

Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Forum Environment & Sustainability Subgroup meeting

Notes from 4th meeting, held on Tuesday 17 April 2018 at 6.00pm
at Harrow in LEAF HQ, large allotment site, The Gardens, West Harrow, HA1 4HE.

Attendees

Mick Oliver	Harrow University of the Third Age (Sustainability Group) – Acting Chair
Gerry Devine	Harrow VCS Forum Vice-Chair, Harrow Community Transport
Swan Kazi	Harrow Parks Forum
Judy Walker	Harrow in LEAF
Frances Goldingay	Harrow in LEAF
Penny Hayward	Harrow Cyclists
Linda Robinson	38 Degrees Local Harrow Group - Notetaker
Anthony Wood	Harrow Public Transport Users Association
Keith Nason	Harrow Public Transport Users Association

Apologies

Pamela Swain	Harrow Friends of the Earth
Simon Braidman	Harrow Nature Conservation Forum
Jane Skelly	Harrow Friends of the Earth
Kathy Westhead	Harrow University of the Third Age (Sustainability Group)

1. **Welcome** and all happy for Gerry to act as Chair for this meeting and follow up. Thanks to Harrow in LEAF for use of hut as meeting space. Good to see its renovations underway. **Introductions** all round – Thanks to Anthony and Keith for attending to help answer members' questions on Harrow's transport.
2. **Notes from the last meeting** no corrections requested. Some actions since followed up by Paul Nichols and shared. Still awaiting previously promised answers/action from:

Cllr. Graham Henson – responses re air quality and recycling issues still not addressed. Delays in acquiring air pollution monitoring equipment. Decision not to chase further until any portfolio holder changes after May's local elections.

Paul Nichols

– No feedback received from Legal Department (HB Law) re application of Open Spaces Act to Byron Quarter plans, or on validity of Byron Hall being classified as 'leisure' use for planning purposes. Assurances from Corporate Director for Community, Paul Walker, to Parks Forum: Paul W chasing Paul N/HB Law for answers.

Action:

Gerry to press for answers from both Pauls.

– Investigations revealed Kenton Rec's bus park probably installed without needing planning permission as only a temporary expedient with no viable alternative for 380 council minibuses, including Brent's. Barnet's depot sold off for development, adding to pressure. Forward Drive depot already insufficient for vehicles including refuse trucks, special needs and Harrow Community Transport. Persisting concerns re effects on Kenton Rec's future use possibilities.

Action:

Gerry to seek clarification of such approval procedures from both Planning and Transport departments and commitment to restoration of Kenton Rec site to parkland afterwards.

– Assurances of council attendances at Ecobuild received, but no further feedback since the event despite requests from Mick.

– Harrow still not appearing in GLA's [Rogue Landlord Checker Scheme](#) despite confirmation of intention from Paul, no news from Richard Le-Brun.

Action:

Linda to find out from Paul/Richard re reasons for delay in progressing this.

3. Questions and Answers

3.1 **What progress has been made about the proposal for the X140 Express bus on the 140 route to Heathrow?** (question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Tony's answer: Plans due to be announced in mid-May. Views currently split, felt impractical by many. X140 proposals begin and terminate express route from Harrow bus station, not Harrow Weald. Lack of space at bus station would force out another route (223 curtailed to serve Northwick Park Hospital only, but possibly preferable to extend 395 or H11 there). Questionable whether express able to go any quicker than regular 140, due to congestion. Extra changes involved for most to use express. Better to increase frequency instead.

3.2 *Capital Transport newsletter 74 states the Mayor has given approval for passenger services to be investigated/introduced on the freight line from Cricklewood to Acton, hence to Heathrow.*

Are there any proposals for interchange between this West Orbital route and lines serving Harrow e.g. Harlesden or Neasden? (question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Tony's answer: Go ahead given by Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, but no funding made available, so no sign of any progress yet. Possible interchange at Harlesden, but difficult.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Could it link into expansion plans for Brent Cross services?

3.3 *Thameslink services through London are expanding in frequency and routes – it seems the Southern service through Harrow & Wealdstone to Clapham Junction and then slow to East Croydon is a poor relation. Why?* (question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Tony's answer: Lack of capacity for higher frequencies on the Southern service, but plans afoot to increase train lengths from five carriages to eight.

3.4 **What progress has been made on the Metropolitan Line to Watford Junction?**

(question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Tony's answer: Track from Croxley disused for over 30 years. Heavy campaigning to revive it for Met Line extension to Watford Junction, approved by Government, planning permission expires July 2018. But blocked by London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, because main benefits outside London (inconsistent approach compared with other routes). Excuses re £73 million funding shortfall, despite contingency funds already being included in government's existing commitment. If lobbying unsuccessful, opportunity will be lost forever.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Alternative idea for 'guided busway' on the line, although not an 'integrated' solution.

