

Minutes of a meeting of the WNBR London Collective

Wednesday, 13th June 2024

by Zoom Videoconference

Present: Barbara, Cy, Dave S, Dave W, Harvey, Ian, Joe, John, Mike, Natasha, Norm, Sophie, Julian

Apologies: Roberto

(Action items in *red*)

Debrief

This meeting was primarily a debrief, focused on feedback from the ride on 8th June 2024.

Getting our messages across

The ride is intended to promote its stated themes concerning cycling, the environment and body positivity. We could do more to convey these messages as some people just view it as a fun spectacle. The media tend to focus on the spectacle rather than the messages. Much of the imagery and content is not on-message. Several suggestions were made to improve the messaging.

- A volunteer public relations officer (as well as the existing media team).
- A photo editor to identify the best, on-message photos.
- Share photos and posts during the ride (we are all too busy to do this which means other people's images and content are the ones that get into the news).
- Live streaming with interviews.
- Film crew.

Planning and testing

The biggest challenge was navigating the lockdowns in Central London due to major demonstrations. There was a march and rally organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), and a counter-protest by Enough is Enough. We had identified and tested 13 possible variations that could be used for the combined legs of the ride, and all the start points needed to revise their routes.

Police Liaison

We benefitted from excellent liaison, advice and assistance from the Police, both in advance of the ride and live during the ride. They validated our route plans against their knowledge of the other protests and lockdown zones. During the ride they liaised with us via our Communications Hub, identifying problems and informing us when and where it was safe to proceed.

This co-ordination made the day a success. All start groups joined up. We avoided the other protests, lockdowns, road closures, and other blockages. We reached the planned rest point / toilet break. We managed to route the ride past Buckingham Palace and we got to the planned end point as one group at the planned time.

The meeting commended the efforts of Dave W in his advance liaison with the Police and Barbara, for her vital role as our communications hub during the ride. The meeting urged them to continue to do so in future years.

Security

This year we again increased the size of the professional security team. We also paid for security at the afterparty venue. The meeting agreed that this spend was worthwhile and we should continue to use professional resources.

Incidents during the ride

There was one serious incident and some minor incidents caused by drivers of motor vehicles.

One of the start groups was being held at a police road block while an unrelated unauthorised group of protesters were being removed. The driver of a Royal Mail van tried to force his way through the stationary riders. One of the marshals trying to stop him was forced to cling onto the front of the van as it ran him down. The police (who were already present) intervened and statements were taken.

At the rest stop, a large lorry carrying part of a crane insisted on driving through resting cyclists to get to his destination. He threatened to drive over the cyclists if they didn't get out of his way. This led to a splintering of the ride. Another incident involved a taxi driver nudging a bike.

Unwelcome behaviour by photographers and spectators

This continues to be a major problem. Wellington Arch and Tower Hill had large numbers of spectators and unwelcome photographers. The accessible start was also overcrowded, which seems very odd as there wasn't anything to see.

People would like to see tents and cordoned-off areas, but that is not generally possible where we are using public spaces.

Practical suggestions included:

- Find more starts on private property where access can be controlled – we would be willing to pay an affordable fee if required.
- People could be advised to gather with professional security operatives who could dissuade problem photographers.
- Continue to publicise our advice to riders – eg you do not need to undress at the start.

There were some reports of abusive passers-by.

Unwelcome behaviour by participants

There was some bad behaviour by riders, although probably not as much in the past as we now have security personnel present. Marshals and security personnel should encourage good behaviour. There were also some suggestions of bad behaviour away from the ride where we have no presence or control.

Our rules for behaviour by participants (including marshals, riders, photographers and body painters) are set out in several places and communicated via our various publicity channels. We should continue to emphasize these in our communications.

AfterShow

The AfterShow was held at Phantom Peak with entertainment by Naked Cabaret along with a life drawing session hosted by Willoh. Tickets were sold-out. We might have considered a higher number of tickets as the event was not overcrowded. We didn't quite reach the minimum spend of £5000, but the event was a fund-raising success for us, with ticket revenue being significantly higher than costs. Phantom Peak say they would be happy to have us back in the future.

There was an unfortunate incident at the end of the show involving inappropriate, non-consensual touching by an audience member (who was not linked to the ride). Police were called and statements taken.

Other parties

A film crew from Barefoot followed the ride from Hackney Wick. They donated £500.

Samples of a new Naked drink were handed out at WA at the start and finish.

Date of next meeting

We agreed the first meeting for 2025 will be 9th January 2025 at 7:30pm by Zoom.

Date of 2025 WNBR London ride

We agreed to plan for the ride on 14th June 2025, which is the second Saturday in June – our regular date. This will remain provisional until closer to the date.

