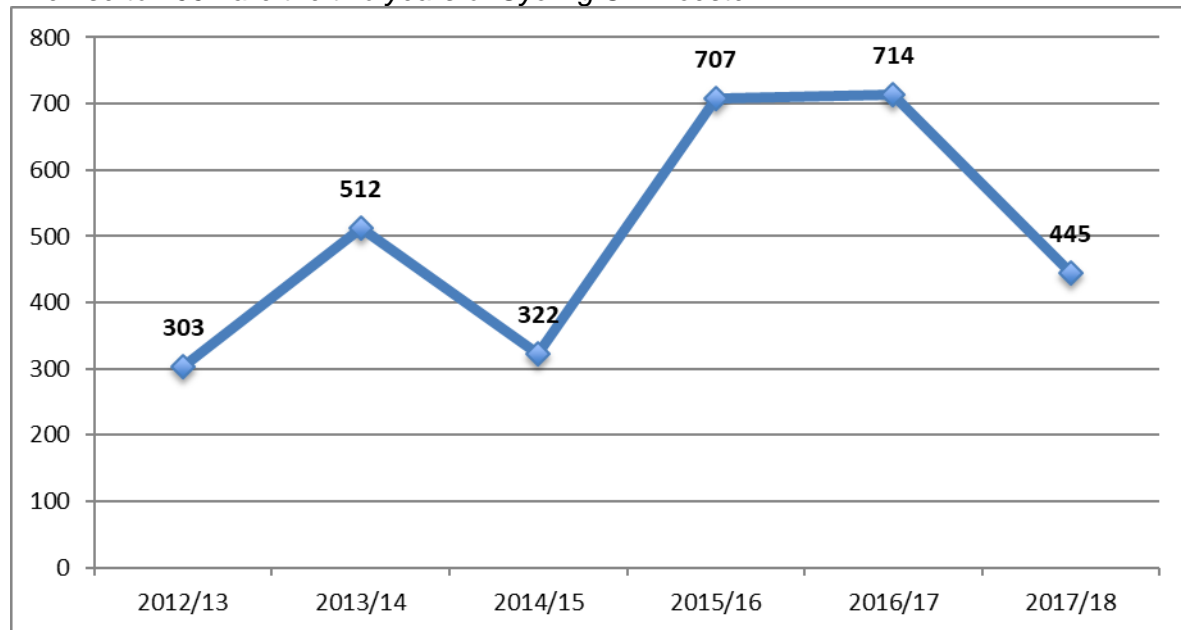
Among the correspondence, there are some people looking for signposting to a local cycling group or specific expertise, for example with inclusive cycling. These I am happy to give time to, but it really is only a few per year.

On the riding side, I have seen the benefit of switching the off-road rides to a more clearly gentler and Wantage-focused basis. And I've enjoyed all of the Couch-to-200 series. And I continue my involvement in campaigning, working with James and others as the Oxfordshire Cycling Network.

After two very successful years, our ridership fell sharply this year, almost entirely because of the loss of the CyclingUK Bicester rides. CTC Wallingford is down a bit, CTC Witney up a bit, and we benefitted from the Couch-to-200 series and more off-road riders.

Riders on CyclingUK Oxfordshire rides

The rise to 700+ are the two years of Cycling UK Bicester.



Overall, it has been a year where I have started to notice the effort put in a bit more, and the rewards a bit less. A lot of the riding and campaigning could continue with less administration, and so I am interested in having a very open discussion about the future of the Group today.

Treasurer's report – Peter Hallowell

The accounts for CTC Oxfordshire have been sent to the auditor and will, I expect, have been audited before this meeting.

Our income this year has been the grant from CTC National Office, a small amount of interest and £40 from the sale of some old unwanted items that had been stored in John Bridgman's loft for many years..

There has been the usual routine expenditure associated with running the group, namely, website and 2017 AGM expenses. During the year we paid for some spare lights for emergency use by Wallingford. As usual the cost of this year's AGM will appear in next year's accounts.

This expenditure and the reduced grant from CTCNO has resulted, after allowing for depreciation, in the small deficit shown in the accounts. The money has been used exclusively, and the committee think effectively, for the promotion of cycling in Oxfordshire. Your committee is always interested to hear and will welcome your ideas for the use of our funds in future years.

