

# Cycle campaign toolkit: specification – from CycleStreets, funded by GeoVation

*Version 1, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2011*

This document describes our plan to improve the effectiveness of cycling campaign groups by the creation of a user-friendly, web-based toolkit that will enable groups and their members to gather, discuss and make best use of dispersed geographical knowledge about the problems faced by cyclists.

Comments on this proposed specification are warmly welcomed.

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## **Section A: Background**

### **1. Context: The state of cycling in the UK**

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Cycling has great potential for solving many of the transport problems we face. It is an efficient form of transport, requiring little space. It is environmentally-sound and improves health, and offers an inexpensive transport accessible to a wide variety of people.

However, cycling rates are very low in the UK by continental standards, with few areas reaching into double-figure percentages, and none approaching the 40% levels seen in some parts of the Netherlands for instance.

The barriers preventing higher cycling rates are several. As well as cultural factors, the paucity and low quality of cycle-friendly infrastructure is a key problem. Cyclists often have no option but to use congested roads, shared with fast and hostile traffic. The legal environment often fails to protect cyclists and pedestrians. Furthermore, cycle theft is rife, often due to lack of secure cycle parking.

A range of government, commercial and third-sector initiatives exist to campaign on these issues and effect change on the ground.

Key amongst these is the large number of cycle campaign groups around the UK and Ireland, who work hard to improve conditions for cycling by a variety of campaigning means. Well over 100 groups exist, as part of Cyclenation, the CTC and London Cycling Campaign and the new Cycling Embassy of GB.

Local cycle campaign groups often face typical problems experienced by many local campaigning organisations. As well as having limited funding and being subject to shortages in volunteer time, they lack IT knowledge which could help enormously in managing information about the local cycle network and its problems.

These groups have varied relationships with Local Authorities. Some work in partnership with officers in a productive yet still independent way, supporting (and actively promoting) council initiatives when these are in line with policy, and working through stakeholder meetings to encourage good practice, but campaigning – in a constructive manner – against decisions which are seen to affect cyclists negatively. Other groups have a more negative relationship with Local Authorities, for a variety of reasons.

With cutbacks to national budgets, with transport expected to be particularly badly hit, there will be renewed emphasis by Local Authorities on smaller-scale solutions and resolution of smaller infrastructure problems rather than ‘grand schemes’. As such, better tools for campaigners to campaign on these more localised issues will be needed in this new funding environment, as well as ways to encourage partnership working where possible.

The toolkit aims to provide solutions to the above, providing a platform for reporting, campaigning, discussion and constructive engagement with decision-makers, whilst fully retaining the autonomy of local groups and their policies.

## **2. *Who will be creating the toolkit?***

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The toolkit is being created by CycleStreets, who run the UK-wide cycle journey planner (at [www.cyclestreets.net](http://www.cyclestreets.net)), run 'for cyclists, by cyclists'. As well as the cycle journey planner, which has planned almost a million routes in the UK, the CycleStreets website includes a Photomap campaigning tool used by cyclists to report problems and good practice, by locating photographs on a map.

CycleStreets is now set up as a social enterprise, CycleStreets Ltd, run on a not-for-profit basis for community benefit, with all income generated being invested back into the project. CycleStreets started as an initiative of Cambridge Cycling Campaign, a local voluntary group (now a Charity) working for better, safer, and more cycling in and around Cambridge.

Both of the lead developers of CycleStreets are active cycle campaigners in Cambridge and have links with local groups around the country as well as strong links with the main umbrella cycling groups mentioned above.

Facilities on the CycleStreets website are modelled around two core ideas: (i) journey planning from user-specified points (whether arbitrary or based on existing locations), and (ii) marking of locations on a map for campaigning and utility uses. Combined together these are providing an increasingly powerful set of tools.

We have long wanted to develop the Photomap side of the system into a more useful set of tools so that we can fully realise its original vision of being a useful campaigning tool, and the toolkit aims to do just that.

## **3. *Funding of the toolkit project***

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CycleStreets proposed the development of a cycle campaigner toolkit to GeoVation, which is an initiative run by the Ordnance Survey, running challenges to address specific needs within communities, which may be satisfied in part through the use of geography.

Funding of £150,000 has been awarded to six groups in the latest GeoVation round. This funding has come from a variety of sources: the Technology Strategy Board, the Department for Transport and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.

CycleStreets' proposal for the toolkit was one of the winning bids, and awarded £27,000. This involved several rounds of preparation and culminated in a Dragon's Den -style pitch at the Ordnance Survey offices in Southampton in May.

More details about GeoVation can be found at <http://www.geovation.org.uk/>.

## **4. *Cycling community support***

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Support for the bid came from both of the national campaigning organisations and a number of the most active local groups and others:

- Cyclenation, the national federation of cycle campaign groups
- CTC, the national cyclists' organisation
- Cycling Embassy of Great Britain
- London Cycling Campaign
- Richmond Cycling Campaign
- Bristol
- Pedals (Nottingham Cycling Campaign)
- Dublin Cycling Campaign
- Cambridge Cycling Campaign
- Spokes (East Kent Cycle Campaign)
- Loughborough & District Cycle Users' Campaign
- Push Bikes, the Birmingham Cycling Campaign
- CycleSheffield
- Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign
- CPRE
- Andy Allan (the creator of OpenCycleMap)

Ideas submitted by several of the groups have been incorporated into this draft specification.

