

Greetings! I'm Dave Butler, one of the two Davids who represent North West CTC members on the national council. It's a year since I was elected, and I am only now starting to feel that I am getting to grips with the breadth of CTC's activities. It's a fascinating time to be involved; my overriding impression is of an organisation transforming itself in order to play a leading role in some of the most important issues of the day - climate change, health, sustainable transport, equality - but at the same time intent on preserving its proud heritage.

Council Meetings

There have been 5 council meetings since I was elected - 3 in London, one in Derby, and the last in Manchester, in the splendid surroundings of the Mechanics' Institute.



The previous regional newsletter, produced by the other David - David Robinson (who was re-elected as Chair of the Council at the January meeting) - covered the first two council meetings in 2008, so I will try and give you an

impression of some of the things that were discussed in the other three.

These have included:

- health-related initiatives and programmes aimed at reaching out to new groups of potential cyclists. These include the work of the Cycle Champions (funded through the Big Lottery), and most recently, Bike Club. As you will have seen from the recent edition of Cycle, CTC has secured £2.5 million to provide opportunities outside the main school day for children to cycle. The scheme will include after school cycling clubs, with strong family involvement, and will be provided in partnership with ContinYou and UK Youth.
- new activities which will increase the range of services for members, and in the process hopefully increase membership of the CTC. These included the acquisition of OTC (Off Road Training Consultancy), which provides the base for expanding CTC involvement in mountain biking. CTC's off-road team have taken the lead in the design and implementation of an off road trail in London as part of the "Olympic Legacy" programme, and are also developing partnerships with the Forestry Commission to maximise the potential of their trails. Along with commuting, this is a big



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*Dave Butler
David Robinson*

potential growth area for membership.

- membership trends. The number of members has been growing steadily over the last few years, and is almost back to its previous peak (of 60,000, in 1898). However this growth has flattened off in recent months, indicative perhaps of the current economic climate, and the ambitious target of 70,000 by the end of the year is starting to look less likely. A concerted membership drive will get underway this spring and summer with the intention of getting growth back on track.
- related to this, there was a lively debate about club subscriptions for 2009/10, which concluded with a decision (after a vote) to recommend to the AGM in April that there should be no increase in the fees, in recognition of the likely impact of the current financial situation on members' disposable incomes.
- the longer term governance and organisation of the CTC. A motion will be put to this April's AGM mandating the council to evaluate possible changes to the CTC's organisational structure – and particularly to look carefully at the possible advantages of becoming an incorporated charity. This is an area in which I have been quite heavily involved, as a member of

small sub-group of councillors carrying out this work. The current hybrid club/charity structure of the CTC is confusing, and the club is potentially missing out on benefits and funding opportunities. But it's complicated stuff, and the options need to be thoroughly investigated before putting up final recommendations to the 2010 AGM. There's an article ("Making Members Matter") in the April-May edition of Cycle which is aimed at getting feedback from members on this issue. If you have any comments, please get in touch either directly with myself or David Robinson, or email members.matter@ctc.org.uk.

- campaigning. You will have seen the CTC's "New Vision for Cycling" in the last edition of Cycle. This provides an overview of the current main campaign aims. Foremost amongst these is road safety, in anticipation of the Government's launch of a new Road Safety Strategy later in the year. One of the key messages is that cycling gets safer the more cyclists there are - so the focus of any strategy should be to tackle the sources of danger and fear that deter people from cycling. An important part of the campaign will be to tackle bad driving, making it easier for cyclists to report instances and giving advice about how to make sure the legal system is aware of them, and

that it acts appropriately. Keep an eye on Cycle for more details as the campaign gets under way.

