



**YORK  
CYCLE  
CAMPAIGN**

**2019 Annual Report**

# Chair's Report

It's been two years since I was elected as the first chair of the revived York Cycle Campaign. Since then, we have restored a once moribund entity into a fully functional activist-led campaigning organisation, complete with a strong committee, new constitution, a healthy budget and a growing membership that regularly engages on a whole host of issues that directly affect all of York's cyclists. You can read about all the wide range of actions, activities and campaigns that we have been working on in the report that follows. We have a long, long way to go, but we are hugely ambitious for the future of cycling in York and are immensely proud of what we have achieved so far.

## **Our Campaign – A clear strategy defined**

During the foundation meetings of the new campaign, it was clear that we had a very diverse group of people brimming with new ideas as to what our new group should aspire to. Such are exciting times - participating in the creation of a new movement and the challenge is always to give structure to the initial excitement, energy and creativity in such a way as to turn it into a sustainable force that will allow it to realise its goals over the years of struggle to come. To this end, I felt very strongly that we had to be very clear about establishing a clear strategy for our movement - what was our objective and what was our strategy for achieving this to the exclusion of everything else.\* To this end, we created the Strategy Group which met and brainstormed over a number of months, concluding that we were primarily a political lobbying organisation and that to achieve our objective we should follow a twin track of winning the policy debate and winning the public debate in favour of cycling in York.

One casualty of this process was the idea, enthusiastically pushed in some quarters, that we should be involved in broadening participation in cycling. After due consideration it was concluded that York was unusually well served in this respect. Whether it was with competitive cycle clubs such as VC York or Clifton CC; through the more steady-as-she-goes Wednesday Wheelers, Breeze rides and York Rouleurs; to the gently convivial jaunts of Bike Belles, there is clearly no shortage of groups to go ride with. And whilst the campaign is not averse to organising rides as part of a particular campaign or promoting group cohesion, we don't see riding as an end in itself. Similarly, on a more programmatic level there is the useful council-run information service Itravel; the worthy cycling advocacy of Bike Belles and, more commercially, the broad range of activities undertaken by Get Cycling. All of these help to provide a gateway to cycling for many under-represented, disadvantaged or underconfident groups. But if any of the above activities were game changers in terms of converting York to cycling, we'd be living in Copenhagen by now and YCC wouldn't need to exist.

Our view, arrived at over much discussion, is that fundamentally this is a political problem - in that for years successive decision makers have lacked the imagination, political will and perhaps the expertise, to pursue an ambitious pro-cycling strategy as a central element in addressing York's dire transport situation and indeed many other problems. There's also perhaps a cultural problem – but only insofar as there is a perception by those in power, that the vast majority of York's citizens are irredeemably wedded to their cars and unwilling to consider the alternatives.

We feel that such assumptions reflect the immediate milieu in which politicians and policy makers operate and take scant notice of a fast-evolving public view on this matter - especially amongst the younger generation, as environmental concerns have moved to the top of the political agenda. Polling by the sustainable transport charity Sustrans consistently shows a large majority of the public would support radical measures to boost walking or cycling, even if it was to result in personal inconvenience to themselves.

## **How do we organise? From strategy to structuring our group**

Such then is the background to our approach, but how do we organise? First, to use everything in our power to influence the local political process – from wider matters of council planning and transport policy right down to the granular details of specific bits of cycle infrastructure. This work is largely undertaken by members of the Better Infrastructure Group (BIG), and as you can see from below, we have been very successful so far at getting a hearing at many levels with some very positive results, but also with some less than encouraging outcomes against what we see as sustained institutional

resistance within the council. What is for sure is that we've only just got going and in the spring the campaign will launch its report "Getting York Moving". Authored by BIG – it's a document aimed at policymakers, outlining the problems York faces for the lack of an effective cycling strategy and our proposals on the way forward. This substantial, 16-page, full colour report will be a culmination of our first two years of work and will represent an important intervention in the policy making process by the campaign. The BIG group represents a real success in terms of our internal organisation, bringing together a collection of technical and policy experts from within the membership, from diverse but relevant fields, including engineering, architecture, transport planning, economics and policy analysis. This 'brain trust' is an important resource at the heart of this movement, one that will be vital to our long-term success in achieving our goals.

Second, we seek to influence the public attitude towards cycling in York - both to educate and to highlight and stimulate what we believe to be the majority public view in favour of more and better cycling infrastructure. These two strategies go hand in hand. Naturally enough we must seek to influence the political decision makers directly, but it's also important to recognise that ultimately politicians will only respond to their own perceptions of public and voter pressure, so it's vital that we work to build a groundswell of public support for our demands. One of the best ways that we can amplify this directly, is by building a much larger and more effective organisation.