The quotes of support can be found in the original bid document on the CycleStreets blog at <http://www.cyclestreets.net/blog/2011/02/04/helping-campaigners-campaign/>.

## **5. *Project timescales***

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The key stages of the project are:

1. The creation of a formal specification, by 24 July 2011 – which is the present document;
2. Development of the toolkit to an 'alpha' (proof of concept) stage, by 28 August 2011;
3. Development of the site to a 'beta' (test site) stage, with a beta being made available to selected groups, by 18 September 2011;

4. The public availability of the site to all groups, by 7 November 2011.

## **6. *Name of the system***

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The name of the system, and its domain name, has not been finalised and is subject to further consultation shortly.

## **7. *Research aspect***

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Work on the toolkit and the associated community interaction issues is being researched as part of research by Loughborough University.

## **8. *A geographical basis***

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Geography, and people's interaction with it, is at the heart of cycle campaigning. Indeed, virtually any issue in cycle campaigning involves geospatial information. For instance,

- Lack of cycle parking involves the need to improve a large number of geographically-dispersed places.
- Poor quality cycle routes, or lack of them, need people who pass through an area to know what the problems are and to share this knowledge.
- Hostile roads need audits that involve geographical techniques.
- Scrutinising planning applications require an understanding of the area and its spatial context.

This web-based toolkit will enable cycle campaigners to gather, discuss and make best use of dispersed geographical knowledge within the specific context of local campaign groups. It will help facilitate their work, enable much simpler information sharing, and provide a range of tools that make clearer the problems that cyclists face, all in a delegated manner that respects both geographical boundaries as well as personal privacy.

Bringing together a whole range of geographical data will make cycle campaigning much more effective. Knowing where planning applications are, or collision hotspots, and clusters of development issues are but brief examples, expanded on below.

The authors of the proposal are both heavily involved with the campaign work of Cambridge Cycling Campaign. They have personal experience of dealing with the geographically-dispersed and numerous nature of cycle campaigning objectives, as well as the sensitivities involved in working with, or campaigning towards, Local Authorities. They are well aware of the need for a system which combines principles of issue management, geography and

campaigning. We believe strongly that the tool will see strong uptake from groups around the country.

## **9. Comparison with other problem-reporting websites**

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Although there are a number of websites currently exist which accept submission of point-source problems, none of them cover the use-case which the toolkit will solve, namely management and prioritisation of dispersed cases of absent/inadequate infrastructure, and the ability for cycle campaign groups to manage and prioritise them.

They are:

- MySociety's FixMyStreet, including its iPhone app. This is really for maintenance issues of a more general nature (i.e. not just transport) rather than provision of absent infrastructure.
- MySociety's soon-to-be-released FixMyTransport. This is more focussed on the process of building a public, high-profile campaign around solving a particular larger issue such as making a station disabled accessible, or similar issues, rather than trying to deal with management of the sum of dispersed issues around a city. Also, it mainly deals with public transport. FixMyTransport mobile also got funding from GeoVation at the same time.
- The CycleStreets website includes a Photomap, which will continue to run as-is. The Photomap has never had a full backend management system for making use of the submitted locations.
- The CTC's FillThatHole, for reporting of potholes, which also has an iPhone app. This deals with maintenance issues rather than improvement of absent/inadequate infrastructure.

As can be seen, those excellent initiatives try to solve different problems for different audiences.

For the avoidance of doubt, the cycle campaigning toolkit is not about maintenance issues (i.e. which tends not to any political process).

## **10. Outcomes**

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The toolkit aims to have the following outcomes:

- Fundamentally, increased resolution of problems on the street/path network and therefore an improved cycling environment



- Improved and better-organised working practices by local groups around the country through access to a new tool to help them manage the deluge of cycling problems that they get told about or wish to see resolved
- Increased reporting of network deficiencies, i.e. increased involvement of local people
- Increased awareness of problems faced by cyclists
- Improved working relationships between campaign groups and Local Authorities (a common problem)
- Increased ability for Local Authorities to justify central government investment
- Increased demonstration of partnership working between Local Authorities and local people
- Potentially, consolidation of existing web-based systems, reducing the need for groups to maintain custom-written and highly-specific systems.

## **Section B: Examples of how the toolkit will help**

### **11. Example 1: Solving cycle parking shortages**

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A first brief example, about cycle parking shortages around a city, will help set the scene for how the toolkit will help.

Secure cycle parking helps reduce theft, provides confidence in cycling, indicates a valuing of cycling as a real mode of transport, and helps avoid cycles blocking pavements.

Yet a shortage of cycle parking is a problem in many towns and cities around the UK. In London, LCC has identified this as a key campaigning priority. In Cambridge, the levels of cycle theft and fly parking are so high that it is seen by the councils as a key infrastructure priority within a programme of improving cycling. The same applies in other areas, too.