Accounts of CyclingUK Oxfordshire

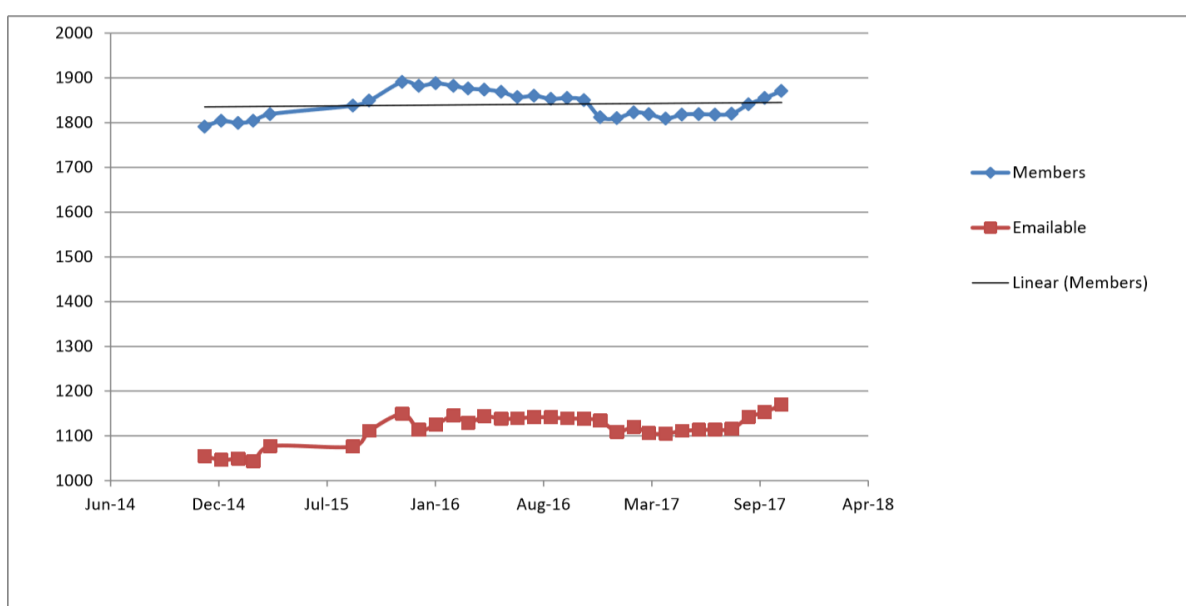
Period 1/10/2017 to 30/9/2018

	2016/17	2017/18
Income		
NO Grant	£200.00	£200.00
Sale		£50.00
Interest	£10.77	£17.41
	<u>£210.77</u>	<u>£267.41</u>
Expenditure		
Web site	£84.00	£73.99
Stationery		£37.49
Sale (Petrol)		£10.00
Wallingford Lights		£12.00
Wallingford Leaflets	£63.99	£0.00
AGM	£40.00	£75.90
Picnic	£137.77	£0.00
Ride Leader Meeting	£35.00	£0.00
Dr.Bike (Wallingford)	£100.00	£0.00
	<u>£460.76</u>	<u>£209.38</u>
Surplus	<u><u>-£249.99</u></u>	<u><u>£58.03</u></u>
Assets:		
CTC Oxfordshire:		
Cash	£55.00	-£68.39
Current Account	£38.52	£88.52
Deposit Account	£3,788.82	£3,920.24
Outstanding Liabilities		
None		
Total	<u><u>£3,882.34</u></u>	<u><u>£3,940.37</u></u>
Fixed Assets	£145.65	£51.65
Stock	£195.35	£195.35
Total	<u><u>£341.00</u></u>	<u><u>£247.00</u></u>
Grand Total	<u><u>£4,223.34</u></u>	<u><u>£4,187.37</u></u>

Registrar's report – Andy Ellis

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force in May 2018.

Unfortunately, Cycling UK Head Office had no plans in place 12 months ago to deal with the data they hold and distributed so Head Office stopped sending out monthly membership data in November 2017. No system has yet been put in place by Head Office to enable Cycling UK Oxfordshire to obtain membership details. The only membership data released (last week) is a list of members in our area who have voting rights – for use at the 2018 AGM. That list has a total of 1929 “Members” but includes many organisations... the number with voting rights is 1835. From the latest data provided, I am unable to establish how many members we currently have to compare to previous years. At the 2017 AGM we had 1855 members and in the November 2017 list we had 1871. My best guess is that our membership has not significantly changed.



So, to the future position:

Cycling UK will NOT be providing a membership list to Groups from now on but will provide Web tools to send out welcome letters to new members and to email / mail members. This new tool set is still under development and is likely to go into beta testing with a small number of Groups within the coming weeks.

Given that Cycling UK Oxfordshire has very few rides and very few riders on those few events, along with the absence of Membership data there is no need for a Registration (Membership) Officer going forwards. I have had a suggestion from Head Office that a Communications Officer might be a more useful role, the responsibilities for which would be using the new tool set to send out information to the membership. There is no Role Profile available for a Communications Officer role.

I recommend that the role of Registration Officer is no longer needed for Cycling UK Oxfordshire Member Group

Welfare Officer's report – Paul Thompson

No welfare issues have been reported in the year.

Campaigning report – James Dawton

As always, this is as much a report about what others have done, not just myself. The Highway Authority (County Council) continue to be better than historically has been the case, but not well enough to achieve their aspirations in the Local Transport Plan (LTP4).

Regular meetings with the roadworks (maintenance) department 3-4 times a year.

