



Press Release

Campaigners to form a people protected bike lane on Old Street, Islington, today in protest at the lack of action by Islington Council to make the street safer.

Embargo until 4pm 19th March 2019

Old Street and Clerkenwell Road form one of the busiest cycling corridors in London, with over 1000 cyclists per hour in the morning rush hour. It is also one of the most intimidating and dangerous routes. There is no protected infrastructure here to keep cyclists safe from HGVs, buses and other motor vehicles whilst travelling along the road or, most importantly, through junctions.

In 2014, Islington Council was awarded £900,000 from TfL's cycling budget to deliver safety improvements along this stretch of road¹, but 5 years later, no designs have been published or consulted on. During this timeframe, three women cycling along the route have been crushed by trucks, resulting in the loss of a leg. Victoria, Julie and Sarah are supporting our action today to underline the human cost to these delays.

Today, during the evening rush hour, volunteers will gather on Old Street, near the junction with Central Street, to form a people protected bike lane as a visual reminder that the council is not delivering on its promise.

In 2015, **Victoria Lebrec** sustained life-threatening injuries when she was run over by a skip lorry at the junction of Clerkenwell Rd and St John Street. Her leg was amputated. She said:

"I was in a crash and lost my leg on Clerkenwell Road. Since my collision in 2014, two women - Sarah and Julie - have lost their legs in collisions on this stretch of road. The suffering I went through was awful, and it pains me that nothing was done to make the road safer after my crash. The suffering that Sarah and Julie went through could well have been avoided if it had. I don't want to see any more delays to the improvement of Old Street and Clerkenwell Road. Delays translate to deaths and horrific injuries."

In 2016, **Julie Dinsdale** was run over by a Tesco truck, which amputated her leg, at the junction of Old Street and Central Street. She said:

"Before the collision, I was working as an NHS midwife and was competing in marathons and cyclo-cross events. What happened to me had a devastating impact on my life - being unable to return to work or continue the sports that I loved. It has now been three and a half years since I was run over on Old Street, and it really worries me that there have still been no safety improvements made to the road layout.

With each delay, there's another opportunity for a cyclist to get injured or killed. Urgent action is needed on Old Street and Clerkenwell Road to protect people riding bikes."

Julie's partner, **Keith Bontrager** said:

"The road works and poorly laid out temporary infrastructure at the junction where Julie was hit contributed to the potential for a collision. Cyclists were harder to see with the way it was configured. "

In 2018, **Sarah Doone** was dragged under the front wheels of a cement mixer at Old Street Roundabout. She suffered multiple injuries, including such severe damage to her leg that it could not be saved.

A spokesperson for **Active Travel Now** said:

"Active Travel Now are here today to highlight the inaction of Islington council in tackling road danger faced by people walking & cycling. On a popular cycling route it's not fair or just that people should have to risk life and limb to visit the shops, get to work or socialize with friends. These are people making the right choice for the city they live in. They are part of the solution to our toxic air and unsafe streets. Islington should be providing them with a safe and protected route. Too many people have come to harm on this stretch of road.

Since 2014, Islington Council have stated that they are working on plans to make Old Street and Clerkenwell Road safe for cycling. In 2017, they expected to consult on plans by the end of the year. We are now in 2019, and still no plans have been put forward. So we are here today calling on Islington to provide protected bike lanes and safe junctions on this popular route. In a city that needs many more people to use active travel to help clean our air and make our streets safe Islington must act and stop the endless delays. We call on Islington Council to provide a timetable for when Old Street will have safe junctions and protected bike lanes."

Dr. Tabitha Tanqueray, a spokesperson for **Cycle Islington**, said:

"This route is crucial for people who travel into the city from east London by bike, yet we are seeing serious injuries and deaths at a terrifying rate. TfL are finally about to start work to reduce danger at Old Street roundabout, but most people will then continue their journey via Old Street and Clerkenwell road, which is under the control of Islington. Cyclists should not have to mix with trucks and buses here, especially at junctions. Islington Council have accepted the brief and the money from TfL to redesign the street to make it safe and attractive for cycling and walking. They began drawing up plans many years ago, yet they have still not got these into the public realm or revealed a timeline for delivery. We have told them again and again that we can't afford these delays. Many of our members are standing in the road today alongside Active Travel Now to highlight Islington's failure to deliver safe cycling provision here. "

Ends

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References

1. (£900,000 figure July 2014)

<https://democracy.islington.gov.uk/documents/s1385/Funding%20bids%20-%20TfL%20Cycling%20programme%20Crossrail%20complementarity%20measures%20and%20Roads%20Task%20force%20Incubat.pdf%20>

Notes to editors:

- 1) Active Travel Now is an independent group of commuters who want to see more cycling and walking in London. Our aim is to highlight dangerous plans, and push for safety and convenience for cyclists and pedestrians.
- 2) **Event details**
Time 16:00- 17:45 19/03/19.
Location junction of Old Street and Central Street
Photocall Victoria Lebec and (if available) Sarah Doone will be present from 4pm along with other volunteers at the beginning of the event.
More details about this event, and further quotes (Why Islington? Why Now?) can be found on our website. <https://activetravelnow.wordpress.com/>
- 3) Further comments from Keith Bontrager are attached, focussing on the very low standards of truck driver training and fleet maintenance found at Tesco.
- 4) Recent photos of Julie Dinsdale are attached. Please credit Keith Bontrager, who has given permission for publication.
- 5) TfL are responsible for the Old Street roundabout scheme, which will soon begin construction. <https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/old-street-roundabout>
To the West of the roundabout, Islington Council are responsible for Old Street and Clerkenwell Road as far as Farringdon Rd, where it crosses into Camden.
Camden Council have recently won funding to create a liveable neighbourhood in Holborn, including protected bike tracks along Theobald's Rd, which Clerkenwell Road feeds into. <https://camdencyclists.org.uk/2019/03/great-news-holborn-liveable-neighbourhood/>
- 6) Cycle Islington is the Islington branch of the London Cycling Campaign.

Contacts:

Active Travel Now: Sean Howes sean.howes@gmail.com 07871541076

Cycle Islington: Tabitha Tanqueray drtanqueray@yahoo.com 07976012163

Additional comments from Keith Bontrager

The road works and poorly laid out temporary infrastructure at the junction where Julie was hit contributed to the potential for a collision. Cyclists were harder to see with the way it was configured.

In addition, Tesco (and probably many companies that operate logistics or haulage fleet services) ran a very shabby operation. Each of the issues noted below led to a much higher probability of a collision with a cyclist.

1) The driver training and evaluation for fitness to drive was clearly substandard.

The evaluator noted that the driver did not use his curb side mirrors properly days before the collision. That is not a driving habit that can be changed overnight. Tesco ignored this and allowed him to drive on his own anyway.

The driver did not understand what the curb side proximity sensor alarm meant. He explained the police that he thought it had to do with something near the rear of the vehicle.

2) The vehicle was maintained poorly.

The charging system for the GPS wasn't functioning. The driver had to navigate with his phone. The vehicle should not have been in service until the GPS was functional.

Given the above, the route the driver selected on his phone was not suitable for a large HGV. In particular, the vehicle could not turn at a radius small enough to avoid going into the oncoming lane on that corner so the driver was preoccupied with oncoming traffic rather than vulnerable road users in the vicinity. That turn would not have been part of a safely designed route. The ad hoc procedure he used on the day was unsafe but there was no mention of a standard procedure in Tesco's system.