But cycle parking is needed in very many places around each town/city. It is a dispersed and widespread problem. The process of getting cycle parking installed in public and private areas involves:

- 1) Identifying areas where cycle parking is needed
- 2) Prioritising these areas in terms of desirability
- 3) Setting up an e-mail list and on-site meetings to discuss proposals
- 4) Identifying whether each location is under the council's control or on private land
- 5) Making a political case for the principle of secure cycle parking in each location, sometimes requiring the removal of a few car parking spaces
- 6) Knowing about the costs involved
- 7) Persuading the relevant authority (council/landowner) to allocate funds
- 8) Determination by the Local Authority of the feasibility of locations, both in terms of land ownership and political feasibility
- 9) Coming up with good designs that meet best practice and avoid old-fashioned, insecure cycle stands
- 10) Community consultation by the Local Authority and determining of objections (e.g. from local homeowners/businesses)
- 11) Implementing each location by the Local Authority (getting the contractors out there)
- 12) Potentially, monitoring usage to make future provision easier to justify.

Each of these stages involves a fair amount of work. Yet these have to be done for every location.

Many of these stages are things where user-friendly technology could help. For instance:

- 1) Identification of locations can be done by encouraging cyclists and members of the public to 'point and click' on a website or click on a mobile phone app (see pictures)
- 2) Prioritising the areas can be done by members of campaign groups who could 'drag and drop' them into a priority order and add notes
- 3) Costs and design issues can be helped by pulling in best practice from elsewhere in the UK available. For instance, particular designs of cycle parking are acknowledged to be best, and there are standard prices available. Making this information available 'on a plate' avoids the need to spend time researching it.
- 4) Making a political case is made easier by demonstrating the sheer volume of requests and by bringing in off-the-shelf summaries of case studies from elsewhere.
- 5) Understanding constraints (e.g. land ownership), to avoid wasted campaigning energy, could be dealt with by inviting the Local Authority officials into the discussion. If they know that a landowner will simply not permit cycle parking on their land, it is best to know this early on rather than after campaigning effort has been expended.
- 6) We could more easily create resources to present our ideas and achievements effectively to the public, e.g. listing the locations that have been improved.

In this way, we can cut out a lot of the 'hard slog' of campaigning. We can delegate identification of the areas easily. We can avoid the need for spreadsheets and drawing over maps. We can avoid the need for much research. We can make an effective political case more quickly. We can work in a productive way with the local council officials who actually would commission the work. Lastly, we can easily list the areas that have been improved.

The toolkit will provide a platform to solve this problem – which is the same problem all around the UK – effectively and avoid duplication of effort.

## ***12. Example 2: Allowing two-way cycling in a one-way street***

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A second example, this time from Cambridge, will discuss how a campaign was undertaken in 2007 to allow legal two-way cycling in what was a key one-way street.

Kingston Street, in Cambridge was a one-way, quiet residential street near the railway station. Cambridge Cycling Campaign, like other campaign groups, has a policy of opening up one-way streets to two-way cycling, in order to make cycle journeys quicker (and thereby more attractive, compared to the car) and safer (because this helps avoid busier roads). Anyone cycling through Soho in London will similarly know the difficulties that one-way streets cause for legal cycling.

It became clear that some local Councillors were against the proposal, pushed by residents who wished to preserve the status quo. In contrast, the cycling campaign took the view that there were objectively no real problems with allowing two-way cycling and that the benefits to cyclists would be very worthwhile.

A campaign was therefore initiated to change the status of the street. This campaign involved the following:

- 1) Setting up an e-mail list to help campaigners discuss the issue and collaborate
- 2) Assembling a case for the principle of two-way cycling, making clear the problems one-way streets cause and the benefits that would come from two-way cycling
- 3) Researching what current national policy exists for two-way cycling
- 4) Identifying evidence from similar changes elsewhere in Cambridge, including collecting photographs
- 5) Running an on-street petition and on the campaign's website and asking where people had cycled from on their journey through the street
- 6) Plotting the origins of each person's journey onto a map, which immediately demonstrated that two-way cycling here was a city-wide issue, rather than just being a purely local issue affecting only residents (and this was key to success of the campaign)
- 7) Encouraging members of the Cycling Campaign to write to their local councillor
- 8) Writing a letter to decision-makers in advance of a key public meeting where the decision was taken, presenting the national policy, the map of users of the street, and the overall case.
- 9) Publicising the whole issue and keeping people informed during and after the change.

The campaign was won. However, it took a lot of work, just for this single street. Four years on, there are many more streets that are still one-way.

Many of the above activities could have been automated or helped by a good toolkit:

- 1) An e-mail list could be automatically created if we already know who lives in the area (and therefore likely to be interested) or who has said they are interested in 'two-way cycling issues'
- 2) Researching national policy could be provided 'on a plate' since this is a common issue elsewhere in the UK and there are specific documents about it
- 3) Setting up an online petition is becoming easier
- 4) Converting postcode/address locations into a map format could be entirely automated, rather than each having to be plotted on the map manually
- 5) The process of encouraging people to write to local councillors could be improved by having key points available and identifying who the councillors are, based on where people live, and approaching Councillors only in the areas (and council committee) concerned
- 6) Publicising the issue could have been made much more easy, ideally avoiding the need for a particular 'webmaster' with special web knowledge to do this task.

## Section C: Overview of the toolkit

### 13. Overview of the toolkit

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The toolkit will be a dedicated website, free of charge to use.

