Summit & AGM 2025

With a new, larger venue booked due to high demand, and 100 vegan Scouse pies ordered from the famous Homebaked Community Bakery in Anfield, the scene was set for community groups, experts and decision makers from across the Liverpool City Region to gather for Merseyside Cycling Campaign Summit & AGM 2025.



Don Thompson and **Rebecca Sharkey** opened the event by explaining that the approach of MCC - which is celebrating its fortieth year in 2025 - is to build bridges and act as a 'critical friend', campaigning and putting pressure on our political leaders to deliver what they have set out in their strategies, while supporting the actively engaged to inspire progress and positive change. The campaign does this in three ways - through campaigns, community and consultations.

"Cycling is a key part of the solution to so many of the urgent challenges facing us as a society - physical and mental health, poverty, climate change, air and noise pollution - with the added bonus of being a fast and convenient way to get around" - Don Thompson.

Welcoming the presence and support of Councillors from a range of political parties from across the LCR region, including the Leader of Liverpool Council, Rebecca Sharkey said that MCC intends to prioritise engagement with local Councillors going forward, "*so they can make informed and progressive decisions about cycling and active travel - "and we invite you all to join us by finding out who your local Councillors are and speaking or writing to them about why you think cycling and active travel are important in your area. Why not invite them to join you on a bike ride around local streets?"*



A key aim of MCC is to demonstrate how all sorts of people benefit from cycling for all sorts of reasons, so it was great to kick off the day with **Monika Grabias-Rodriguez**, who told about her positive experience with Molly Coddle, a project set up by Peloton Liverpool Cooperative to give mums and caregivers with young children the opportunity to cycle together. Monika said that she and her children really enjoyed using the specially designed bikes and carriers, training and guided rides around safe, traffic-free parks - and that this had given them all the confidence to go cycling on their own in Liverpool.



Chaired by **Kirsty Styles**, journalist, campaigner, researcher and former MCC Chair, the morning panel was on the theme of 'Making Liverpool City Region a brilliant place to cycle'.



Ed Gommon (Director, Zero Carbon Liverpool) described how, *"From now, until 2032 is an absolutely crucial time for the city in terms of active travel. We'll either be part of the process of transformation where Liverpool becomes a shining example of an integrated transport system of public transport, active travel and taxis and vibrant public spaces come together to create a truly exceptional urban experience. We must seize this opportunity and ensure it's not a false dawn."*



Dr Kay Inckle (Campaigns & Policy Manager, Wheels for Wellbeing) explained how for a majority of Disabled people, cycling is easier than walking. Describing some of the many barriers to cycling that Disabled people face, Dr Inckle urged planners and decision makers to consult and co-produce with Disabled experts (and pay accordingly). *"Mobility Justice means that resources should be aimed towards those who have least access to transport and mobility rather than those with the most mobility privilege"*.



Answering a question from Councillor Barbara Dunn from Knowsley about perceptions of empty bike lanes, **Simon O'Brien** (Cycling Commissioner for Liverpool City Region) made a salient point that if you stood on a railway bridge you might conclude that train tracks were empty and inefficient - when of course the opposite is true for both train tracks and cycle lanes.



Ian Pennington described his involvement with the inspiring campaign group Walk Ride GM, which has successfully developed a new and dynamic active travel campaign coalition, with local groups across Greater Manchester, an impressive social media presence, and developed constructive relationships with GM decision makers who are creating an enviable system of joined-up and sustainable transport. Walk Ride GM highlights the social justice aspects of active travel, how poorer people cannot access employment opportunities due to inadequate transport facilities in their area; how this link between poverty and transport is exacerbated by the current energy crisis, and how communities with the lowest levels of car use tend to suffer from the highest levels of air pollution.