Prioritising risk to cycles during road inspections has often been verbally stated in meetings, but doesn't (yet) appear in print in policies. A revised policy will soon appear, what is said remains unknown, as the County's insurers inspected the County's procedures, and said everything should be prioritised on risk. Whether that works in our favour as we are at more at risk, or whether we lose out by getting lost in the noise remains to be seen.

The County Council want to digitise the cycle track/lane network on their mapping system. The idea is that when works are planned, the cycle infrastructure/facilities will already be there as a layer on the mapping system, hopefully making it easier to plan in improvements.

The County will want to contact cycle groups at some point to check what facilities are actually out there on the ground around the county.

County/City deal on maintenance. The County Council now has a deal with the City Council, and pays the City Council to maintain roads with in the City.

Maintenance funding brought forward. The County has borrowed money against future budgets to bring forward maintenance schemes. It is also being raised against the predicted increase in council tax revenues from future developments. This hopefully saves money in the long run, as bringing a scheme forward means the road will be less delapidated when they repair it.

Walthamstow Mini Holland visit. Cyclox arranged a visit to Walthamstow "Mini Holland" scheme (DfT/London Mayor funded). Works ranged from expensive new hybrid cycle lanes* (at the loss of a bus lane) to cheap and cheerful rat run stoppers (variously cycle parking, benches, bollards and planters blocking rat runs). All inspirational, but it cost £30-40m to (not completely) do the borough.

(*Hybrid cycle lane, a cycle lane separated from the main traffic lane by a low kerb, and separated from the pedestrian footway by a low kerb also – see the Slade for an example)

Access to Headington continues, as last year, lots of details detract from the effectiveness of the scheme in favour of motor traffic, complaints falling on unsympathetic ears.

2018 budget underspend suggestions. The County asked Cyclox for suggestions of where to spend their budget under spend on highway maintenance. They were given a 15 page document which they said was extremely useful. How many get on the final works programs remains to be seen though I have seen 2 items on the list done already.

Westgate area signage. Graham Smith wrote an On Yer Bike article for the Oxford Mail about the lack of signage making people think it was illegal to cycle in St Ebbe's and Bonn Square (cycling here is allowed 24/7). As there was going to be a lot of tidying up around Westgate, I wrote a report for the County Council on the confusing/contradictory/unclear signage around Westgate/St Ebbe's/Bonn Square/Queen St/Market St/Cornmarket St. This is now with the City Council lines and signs man who is going through it with his "red pen", and will get back to us when he has some proposals.

Botley Rd corridor study. This has had a redraft and (I think) now has hybrid cycle lanes, which will give cycles priority across all the side turning, unlike the exist cycle tracks.

Woodstock Rd Now the ROQ (ex Radcliffe Infirmary site) is complete, the stretch of Woodstock Road outside had been improved. Other work further up Woodstock Rd became bare maintenance as the budget shrunk.

OCC “Riverside Routes” Iffley to Folly Bridge and north has been completed. The planned bridge over the Thames is still being designed. The track south of Iffley lock will be 3m surfaced all the way to the Kennington flood plain where it joins the (somewhat) older surface installed by Sustrans some years ago. Upswept gravel from the surface dressing (“loose chippings”) generated some complaints from cyclists – this sort of surface shouldn’t be used on cycle tracks according to the draft new County Maintenance Document.

Hythe Bridge Street junction (the “teardrop junction”). A proposed redesign is being developed (rather similar to what was there before with a slither of pavement diagonally across the junction). There are planned cycle waiting areas (for those needing to cross the road) which Cyclox/CUK objected to, as they were too small (with traffic passing both sides). Some waiting areas were too short to accommodate a cargo bike, or solo bike with child tag-along. They are still looking at how to finalise the design.

A 40 (Eynsham – Duke’s Cut (canal)) plans were revised after the first consultation, the (quite long) cycle/pedestrian bridges have been widened to an acceptable 3m wide.

Park End St narrowing. A complaint (made to a County councillor) about the sudden narrowing of Park End St at the Frideswide Square junction was made. I proposed a (cheap) way to avoid this, no reply yet though they were to have looked at the idea some weeks back.

Swan School (Marston) planning application. This was approved on appeal, having been refused on transport grounds. Ways now need to be found to minimise the effects of Swan School motor traffic entering/leaving crossing the Marston Ferry Road cycle track – which sees large number of Cherwell School pupils using this cycle track. Ironically, the Swan School and Cherwell School are part of the same Academy Trust.

Northern Gateway/Oxford North development. Reasonable cycle facilities within the development, but the usual weak points of poor links to adjoining areas (including between residences and schools).

Other Housing Developments in the county. This pattern repeats across the county and was highlighted in the ‘Transport for New Homes’ reports released recently and reported by the BBC.

Motion to the County Council. County Cycling Champion, Councillor Suzanne Bartington is taking a Motion to the Council to support cycling and active travel on 6th November. This is one that we have worked with her on for several months and should give broader support for Officers in the Council. Cyclists and other will gather outside County Hall to support them from 9:30am on the day.