We'll admit that hitherto we've made limited progress on this public front through our chosen vehicle the Engagement Group. Part of this is due to a lack of resources: with insufficient personnel, as well as conflicting campaign pressures on existing participant's time; but also perhaps due to an all-too-wide, but insufficiently defined remit. It will be a priority in the next year to review and restructure the public facing side of the campaign, recruit new members and undertake a more ambitious programme of public engagement.

### **Getting the Job Done - from structures to action**

In two years we've laid the groundwork of a successful organisation and got stuck into the cut and thrust of the issues that affect us. Much of the work of the more active members, is reactive and focussed on matters that affect York cyclists in the short and medium term – such as responding to the constant stream of planning applications addressing everything from the size of cycle lanes on a particular stretch of highway, to the almost complete lack of cycling infrastructure in a given housing development. We have found from experience that the bar is set pretty low here in York on most schemes, so this keeps us all fairly busy. Indeed, it's hard to over-emphasise just how much energy goes into this work, energy that could be more usefully directed towards bigger issues if pro-cycling policies were really taken more seriously and better embedded in the structures and activity of our council. But this day-to-day work sits merely in the background compared to some of those bigger issues that come up - some of them very urgent, such as the impact of the Clementhorpe flood alleviation scheme; whilst others - such as York Central and Castle Gateway, have profound long term implications for our ability to break away from the destructive cycle of car-dependency in York. It goes without saying that these bigger issues soak up even more of our volunteer's time. We have concluded that in future, in order to react more adeptly on all such issues and to operate more proactively across the board, then not only do we need to recruit more members, but also to draw from a larger pool of more active members within our existing membership base (now approaching 200). If you're reading this now and not involved – then your campaign needs you!

### **The Political Outlook**

On the face of it this ought to be an auspicious time for progress towards a cycling nirvana in York. The Climate Emergency has risen high up the political agenda, we have a new coalition in charge of the council with two (ostensibly cycle-friendly) Green Party members in key executive roles and an entirely new post with the encouraging title of Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change. These are early days, and it remains to be seen as to whether there is the desire to move beyond York Council's familiar window dressing on sustainable transport or indeed whether this new coalition can move the council substantially away from its obsessions of parking and dualling the outer ring road. There are big development projects in the offing whose collective configuration will profoundly impact the city in years to come – including York Central, Queens Street/York Station

Frontage, Castle Gateway and a council-led house building initiative across the city. As a campaign, it is absolutely vital that we engage on such long-term issues to address the core structural problem of car-dependency in this city.

I'll be standing down as Chair this AGM but intend to remain very committed and active within the group and on the committee (member's permitting). I'd like to thank everyone in the campaign for all your support in giving our revived campaign a brilliant start. As we look forward to the future we are facing very uncertain times, but as a movement we are absolutely certain about one thing - and that is that cycling offers a strikingly simple answer to many of the ills that afflict contemporary society. Our job at York Cycle Campaign is to make it so.

*Andy Shrimpton, Chair of York Cycle Campaign*

*"The purpose of the Campaign is to make York the UK's premier cycling city - one where cycling is safe, convenient and accessible for all.*

*Our goal is to make cycling the most popular mode of transport in York by 2032."*

## Events

Once again in 2019, we've held various events to involve our membership with different aspects of the Campaign.

### November 2018

#### Carlton Reid comes to talk at our AGM

After the AGM, the campaign enjoyed an excellent presentation by seasoned cycle campaigner and cycle journalist Carlton Reid. Carlton delved into a forgotten piece of transport history – a time in the 1930's before the arrival of mass motoring in the UK and an all-too-brief policy window when it was mandatory for all new roads to have segregated cycle lanes. Carlton has been very active in re-discovering some of these and campaigning to restore them to their original purpose. The presentation was well received - especially his reflections on how this history informs our present struggle as cycle activists.

### February 2019

#### Cosmin Popan comes to York and gives a talk to YCC members

We were treated to an inspiring presentation from Dr. Cosmin Popan about why the future of cycling is slow. Based at Manchester Metropolitan University, Cosmin investigates how we can make our cities both 'liveable' and low carbon. He explained why we'd all benefit from dropping the pace and savouring the ride, and gave us a good flavour of his new book: 'Bicycle Utopias. Imagining Fast and Slow Cycling Futures' (Routledge 2019).