It will be split into two main sections:

- a) Reporting a problem: a section open to anyone
- b) Managing and solving problems: for campaigners and groups, requiring a login

These are described in more detail below.

### 14. Reporting a problem: a section open to anyone

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This section will enable people to report a cycling-related problem (or an example of good practice). This will be made as user-friendly and straightforward as possible. People will:

- i. pinpoint the location on a map of the UK
- ii. add a photo if they have one (which will be encouraged)
- iii. add a quick one-line summary of the issue
- iv. optionally, add further details of the issue
- v. add a category so that types of issues will automatically get grouped.

Submission can also be done via the CycleStreets Photomap website and via the CycleStreets mobile apps and mobile web site.



Anyone will be able to submit problems, e.g.:

- Campaigners
- Members of the public who cycle, perhaps encouraged to submit problems thanks to publicity by campaign groups
- Members of the public who would cycle if infrastructure were better
- Local Authority officials and Councillors
- Anyone else

The types of problems that can be added are either:

- Point-source locations, pinpointed on a map (e.g. for needed cycle parking, obstruction needing removal, parking problem hotspot etc.)
- Linear problems, i.e. lines drawn on a map, e.g. for where a desired cycle route could be created where it does not currently exist. This could be a single line (e.g. cycle lane needed on road) or a set of related lines forming one overall route (e.g. a missing route through an area).

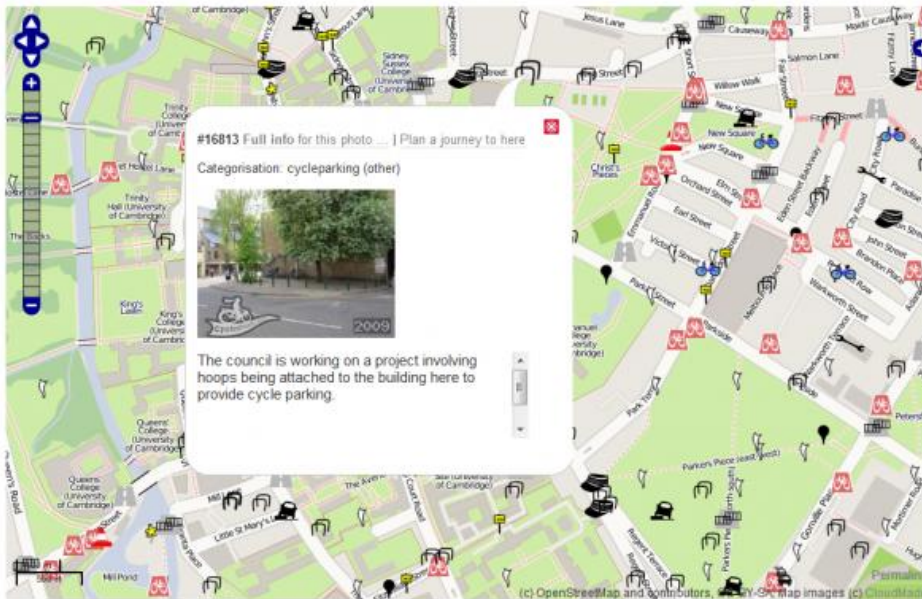
[Should submission require a login, to prevent spam?]

In respect of issues that people have already submitted:

- These will be shown publicly on the map (where they have not already been solved)
- Others can 'thumb up' the issue (once only, cookie-based to deter casual abuse)
- Others can also add a comment to clarify or add additional views in respect of a location shown
- A link to the internal campaign page on that issue (the 'thread', see below) discussing it will be shown. This will take people to a login page and only campaigners can access it.
- No discussion will be possible on the public site, other than the thumbs-up facility and submitting in a comment
- Outcome of an issue if it has been resolved
- Public users can opt to receive notifications about the progress of locations they have submitted. [Needs further consideration.]
- [Determine what happens when an issue (thread, explained below) has been split by campaigners]

Move the map near: 

Show key / Filter by type



## 15. *Managing and solving problems: for campaigners and groups*

This section of the website is intended for people interested in campaigning and working to solve the problems submitted. It is the larger of the two sections and it will contain many different facilities.

Each local campaign group will have its own area, i.e. its own customised toolkit, picking up the submitted problems in their geographical area only. All discussions and so on will be private to their group (unless they decide otherwise) and managed in the way they want.

People using this will be:

- Members of campaign groups (both ordinary members and those running the group)
- Other campaigners that are not members, potentially, if the group wants to allow that
- Officials and people like residents association reps, if campaigners want to invite them into particular discussion(s)

The sorts of activities that campaigners will do here are:

- Viewing submitted problems, either on a map or listing format
- Categorising and clarifying submitted problems
- Discussing the issues amongst the group
- Adding/removing oneself from individual discussions

- Grouping issues together
- Prioritising the issues in a variety of ways, e.g. by importance, achievability, cost range, date, etc.
- Bringing into the discussion any best practice examples from elsewhere
- Adding in factual information into the discussion, e.g. a likely costing of some infrastructure, national guidance, etc.
- Marking good practice as something that might be of interest to other campaign groups elsewhere in the UK
- Inviting in other people, e.g. local residents, Local Authority officials, if wished. (Often these are external people who have extensive local or technical knowledge.)
- Setting up meetings, petitions
- Drafting letters, blog posts and other resources
- Publishing issues (i.e. informing the public) in a variety of ways

These and more are given in more detail below.