- not long ago the Council approved a revision to the Equality and Diversity (Equal Opportunities) policy to reflect changes in legislation. In October, Barry Jordan (our Equalities champion) reported that the CTC had now achieved Equality in Sport foundation level, the recognised accreditation mark for sporting and participation organisations, reflecting the considerable amount of work that has been put into this in recent months.
- there was a knock-about debate in July on the merits of the Winged wheel logo as opposed to the “wobbly bike”. This still manages to generate passionate views; though it’s not high on my list of concerns, it was interesting to get some historical background – the wobbly bike was introduced in 1997 for marketing purposes (basically because few people outside the CTC knew what the winged wheel stood for, and at least the wobbly bike is fairly obviously something to do with cycling....), whereas the winged wheel “remains the CTC’s historic and unchangeable heritage mark”.

AGMs

Autumn brought the annual AGMs. David Robinson and myself managed to get to almost all of these in the region. This provided a good insight into the great variety of member groups across the area, and into the issues that active members were most concerned about. Despite plenty of misgivings about, and some hostility to, the new member group structure, in practise it seems to have achieved its aims. Several new groups have formed under the new arrangements, and others have taken the opportunity to rationalise their structures.

Cycle Champions

The three Cycle Champions in our region – Karen Carter in Rochdale, Mark Gumbs in Manchester and Juliet Jardine in Sefton – are providing a real boost to the CTC’s profile in the area, and are all having great success in helping to bring the joy of cycling to the uninitiated. (see www.ctc.org.uk/cyclechampions). On Valentines Day I attended an open day at the new cycling centre based at Hollingworth Lake Water Activity Centre in Rochdale, run by the CTC in partnership with [Link 4 Life](#) (the local Leisure Trust) and led by Karen. Though it was a bleak day on the edge of the Pennines, it was a very successful event, attracting over 200 people.



David Robinson gave an opening address, and was presented with the Foundation in Sport certificate by Peter King, Chief Executive of British Cycling. The photo below shows the two, along side Barry Jordan.



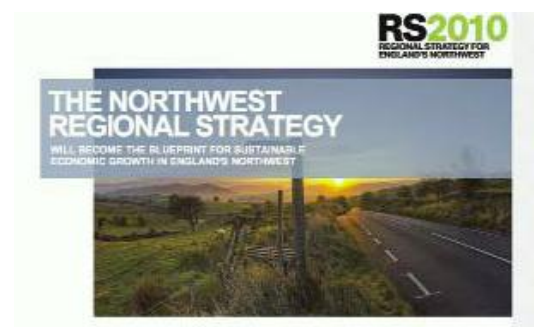
Cycling policy in the region

Apart from Council business, I put together a response on the Greater Manchester TIF (Transport Innovation Fund) proposals. The central plank of this was a congestion charge - which was the main reason it was sunk in the referendum. Despite the cycling proposals appearing to be very much an afterthought, on balance I believe it would have brought benefits to cyclists in the area, mainly through reduced car

use. Now the transport authority will have to think again, and with considerably less resources available, I will be arguing that cycling provides one very cost effective method of reducing congestion.

I am keen to increase the CTC's capacity to influence the regional agenda. Along with the regional right-to-ride representative, I have responded to the consultation process on the partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) about parking (including cycle parking) standards.

The RSS is soon to be replaced by the Single Regional Strategy (DO try to keep up!!), and I am involved in the early stages which considering the "Issues and Principles" of the plan. Issues like climate change, sustainable transport, and health are central to this, and as a consequence improving conditions for cyclists needs to be high up the list of priorities.



These kind of documents don't exactly provide light bed-time reading, but they set the context for a lot of the local battles that we have to fight. I have become a core member of the NW Transport Activists Roundtable to help

inject a cyclist perspective into these agendas, and have written a "Perspectives" article for their website www.nwtar.org.uk , appealing for help from anyone else who isn't bored stiff by such things!

LEJOG (or in my case, JOGLE)

Much more enjoyably, in June I completed a John O'Groats to Lands End ride with my daughter. Mixed weather, but a great experience. We covered 1200 miles in 18 days - we went the pretty way!



AGM Chester.

The AGM is being hosted by Chester and North Wales CTC, who are celebrating their 70th anniversary. I hope to see many of you there.