### March

#### Venus to velodrome social cycle ride with Rob Ainsley

April 2019 – Cycle to Freedom. Our annual cycle ride supporting the fantastic Yorkshire-based cycling charity, Empowered People.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/umee2me](https://tinyurl.com/umee2me)

### July

YCC's Kate Ravilious and Rob Ainsley took the team tasked with rebranding York out for a pedal around our fine city.

### June

#### Safety and society: Cycle helmet debates

YCC's Robyn Jankel joined a panel of experts at a debate hosted by the University of York about whether helmet use by cyclists should be made compulsory.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/s4qtx3s](https://tinyurl.com/s4qtx3s)

### Festival of Ideas

As with previous years we co-hosted with Cycle Heave a series of talks as part of the city wide Festival of Ideas. This year we invited sociology lecturer Kat Jungnickel to tell us about about bikes and bloomers, YCC's own Rob Ainsley talked about the UK's most bizarre cycle routes and author Tom Isitt told us tales of riding In Zone Rouge on a Tor of the Battlefield in 1919.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/wm8ss3t](https://tinyurl.com/wm8ss3t)

### September

#### City Centre accessibility cycle ride with MyCastleGateway

We worked with MyCastleGateway to organise a ride looking at how accessible the city centre is for those that use their cycle as a mobility aid.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/vztqplx](https://tinyurl.com/vztqplx)

## **York Cycle Campaign helps celebrate the opening of the newly accessible Scarborough Bridge**

September 2019 saw the official opening of the most significant piece of cycling infrastructure in York for years - the newly upgraded Scarborough Bridge - to enable wide, step-free crossings of the Ouse to and from the rail station. We have long backed this upgrade and so were delighted to be able to attend the opening ceremony to toast this new era of accessible cycle connectivity across the Ouse.

## **General outreach events**

We also managed to stage a few general outreach events across the year too: at the Bishopthorpe Road Street party, the York Festival of Cycling, and some cycle counts. We hope to increase the number of these events in the next year.

# **Campaigns**

We pursued a number of campaigns in the last year, with large amounts of success.

## **November 2018**

### **Can't Walk; Can Cycle**

We organised a guided cycle ride for senior Councillors of different parties and some of our disabled members to demonstrate to York's decision-makers how difficult it was for even experienced, confident disabled cyclists to traverse the city centre safely and conveniently.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/w6ng92u](https://tinyurl.com/w6ng92u)

## **Winter Gritting**

Together with York Bike Belles we campaigned for winter gritting of key cycle routes. In September 2019 we achieve success as CoYC approves a decision to trial gritting 11 miles of York's cycle routes with specialist small gritters.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/wgm9twa](https://tinyurl.com/wgm9twa)

## **December**

### **Ring Road Dualling**

The Transport Secretary made a political commitment to give the City of York Council £29m to dual part of the outer ring road. We took the opportunity to call for the funding bid to include cycle superhighways on key roads within the outer ring road, securing a promising meeting with the Deputy Leader and senior Highways officers as a result.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/wlsv4x2](https://tinyurl.com/wlsv4x2)

## **April 2019**

### **Clifton Backies**

We learned of plans to introduce radar gates on to the key cycle route running through Clifton Backies nature reserve. Armed with an array of facts drawn from across YCC, our Communications Manager Robyn Jankel attended the Council-led committee for the Backies, overcoming the concerns of other groups to persuade the committee to remove the barriers completely - a major success that has made this route more accessible and increased cycle journeys in the area.

## **May**

### **Local Elections**

May saw the most significant local political event in York for four years: the Local elections. Identifying in advance this key opportunity for investment in cycling, we consulted our Better Infrastructure Group to put together a list of five pledges that we asked each of York's four political parties to sign up to. Each party was happy to engage with us, we reported their answers in a blog, and are delighted that York Green Party Leader and new Executive Member for Transport Cllr Andy D'Agorne has secured £1m in new funding for walking and cycling infrastructure schemes.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/v2jymvc](https://tinyurl.com/v2jymvc)

### **Clementhorpe Flood Defences**

Less expected was the Environment Agency's suggested Traffic Management Plan for its Clementhorpe flood defence proposals, which threatened to endanger cyclists' lives by forcing them onto a dual carriageway and to mix with heavy construction traffic. We immediately held outreach events to raise public awareness, gather petition signatures and ultimately submitted an evidence-based objection to the plans. Since then, we've worked with the Environment Agency and City of York Council to come up with better alternatives, and to share information with the local community. A new access proposal and flood defence plan has been submitted to planning (and will most likely be decided upon in January). The work is now anticipated to be completed within a year (rather than the 18 months for the previous plan) and it is looking like access will be maintained along Terry Avenue for cycles and pedestrians. However, we still have concerns around cyclist and pedestrian safety, due to the large volumes of vehicle traffic that will be introduced to Butcher Terrace and Terry Avenue. We will continue to work with the Environment Agency and City of York Council to improve the traffic management plan and ensure that mitigation measures are introduced to keep everyone safe.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/sy6x2mr](https://tinyurl.com/sy6x2mr)

### **York Station Nighttime Gate Closures**

YCC's Robyn Jankel raised the safety and access issues presented by LNER's decision to lock the station exit leading onto Scarborough Bridge overnight.