## **16. *A one-stop-shop for campaigning***

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Cycle campaigners deal with a whole range of issues, and an aim of the toolkit is to try to bring these together into a 'one-stop-shop' for managing them.

So the system will aim to:

- Provide a central way for anyone to submit a problem, as mentioned above
- Provide a central way for campaigners to manage, discuss and campaign on problems.
- Bring in locations of planning applications, and showing these as issues to be looked at, displayed on the toolkit's map automatically
- Let people browse and interact with best practice from around the UK
- If wished, enable the group's public e-mail address to be automatically linked with the system so that incoming e-mails can be turned into problems on the map in the same way
- Provide the ability to replace manually-managed e-mail lists with automatically-created e-mail discussions and online forums that include only people who have expressed an interest in each particular issue
- Import other sources of geographical data (e.g. a group may already have a database of cycle parking locations), again to show on the map
- Provide a way for issues to be published on an existing website easily and flexibly without the need for copying and pasting material



## Section D: Group basis

### 17. *Respecting groups' autonomy*

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The cycling community is very diverse, and as such, there are lots of views on lots of subjects. Sometimes there are multiple groups with an overlapping geographical remit.

The toolkit aims fully to respect groups' autonomy. The principle is that the toolkit is, by default, an 'internal management tool' that members of the group – and only members – can use, but they can choose to make the system more open to others if they wish.

The toolkit:

- Will enable campaigners to discuss issues as publicly or privately as they want
- Will not force a view on anyone – it is merely a platform to make discussion and issue-management as simple as possible
- Will enable groups to share best practice knowledge with other groups if they want
- Will make it easy for groups to invite in Local Authority officials, if they want. (If not, those people will not be able to see the discussions.)
- Will manage issues in their area independently of other groups who might also be in the same area.

The latter point is important and needs some expansion:

- Each group can define whatever geographical area it wants (e.g. "Tell us about all issues in Placeford"), irrespective of whatever any other group has decided. In rare cases, a group may wish to exclude a geographical area (e.g. South Cambridgeshire is a Local Authority area which fully surrounds Cambridge).
- For instance, if a Cyclenation group and a CTC group both work in Placeford, they can both set up their own area and not share discussions
- Therefore, it will be possible for more than one campaign group to register for managing problem reports in the same area. This is not a problem technically and reflects the current situation in some places. The system will be available equally to any group so it should not change any politics concerned. If anything, the system will hopefully encourage closer working.
- Groups can choose to open up an issue ('thread', see below) to another group, however. For instance, if Placeshire CTC and Placeford City Cycling Campaign are both working for a 20mph zone in an area, they could join together on that issue, while not sharing information on other issues.
- Groups could choose to open up an issue ('thread', see below) on a cross-boundary basis. For instance, if the South Placeford Cycle Campaign and the North Placeford

Cycle Campaign are working on trying to get cycle lanes on the A-road between them, they could join together on this issue if they wish.

- Where a set of campaign groups in an area are working together, both logos would be shown.

When someone new comes to the site and tries to register in an area, having specified their location, they will be told what groups exist in the area.

## **18. Group identity**

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Groups can apply for their own toolkit for their area. In doing so, they will:

- Fill in a simple webform giving the required details
- Specify a geographical area, by selecting this from a list of OS-boundary based areas, and modifying it on map where necessary

Applications will, initially at least, be checked by CycleStreets before becoming activated. This is to avoid mistakes and problems. The intention is that this check will be removed in the light of experience gained with the system after several groups have registered.

Each group will:

- Run its area of the toolkit under its own subdomain (see next section) or dedicated domain name
- Be able to customise the header and footer so that it matches their own site. This can be done by pasting in HTML or by specifying a header and footer file that the system will dynamically retrieve. (At a technical level, caching will be in place, with a time setting established.)
- Be able to add a logo, which will be strongly encouraged
- Be required to fill in certain details about their group, e.g. main contact details, main website (if they have one), Committee officer details and other things that ordinary members of a group will find useful to have easily available.
- Have a settings page, determining the parameters of the system, e.g. privacy controls, member expiry default, etc.
- Have a link to auto-subscribe users (further details of which are given below)

## **19. Website addresses for each group**

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Each group will by default have its own subdomain, e.g. placeford.<toolkitname.com>. These will try to avoid name clashes (e.g. 'ccc' which would be vague).

A group with an existing website can decide to change its default subdomain, according to one of the following four options. (A group can only have a single option in use at any time.)

1. A website address they own, e.g. [www.placefordcyclecampaign.org](http://www.placefordcyclecampaign.org) and make the site entirely be the toolkit
2. A subdomain of a website address they own, e.g. <http://toolkit.placefordcyclecampaign.org/>
3. A subdirectory of a website address they own, e.g. [www.placefordcyclecampaign.org/campaigning/](http://www.placefordcyclecampaign.org/campaigning/). This will require proxying.
4. Or change it back to the default subdomain.

Groups can propose changing their default subdomain name (e.g. in the scenario that the group's legal name changes), but this will require the approval of the system administrator (i.e. a CycleStreets employee).

