

BRISTOL CYCLING



Cycle Campaigning: lessons from London and the Waltham Forest Mini-Holland

Simon Munk delivered a highly inspiring talk on his experiences in campaigning in London and offered a whole variety of examples of what can be achieved through active campaigning. He emphasised that Infrastructure was the key so long as it met all needs - young people, senior citizens, commuters, leisure riders.

Instrumental in changing the face of the Borough of Waltham Forest, he explained that there had been a transformation in the quality of life and a dramatic shift in the quality of cycling infrastructure which has become a model for future cycling in London. He noted that ten years ago cycling in the borough was a nightmare. The journey from there to here doesn't happen without effort and campaigning.

So how was this change encouraged? Most notably he emphasised that while cycling was an operator, change could not happen without talking about cycling within the wider context of safety, road use, walking, health, clean air and fitness and well-being for all.

The transformation of Waltham Forest has been remarkable but would not have happened without creating political will. He posed the question as to whether the authorities had the will to change. Our role as campaigners is to encourage them to do it. To achieve and promote this political will London Cycle Campaign train councillors to ride and to share their experiences.

As a leading campaigner, Simon took local councillors on one-to-one rides across the borough so that they would begin to experience first hand what it was like to cycle on dangerous roads and to experience the many hazards and conflicts between different groups - pedestrians, car users et al - and the behaviour of each. Simon explained it took some time, given local concerns that the borough did not have the necessary resources, understandable following cuts.

Eventually the strategy worked leading to the appointment of a specialist Cycle Officer and a commitment to changing focus. The Waltham Forest 'Mini Holland' scheme has been implemented with Borough Councillors thinking outside the box to ensure an improved environment for all with youngsters playing and cycling in safe spaces - limitations on car movements and parking - cleaner air, and real Living Neighbourhoods.

Earlier that day he had been riding around Bristol with Bristol Cycle Campaign Chair, Nicholas Davies. Simon suggested that Bristol had clearly got a lot of good infrastructure

in several places (such as the centre and the Temple Way road system) with a little more effort the infrastructure could be so much better. As a campaigning group Bristol Cycling Campaign can make a big impact given Bristol City Council have declared a Climate Emergency.

London Cycling Campaign have worked extensively to build links at all levels - neighbourhood, community, City - to create the political will.

Simon's message to Bristol Cycling Campaign and to Bristol generally was to understand the issues that the authorities and Mayor really care about. And then build your campaign around these.

He emphasised pointers to effective campaigning:

- Creating a network relating to school circulation/commuting traffic/connectivity
- Identify commuter traffic patterns and how to convert those to cycling
- Promote locked cycle spaces at street level in Living Neighbourhoods
- Review Transport for London's guidance and standards

Notes

Simon Munk is an internationally renowned cycle campaigner and he is London Cycling Campaign's expert on cycling infrastructure. He leads the campaign for better, safer, high quality cycling in London Boroughs and he has been highly effective in promoting change throughout London. He has been working directly with City Hall, Transport for London and other bodies. Simon offered an insight into what works, what doesn't and approaches to securing a better, safer environment for cyclists in urban environments.

Simon's talk was delivered on 26 November 2019 at the Create Centre, B Bond Warehouse, Smeaton Rd, Bristol BS1 6XN

<https://bristolcycling.org.uk/>