## **July**

### **Micklegate Bar Closure**

We had the opportunity to make permanent the cycle-only outbound access through Micklegate Bar, trialled by the previous Conservative-Lib Dem administration. We encouraged our members to signal their support for the arrangement to the Council, and submitted an official response ourselves. We were delighted when Executive Member for Transport and Green party leader Cllr Andy D'Agorne gave the go-ahead for this cycle-only access to remain permanent.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/uhpqgco](https://tinyurl.com/uhpqgco)

## **September**

### **Ableist Travel on Trains**

YCC's Robyn Jankel takes on the train companies for their sexist and ableist attitude to cycle storage on trains.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/yyaxnrg8](https://tinyurl.com/yyaxnrg8)

## **October**

### **Cycle Shop Support**

Engagement with local bike shops who have agreed to promote the campaign and its work in-store, so far including: Recycle, Halfords (Foss Islands), Re-Cycle, Giant (2 stores), Get Cycling and Cycle Heaven.

### **St. George's Fields Sewer**

We raised concerns with Yorkshire Water about the time it was taking repair a burst sewer near St George's Fields blocking both the footpath and cycleway causing misery for pedestrians and cyclists using the route.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/rvleozf](https://tinyurl.com/rvleozf)

## **Consultation responses**

The York Cycle Campaign has also been busy in the year since our last AGM in November 2018 engaging with the Council and submitting consultation responses on key transport proposals.

### **November 2018**

#### **Station Front**

One long-running issue throughout the year was repeated engagement with the Council and local residents over the Council's proposed removal of a segregated cycleway from its Station Front plans. After we submitted a comprehensive, evidence-based objection to the cycle aspects of these plans we were invited to meet Council highways officers who reassured us that they were actively exploring solutions to our concerns.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/wx2p8c7](https://tinyurl.com/wx2p8c7)

### **December**

#### **Micklegate Bar**

We welcomed the start of the trial restriction on motor traffic through Micklegate Bar looking at the economic benefits it could bring to the street's businesses. Later in July 2019 we push members to write letters of support to maintain the restrictions.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/vrml9jl](https://tinyurl.com/vrml9jl)

### **March 2019**

We've regularly raised our concerns that the York Central development doesn't put the people who will live and work there and those already in the area first. In March we submitted an objection to the York Central plans calling them a "missed opportunity to create safe and sustainable transport options and future-proof our wonderful city for future generations".

Read more: [tinyurl.com/rwrxl65](https://tinyurl.com/rwrxl65)

### **City Centre Parking**

YCC supported the idea of additional city centre cycle parking and gave feedback on potential locations. In March York BID installed the first of the new cycle racks – result!

Read more: [tinyurl.com/u24y395](https://tinyurl.com/u24y395)

### **April**

YCC requests a cycle route alongside a newly planned housing development on Windmill Lane.

## **June**

### **Piccadilly**

We were shocked to find that the proposals for a new cycle route through the Castle Gateway masterplan come to a sudden end at Piccadilly, creating a break between safe cycle routes from the south to the town centre. We met with My Castlegateway so that they could feedback our concerns on the proposal to those developing the masterplan.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/yx7wofep](https://tinyurl.com/yx7wofep)

## **July**

### **Carbon Neutral City Motion**

Campaign member Anna spoke for us to deliver support for a motion put forward by Cllr. Crawshaw for York to become a carbon neutral city in a response to the current climate emergency. We raised the issue that whilst emissions from other sources have been dropping over the past 30 years, transport emissions have remained static and action is needed to provide alternatives.

## **August**

### **Age Friendly York Submission**

We passionately believe that it should be possible for people of all ages and physical abilities to be able to cycle safely, conveniently and accessibly in our beautiful city. Campaign member Rose shared her experiences getting around the city as an older cyclist for our submission for the Council's Age Friendly York consultation.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/tf3zx4h](https://tinyurl.com/tf3zx4h)

## **October**

### **Supporting New & Better Routes**

We supported proposal to prevent through-traffic in the Groves area of York and the re-opening of High Petergate to one way cycling.

Read more: [tinyurl.com/tapa4kk](https://tinyurl.com/tapa4kk)