

## **Sidmouth Cycling Campaign**

### **Annual Report 2022/23**

#### **Introduction**

The Sidmouth Cycling Campaign was formed in August last year, building on the work of the Sidmouth Cycling Action Group, which had been a VGS project since 2008.

During our first year we have focussed on engaging with local cyclists, meeting decision makers and raising awareness of opportunities for encouraging cycling in the Sid Valley, as summarised below.

#### **Questionnaire**

We launched our campaign last year with a public questionnaire, which received 185 replies with a lot of helpful suggestions for improving cycling in the Sid Valley. The responses were summarised in a report which is available on our website.

The most popular suggestion was for more off road cycle routes; in particular the proposed route from Sidmouth to Sidbury and the Otter Trail from Sidmouth to the Bowd and down through Harpford Woods to Tipton St John and beyond.

Other suggestions included:

- More cycle stands
- Improvements to the Byes cycle route including an extension to the seafront
- More education for road users
- Making some streets one way
- Building a pump track for BMX

#### **Stakeholder engagement**

Our draft report on the questionnaire results was circulated widely to stakeholders and we received positive responses from the following that were included in our final report:

- Meg Booth, Devon County Council (DCC), Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport
- Councillor Stuart Hughes, DCC, Cabinet Member for Highway Management
- Councillor Marianne Rixson, East Devon District Council (EDDC), Portfolio Holder Climate Action and Emergencies
- Councillor Denise Bickley, EDDC and Vice Chair Sidmouth Town Council Environment Committee
- Steve Brown, Devon County Council, Director of Public Health, Communities & Prosperity

We also had articles published on the front page of the Sidmouth Herald and in the Sidmouth Nub News.

We followed up this publicity with meetings with key decision makers and interested parties to discuss how to improve cycling. We met:

- Simon Jupp, MP East Devon
- Richard Foord MP, Tiverton & Honiton (prospective candidate for East Devon)
- Cllr Stuart Hughes, DCC, EDDC and Sidmouth Town Council
- Cllr Marianne Rixson, EDDC
- Catherine Causley, EDDC Climate Change Officer
- Kerry Wells, Sustrans Senior Project Manager England South

We have also been regularly meeting the Otter Trail Group, led by Jo Elliott, who are dedicated to the creation of an off-road cycle route following the route of the disused railway line from the Bowd through Ottery St Mary to Feniton.

## **Other Activities**

We set up a Facebook group last year which has regular posts.

In May this year we arranged for the Bicycle Ballet to perform during SeaFest which received a lot of publicity. We also manned a stall at the event to raise awareness of the Campaign.

We have engaged with various bodies to request improvements in cycle parking including Lidl, Beacon Medical Centre, the Tourist Information Centre and the Watersports Hub.

Early this year we provided a detailed response to the consultation on the proposed EDDC Local Plan to support their policies on cycling and provision of off-road cycle routes. We have also provided relevant comments on local planning applications.

We are keen to improve the road crossing at the bottom of the Byes and have met Cllr Stuart Hughes to discuss ideas.

## **Looking forward**

We plan to continue our current activities, pushing for improvements to encourage cycling in the Sid Valley, specifically:-

Sidford to Sidbury Cycle Path – support Devon County Council with their plans to create an off-road route. They are currently preparing a planning application.

Otter Trail – support the Otter Trail Group in continuing to push for an off-road route following the old railway line from Sidmouth to Feniton.

It's likely that a General Election will be called next year and we will engage with the candidates to encourage them to support active travel.

Roy Russell

Secretary, Sidmouth Cycling Campaign