Can Department for Transport/Network Rail be persuaded to offer more direct support?

Suggest a petition, with emphasis on national benefits of interchange at Watford Junction between tube network and West Coast Mainline, including for tourists, to relieve expected increased pressure on Euston.

Met Line upgrade – new trains quieter but seats deteriorating quickly. New signals still being tested and due to be extended to all other lines by 2020, for quicker departures and higher frequencies.

Action:

Linda to contact Tony to help set up 38 Degrees petition to Sadiq Khan and Chris Grayling before planning permission expires for Met Line extension to Watford Junction.

3.5 **Why does proper step-free access at Stanmore Station seem to be such a low priority for the council and for TfL, when it is the nearest one to a national orthopaedic hospital?**

(question from Harrow 38 Degrees Local Group)

Tony's answer: Original proposal to build lifts into double deck car park, rejected. Plans still in the pipeline to redevelop TfL car park incorporating lifts, but no definite timescale.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Encourage courtesy cars to/from the orthopaedic hospital to use the car park entrance for pick up and drop off.

At Harrow-on-the-Hill station, Planning permission given for lifts to platforms and to College Road, expected completion by 2020. Possible ramp instead of lift on Lowlands Road side, to encroach on recently revamped recreation ground, separate permission needed, planning application not yet submitted. Whole scheme eventually to be funded by extending bus station with two tower blocks developed above it.

Lifts at Rayners Lane station eventually to be funded by development on TfL land there, but not involving building on stilts over the car park as in Stanmore.

Also lobbying for lifts at South Harrow station – more steps than other tube stations.

3.6 What do we need to do to get better bus links to hospitals, especially Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital and the Central Middlesex?

(question from Harrow Community Transport)

Tony's answer: Continue lobbying for extension of bus route 324, to serve RNOH site.

3.7 Will the HS2 work at Euston have an adverse effect on Harrow's rail services? And if HS2 successfully attracts many passengers, will Euston be able to cope?

(question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Tony's answer: Short term diversions likely. Euston's eventual ability to cope unknowable.

3.8 On a map of services linked with **Crossrail**, the Heathrow consultation showed a proposed line which would enable trains from Slough and Reading to access the airport directly. But the line running west from Heathrow was shown in the same way as a line joining Old Oak Common with the main line to Harrow & Wealdstone, Watford and beyond, which we've been told will not happen, so **why is it shown with the same emphasis as the Slough proposal?**

(question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Tony's answer: Various different stages of vague proposal for all potential lines shown on such maps. Impossible to differentiate each level of vagueness with distinct markings.

3.9 ***We're concerned about population increase and dense development (Kodak, Byron Quarter, new Civic Centre, Palmerston Road, old Civic Centre, Central Harrow):***

- **Is there a car ownership policy?**
- **Can it be enforced or will it lead to displaced parking in adjacent areas?**
- **Will public transport serving these developments have adequate capacity for the resulting increase in demand?**
- **What will be the effect of increased traffic on timekeeping of buses serving the area?**
- **What will be the effect of parked cars slowing the flow of traffic, and buses needing to wait for opposing traffic to get past parked cars?**

(question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Tony's answer: Aware of potential problems but not of specific solutions, except for plans to use Section 106 money for changing Goodwill Junction to prohibit certain vehicle turns and relieve pressure of increased traffic from Harrow View East development.

3.10 A wild card – **Why not a tram route along the Station Road corridor from Harrow-on-the-Hill station to Harrow & Wealdstone, linking the stations and extending into the Kodak development?** *There's no way the latter can be adequately served by buses and is likely to inflict almost permanent gridlock on the northern part of the borough.*

(question from Harrow Community Transport)

Tony's answer: A good idea, if only there was somewhere for all the existing traffic to go instead. Otherwise not enough space, so only increasing congestion.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

A monorail above the main traffic corridor instead.

3.11 **How can we best get decision makers in Harrow to support the [Liveable Harrow proposals for pleasant and walkable routes including a safe cycle network?](#)**

(question from Harrow 38 Degrees Local Group)

Tony's answer: Unaware of this. Even if improvements made for cycling and walking, good public transport still needed for elderly and others unable to cycle or walk far.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Bus reliability being hampered by 'Little Holland' pilot scheme in Waltham Forest.

Health considerations – improve Harrow's cycling rates (lowest in London) to combat its exceptionally high levels of diabetes and other health conditions.

