

Cycling Ticks all the Boxes

Government at all levels recognise the need to tackle climate change, traffic congestion, air pollution, public health and obesity. What is the magic bullet to solve all these problems? Cycling ticks all the boxes! So government is ready to make available to Oxfordshire £300 million (yes, that's 3 with eight noughts) over 10 years. It has the not-so-catchy title of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan or LCWIPS for short. The catch? Oxfordshire have to demonstrate that they can increase cycling by around 33% over the same period. No easy task. And the County have concluded that it can only be achieved with the major increase taking place in Oxford City where, at present, some 25% of journeys are undertaken by bike, 25% as pedestrians, 25% by bus and 25% by car.

Does this leave Woodstock out in the cold? Well, not quite because OCC accept that many journeys in the city start out in the environs, particularly from Wheatley, Abingdon, Eynsham and, yes, Woodstock. But what is missing and what us country bumpkins from Woodstock have to persuade the slick politicians in County Hall to recognise is that the Bladon, Hanborough, Witney corridor is important too, especially with Hanborough Station shortly to rival Euston as a rail hub.

So how is this £300 million going to be spent. Actually it's considerably more than £300 million because on top of this large cheque there is further money for a raft of proposals called "Connecting Oxfordshire" that will pave the way to ensure that cycling in the city is more attractive. Connecting Oxfordshire will actively discourage vehicles from passing through the city centre with restrictions on all but essential traffic. The proposals will include a "workplace parking levy" on city businesses that have staff car parks and measures will be provided to cut off rat runs on other non-principal roads (like Walton Street or Margaret Road, Headington Quarry). With less traffic, bus lanes won't be needed and good, wide and safe cycle lanes can be provided. These high quality fast commuter routes on all the main routes in the city centre will be called "Quickways". Alongside the Quickways will be "Quietways" which will be routed along mostly traffic free routes although often they may not be so direct (average 20% to 30% longer). They will appeal to the less confident cyclists.

So where does this leave Woodstock? It means we have to continue to press OCC to recognise the importance of the Woodstock, Bladon, Hanborough railway station missing cycle link. Blenheim recognise this is a vital link for their Green tourism agenda and we know that with more houses in Woodstock and at Eynsham Garden Village and at Hanborough the significance of Hanborough Station will grow considerably. It means that there is a good chance of improvements to the sometimes poorly maintained cycle tracks alongside the A44, and we may even be able to persuade the Authorities to continue some segregated cycle provision north of the town as far as Judds Garage (B4437 junc.) Woodstock Safe Routes will continue the campaign when and where we can.

Colin Carritt – January 2020