Cllr Liam Robinson, Leader of Liverpool Council, highlighted the Bike Life report from a few years ago, which found that 7 out of 10 people across the city region wanted safe cycling and segregated infrastructure. It was such a powerful report, he argued, because it was from a representative sample of people from across the region. Those opposing cycling and active travel "would give the impression that they're 100% of the population", so he urged everyone to join the 'battle of ideas': *"As cycling and active travel campaigners, one of our key roles is to make sure that what we're pushing for - genuinely - is popular and what the majority of people want us to do. So please keep pushing us and keep being on that front line telling people this is exactly what we should be doing."*





In his role as Road Safety Coordinator at Liverpool Council, **Andy Codd** accepts that Liverpool is a long way behind other cities when it comes to creating the links between road safety and active travel, and there is a lot to do to catch up. As part of Liverpool's road safety education programme, he is focussing on the reintroduction of school travel plans as a key process, with the creation of Youth Travel Ambassadors within schools to assist in helping to change hearts and minds. His team has also developed an annual calendar of campaigning on road safety issues linked to the national police calendar which focuses on national, regional and local issues such as the fatal four: speeding, mobile phone use, seatbelts and drink/drug driving. Partnership working forms a large part of the work the road safety team undertake and Andy is looking to strengthen the links between his team and the local cycle community to ensure their issues are not overlooked.



In the afternoon, **Ellis Palmer**, BBC Radio Merseyside climate and environment reporter, interviewed some of Merseyside's cycling community champions, starting with **Helen Holcroft**, who set up and runs the wonderful Aigburth Community Cycling Club, "an inclusive community club sharing the joy of cycling with people of all abilities".



Magdalena Cichocka introduced the national and local work of Cycling UK, which includes supporting lots of community groups in Merseyside, and she encouraged more people to join the Cycle Advocacy Network (CAN) to access resources and support for campaigning.



Danny Robinson gave us the lowdown on the fantastic Peloton Co-op that he founded with a mission “to make Liverpool an even better city through more of us riding bikes, by bringing us together through bikes and by bringing those in the margins of our city into the fold through healthy stuff to do, training and employment opportunities.” Danny spoke movingly of the therapeutic and social benefits of cycling for people who are struggling with e.g. substance abuse or returning to society after being in prison - “people feel a bit better when they get on a bike”.



Elliot Duffell explained how much they had personally benefited from being part of Queers With Gears, which organises rides in Liverpool to create a fun empowering space for queers to connect on bikes.



John Heldt is a ‘back rider’ at SAVI (Sports and Activities for the Visually Impaired) Tandem Club. He came along with his ‘front rider’ **Chris Malburn**, to share his love of cycling - and his gratitude to the tandem club for enabling him to continue to enjoy cycling after his sight loss meant he could no longer go out alone. Chris said he loves volunteering for the tandem club, and that more volunteers were needed - so please sign up! He highlighted some taster sessions coming up.





Shaun Gallagher and **Peter Clucas** shared stories of the many people from all backgrounds who enjoy being part of St Helens Pedal Power Community Cycling Group, a friendly volunteer group created in 2015 with support from St Helens Council which provides weekly social rides from four cycle hubs, including leisure/touring rides, women only rides and rides specifically designed for disabled people. *“We dream of a world where every disabled person and those with long-term health conditions can feel the exhilaration, joy, and empowerment of cycling”.*

Wheels for All is the largest provider of inclusive cycling in the country. “We dream of a world where every disabled person and those with long-term health conditions can feel the exhilaration, joy, and empowerment of cycling”. **Ian Tierney**, its CEO, showed a heart-warming short film about a visit from Simon O’Brien, Liverpool City Region’s Cycling Commissioner, to one of Wheels for All’s projects in Liverpool. Check out the film here.



The Gary Clarke Memorial Cup is given each year to an individual or group making a difference in local cycling – in memory of police officer Gary Clarke, who was tragically killed while off-duty riding his bike. This year, MCC was delighted to welcome the newly appointed Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Councillor Barbara Murray, and Inspector Simon Wilson from Merseyside Police, to present the Gary Clarke Memorial Cup, with a £200 donation from Merseyside Cycling Campaign, to **Asylum Link Merseyside Bike Club and Repair Shop**, who do such important work enabling refugees to benefit from cycling.





Darryl Marsden, Activities Coordinator at Asylum Link Merseyside (ALM), said: *"Huge thanks to MCC for this award. It is a testament to all the wonderful volunteers! The bike initiative makes a huge difference to people at the centre".*

Don Thompson with the MCC officers who were elected during the AGM:

Rebecca Sharkey - Chair
Andrew Grimbly - Secretary
Peter Roome - Treasurer