General support for cycling being permitted in parks, with 'dual use' paths for pedestrians/cyclists, although faster for cyclists in dedicated lane if possible.

3.12 **When can we expect more bus priority schemes in Harrow? This would to speed up services, including orbital bus links to other parts of London, enough to attract people out of their cars and reduce congestion. Even the (welcome) introduction of a direct Harrow to Ealing bus link a couple of years ago follows a convoluted route via the back of Wembley so it takes an hour on a good day (off peak) and an hour and a half or longer at peak times.**

(question from Harrow Community Transport)

Tony's answer: Council keen and seeking suggestions to expand its bus priority programme.

Tony co-ordinating these suggestions. Plans afoot for bus priority near Whitmore High School, with inset bays for parked cars to free up road space for buses.

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Possible need in Headstone Lane and also by new school developments at Whitchurch. Street trees often a problem for buses/bus lanes.

Action:

All to contact Tony with details of any suggestions for bus priorities.

3.13 **Low emission buses – Harrow has got a relatively high proportion of these, but **can we have even more please?****

(question from Harrow Community Transport)

Tony's answer: Ongoing, e.g. in latest round of retendering route 292 just awarded to Metroline (from London Sovereign), to use lower emission vehicles. Priority for more hybrid buses in Harrow but no proposals yet for electric-only routes.

3.14 **Is there scope for demand-responsive minibus services like the one being trialled in Greenwich by Chariot, a subsidiary of Ford?**

(question from Harrow Community Transport)

Tony's answer: Maybe some potential but Greenwich trials losing money so far. Low emissions but not as low as possible.

Action:

Keith to send details of the Greenwich criticisms to Gerry.

3.15 **Westfield is accessible by direct train from Harrow & Wealdstone or by changing from Hatch End, Headstone Lane or Kenton, but there are no direct bus routes. **Would there be a demand from Westfield customers for a direct bus service from Harrow?****

(question from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Tony's answer: Existing trains not too difficult, probably preferable to buses for most people.

3.16 **In the light of the thousands of new homes being promised favourable transport connections, **what has happened about the Council Leader's letter to Sadiq Khan, TfL, DoT et al, calling for improvements in capacity, frequency, reliability and facilities at Harrow & Wealdstone and Harrow-on-the-Hill stations? (As per [February's Overview and Scrutiny Committee minutes.](#))****

(question from Harrow 38 Degrees Local Group)

Tony's answer: To be raised with London Underground Limited and Network Rail, and referred to Sadiq Khan if response inadequate. List of concerns re Harrow & Wealdstone being collated by Tony. Network Rail representative invited to meeting but no show. Hopeful of train/signalling improvements at Harrow-on-the-Hill leading to increased frequencies/capacities there. Harrow & Wealdstone:

Comments / Concerns / Suggestions:

Safety concerns at Harrow-on-the-Hill re unexpected terminations suddenly discharging all passengers onto overcrowded platforms during rush hour.

3.17 a) *Badly designed and built dropped kerbs at pedestrian crossings and junctions often create a water trap so there is always a puddle in rainy conditions. (In frozen conditions there could be ice.)* **Why aren't these drops designed (like flat roofs) to shed any water sideways, into the gutter?** Road humps often trap water in the same way too.

b) *Potholes... side roads appear to get less scrutiny than inspection procedures for A roads. **Is Harrow Council avoiding repairs in the hope that any compensation they pay out** (e.g. for cyclists' accidents or damage to vehicles) **will be cheaper than the repairs?** If we are serious about encouraging cycling, we need proper repair of potholes.*

c) **Shouldn't a better quality of tarmac be used for road humps**, to avoid deterioration into potholes where they join the existing surface?

(questions from Harrow U3A Sustainability Group)

Answers: Highways not specifically within Tony's remit. True, potholes problematic for buses too. Road noise reduced by using more flexible tarmac with added plastic.

Action:

Linda to put these questions to David Eaglesham, council Service Manager for highways, and to relevant newly (re-)appointed portfolio holder after the local elections.

4. Other matters discussed

4.1 **Meeting of Harrow Public Transport Users Association** due to take place on 14 May.

Action:

Keith to update [Harrow Public Transport Users Association's Facebook page](#).

5. **Next meeting** – Consensus to focus on recycling and waste disposal as a topic.

Actions:

Gerry to arrange and advise next Subgroup meeting date, hopefully at the Harrow Recreation Ground pavilion, and invite new council recycling officer (Leonora?).

Keith to invite Caren Duhig of Fixit Harrow Network to join the Forum and the Subgroup, and bring her knowledge about fly tipping etc.