Documentation on this will make clear the technical requirements. Groups using methods 1–3 will need some technical knowledge of a webmaster to implement the change.

An iframe-based hosting will not be available, because this prevents direct linking to individual issues.

Where a name has been changed, the old one will still be recognised and will redirect to the new one.

## **20. Management of a group**

---

A group's area will be 'managed' by its Committee, mirroring the way that virtually all groups have an elected Committee of officers:

- When setting up a group online, the founding people must determine a policy setting which specifies whether changes to any settings must be by (a) majority vote or (b) approve-unless-objections or (c) approve when reached a threshold. This effectively gives a safety catch to prevent a disruptive member paralysing a group.
- Committee members can approve new people subscribing. This is described further in the section on registration.

The system will not include a membership payment system. This could be added as a future feature, although this introduces all kinds of new security risks and will require a different security context to be implemented.

## **21. *Who can take part in a group's discussions?***

---

The question of who can take part in a group's discussions, i.e. view and subscribe to issues (called 'threads' – see later) being dealt with by a group, is entirely the choice of the group. The Committee can set one of these policies:

- i. To allow paid-up members of their Campaign only
- ii. To allow Committee members only (though it is hoped that groups will try to involve people more widely)
- iii. To allow open access to anyone who wishes to subscribe. (However, this opens the risk of anti-cyclist members joining maliciously, and arguably means there is no democratic basis for operation of the group)

## Section E: Users and registration

### 22. Registration and profile pages

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In order to take part in a group's discussions, campaigners will need to sign in with a username.

Every user will have a profile page, containing the following information (with only the username required – the user can choose to omit the other information):

- Their username
- Their e-mail address (which is not revealed unless they choose to allow this)
- Real name
- Which group they are registered to (this could be more than one group, potentially)
- A picture of themselves (avatar)
- Their location, entered either as a postcode (converted automatically to a map location) or directly clicked on the map
- Contact details, if they wish to reveal them
- An 'about me' text section that people can fill in

Profile pages also include a messaging system. This is to enable other members to contact each other without revealing their e-mail address. This will display messages in a conversation-style view, one per user, much like Facebook. [Consider whether to split by subject line also, i.e. as per old Facebook style.]

Initial registration will use the existing CycleStreets signin database data and the toolkit and CycleStreets will share this same database.

Methods of creating an account (and logging-in) will be:

- Using a standard user account creation system as currently used by CycleStreets.
- An additional option run using OAuth or OpenID would be available so that people with existing accounts on the relevant cycle campaign websites could use that account to log in, where those systems have been OAuth/OpenID-enabled.
- Auto-registration by a Committee member of a group, as detailed below.

Registered users:

- Would be encouraged to enter their home postcode, and places of work and leisure. (As a nice extra, users will get automatic 'cycle from/to here' route links based on these submitted key places.)
- 'Plot-my-routes': Having entered these work/leisure locations, routes would automatically be created by the CycleStreets journey planner. The user would be

encouraged to adjust ('drag points on the line to correct it') the generated routes against their actual, undertaken journeys (data which, in itself, could be used to improve routing quality in the CycleStreets journey planner), or upload a GPX file. This route feature is used so that submitted problems can be linked to people who actually would stand to benefit (and who therefore have an incentive to get involved in the issue).

- Potentially groups might also be able to add known journeys of their members who are not (yet) registered. However, this might have data protection implications so will need further consideration. [Consider further; ask DE]

Users agree the copyright status of their contributions when registering. This will include confirmation that the hosters of the system (CycleStreets) are licensed to host these contributions.

Users will be given helpful 'guidance bubbles' to ease them into the toolkit's interface the first time they use them. The number of these will be limited, to avoid them becoming annoying. These will have an 'OK' button in each case to prevent them being shown again.

Upon first registration, the default state is that users do not receive any information on any campaign issues by e-mail.

## **23. *Types of users***

---

Users are either:

- Standard members of the group, however that is defined (e.g. paid-up or otherwise) according to the Committee's choice of how they manage their toolkit
- External invitees (e.g. Council officials, Councillors, residents association group contacts, etc.). Groups can determine whether these people can see all discussions or (more likely) just individual issues ('threads', see below).

## **24. *Auto-registration of users***

---

Groups can auto-register their members as users of the toolkit, on the following basis:

- This can only be done by Committee members of a group
- It is done by importing a set of e-mail addresses, with a variety of flexible formats being possible.
- It will only have the effect of issuing an pre-formatted invitation to the user to register.
- Where the Committee has added these invitees, the list of those who have accepted will have hyperlinks to active user profiles (i.e. those who have responded). The

listing will also show those who have not responded, and it can be amended (e.g. unregistered people deleted).

Where a group runs on the basis of a members-only access system (which is likely to be the default scenario):

- The Committee can control the expiry date of a member, which can be updated when they renew
- The group's settings include a grace period setting, meaning that people will be reminded that they need to renew (and be given a link to the group's website, where details are given) but still be able to post in that period. After this, they will be locked out.

## **25. *Status bar, at the top of the screen***

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Once logged-in, users will see a bar along the top of the screen which contains:

- Quick links to the various sections of the site
- Notifications (things they need to look at)
- A search box
- Confirmation of their username
- A logout link

This status bar will be visible whatever section of the site the user is in.

## **Section F: Dealing with issues: campaigning**

### **26. Getting an overview of campaigning issues**

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Upon logging in, the user will be in the campaigning section of the website.

A campaigner will be able to:

- See all the issues of interest to them (however submitted into the system)
- Not see other issues not of interest to them by default
- View them on a map or in a forum-style text view
- Have their own listings of issues prioritised, in various ways
- Be able to discuss the issues, e.g. add replies

In respect of the map view:

- Locations will have different icons depending on the type of issue, e.g. cycle parking, obstructions, etc.), in a similar way to the current CycleStreets Photomap
- Filters can be applied, e.g. to show only cycle parking problems.
- Additional static layers can also be switched on for information purposes, e.g. cyclist collision locations (subject to availability and licensing compatibility by area), potentially transport-related crime (if available) and London Cycle Hire locations.

### **27. ‘Threads’: core concept for discussing and managing issues**

---

A ‘thread’ is basically a discussion on a specific issue or more general topic.

The system will have a notion that every issue becomes a thread (discussion page), into which replies (views and facts) and resources (e.g. more pictures, guidance, best practice examples, even other related issues) can be added.

This is a similar concept to things like:

- An e-mail list, where an issue is raised (with the subject line being the title) and people reply, one-by-one, sometimes quoting previous text, and where people can attach pictures, documents when they reply
- Web forums, where each issue is an entry in the forum and people reply one after another

A thread is created automatically for every submitted issue, planning application, etc. I.e.:



- Every issue submitted (e.g. “Cycle parking needed here on York Street”, “Removing the bollard near the entrance to the supermarket”, “Adding a cycle lane on Downing Street”)
- Every thematic issue (e.g. “20mph zones”, “Cycle parking”, “Cycle lanes”, “Helmets”)
- Every non-geographical topic (e.g. “TfL’s cycling strategy”, “Committee meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> July”)
- Every planning application (“New school on York Road”)
- Every other issue which makes its way into the system (e.g. imported cycle parking locations)

## **28. *What threads (issues) does a person see when they log in?***

---

People are automatically ‘subscribed to’ the types of issues which they have said they want to know about. All of the following will apply in determining which issues get subscribed to:

- On first registering with the website, they specify what thematic issues they are interested in (e.g. “Cycle parking”, “School cycle safety”)
- On first registering with the website, they can also specify the areas they cycle, effectively drawing lines on the map representing the places that, when issues are submitted in that area, they will get to know about them. (The concept here is that, if someone cycles through an area, changes to that area affect them, so they are more likely to be interested.)
- If they wish, drawing a box or multiple boxes on the map showing the area(s) they wish to know about. Some users (particularly Committee members) may even wish to watch the entire area of relevance to the group.
- Manually adding themselves into a thread, by ‘ticking it’
- Adding a comment to a thread they are not currently subscribed to (since this indicates they are interested in this particular thread)
- Being invited into a thread by another campaigner (i.e. an ‘I think you should see this...’ invitation), which they can chose to tick/respond to in order to subscribe

If the person is not interested in an issue comes up, they can just untick it.

In summary, the result is that:

- People only get subscribed to what they’ve said they want to hear about, and nothing else
- Issues that get submitted automatically become available in their list of threads
- People can view/monitor other things being discussed without subscribing to them
- People can easily unsubscribe from an issue

## **29. How can threads (the issues) be accessed?**

---

Campaigners can read and reply to threads by either (or both) of these:

- Logging into the website, exactly like a forum
- E-mail, exactly like a normal e-mail list

For instance, if someone replies to a thread on the website, people who prefer to receive things by e-mail will see that reply coming in by e-mail, and vice-versa. People can also choose to do both, i.e. also log into the website.

In respect of any forum views:

- They can also be accessed as RSS feeds
- Users will be able to 'Send this thread to me by e-mail' by pressing a button, when subscribing to a thread. This is useful if a user prefers replying to threads by e-mail but who therefore has not got access to previous e-mails (and therefore has nothing to reply to). This will send a set of individual e-mails rather than a single one [Consider further].

## **30. Flagging of important issues by Committee members**

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Committee members can 'flag up' important threads:

- Top-priority, high-profile campaign issues that they particularly want everyone in the group to be aware of, which will appear in a News section on the front page when logging in and as a notification.
- For each thread, cycle campaign committee members can flag to people whose home location or journeys (both as submitted in their user profile) pass through the area, to ask for views on proposals or issues. For instance, if, after pressure from a campaign group, the local council proposes a new cycle lane, the group could easily contact anyone whose journey goes through that street and therefore would be encouraged to submit comments to the Council.
- [Should these flagged items also be notified by e-mail for users who use the e-mail method, if the user has consented to such updates, if some way to prevent overuse can be set, e.g. in a setting of max notifications?]

If a person has previously unticked an issue that they were automatically subscribed to, and the Committee flags up that issue, it will be re-shown, but lower down on the page in a separate section.

## **31. Summary of information shown at the top of each thread**

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The top of the thread will have:

- An initial title (which is the summary that was originally submitted by the person reporting the issue).
- Optionally, a description, which is the description originally submitted
- The category, which will have a link to other issues in the same category (e.g. other cycle parking issues)
- The time submitted
- A button for subscribing or unsubscribing
- A button which, when clicked, shows who is subscribed to the thread, which will always show all usernames (but also their real name where people have enabled this, which will be encouraged).
- A Google Street View display, to help people give context
- A display of the group(s) dealing with this thread. Normally this will just be a single main group for the area. However, in places where more than one group is covering an issue and have agreed to share a thread, both logos will be shown.
- The number of public thumbs-up, for information
- A Subgroup assignment, if the campaign is organised into subgroups **[More detail on this concept needed – or is it actually still needed?]**
- Prioritisation controls (see further details below, e.g. ‘prioritise by importance to me’)
- A link to the relevant WriteToThem page (a website which enables easy contacting of political representatives for an area) or internal contact-my-Councillor page having the same underlying data. **[Consideration needed about how to encourage people only to do this when they have read and engaged with the thread.]**

## **32. Replying to a thread – advancing the discussion**

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A thread can have the following types of things added to it:

- Text replies, which will be very commonly used. (These can include quoted sections of a previous reply. Quotations will try to detect people carelessly quoting an entire entry, but instead encourage it to be cut down to the relevant parts only.)
- A photo
- A new Google Street View location
- A notification that the thread’s title/description has been amended by a user

- An link to a online newspaper article or blog post
- A document (e.g. a link to a policy document). Documents will be encouraged to have structured data added so that they can be found more easily later.
- A general web link, which shall include a field for a description so that people know what they're about to click on
- An e-mail attached into the thread (e.g. a reply from an official that campaigners should be aware of). E-mails relating to the issue/cloud can be bounced/forwarded to the system via a mail-to-web gateway, and when they log in to the web forum view, the person can assign the e-mail they have forwarded from a list of those waiting to be added to a thread.
- Information that is marked as 'Strictly private to the group' that should not be forwarded to outsiders. For instance, there could be known issues relating to land ownership or strategic issues with the council which would not be productive to broadcast. [Should there also be a 'Notes for Committee' box?]
- Additional comments coming in from the public
- A notification that someone has been invited into the discussion [needs expansion in terms of policy: who decides on this, and what if people object, in particular to being able to see earlier discussions?]; in the case of external people such as an official from a Local Authority, this will be from a 'pick list' of people and their job titles and areas of involvement, and campaigner 'drags this person into the conversation' from a box in the corner of the screen. The system will have visual clues that help promote (but not force) this kind of interaction. These people can often add useful information about feasibility.
- An 'info block' (see fuller description below) which outlines a policy statement, e.g. national policy (e.g. "National policy on pedestrianised areas") which tries to summarise key resources succinctly, and includes key quotes.
- Campaigners can pull in examples of best practice related to the particular issue, from the best practice examples already in the system (see: <http://www.cyclestreets.net/photos/categories/>) or which are submitted as good practice by people adding locations. A quick and direct search will be available to make these easily-findable. For instance, if an issue regarded the need for cycle parking in a tight space, best-practice examples of solutions to that problem from elsewhere could be directly referenced by attaching that to the item, reducing the ability for decision-makers to claim "it can't done".
- An info block which outlines a likely set of costs for a type of infrastructure
- A pre-formatted invitation (e.g. "Someone please agree to draft a letter") that people can accept
- Integration with an Ensembling document ([www.ensembling.com](http://www.ensembling.com) is a system for enabling people to draft a document and enable other people to comment on it, iteratively producing drafts). When the document is approved, the compiled

comments will be forwarded by Ensembling and be imported into the toolkit for future reference.

- A statement that a letter has been sent, and to whom, and attaching the letter itself. [Could the system do the actual sending out as well?]
- A proposed Campaign Objective (e.g. a solution like “Addition of a cycle lane” in response to a submitted problem like “Dangerous traffic here”. These are designed to encourage action-orientated discussion. Two levels of objectives can be added: “Objective” and “Acceptable compromise”. People can thumb these up or down (one vote per person), with the count shown.
- A deadline. More than one deadline can be added, but users will be warned about other deadlines that are still forthcoming. When adding a deadline, a description of what the deadline relates to (e.g. “Consultation deadline”) has to be added.
- Other types of material/activity (as become required as usage of the system increases).
- Achievement of a campaign objective, e.g. that the cycle parking location has been added. This will also show as visible text on the public map view, where it was originally submitted.
- A photo which officially supersedes the original photo in depicting the new situation on the ground.
- Reference to a ‘Case study’ entry for the information of other groups. This is explained in a later section below.

Members can undo (‘Click X’) an addition, working on a similar basis to Facebook. If other people have already viewed the comment, the fact that the person adding the item has removed it will be noted. This will avoid suggestions that members are trying to ‘game’ discussions by adding things that other people then do not see.

Members can also edit their postings (including the ability for a reply submitted by e-mail to be edited online by the same user). When an edit is made, the fact that an edit has been made will be noted. [Should the old edit be displayed, perhaps on a time-after-editing basis?]

Members (even those not following the thread) can click a button which has the effect of anonymously stating that they feel that the discussion is becoming too chatty rather than action-orientated. An indication of this count will be shown.

Threads can be viewed in date or who-replied-to-who order.

### **33. Using e-mail instead of a forum view (mail-to-web gateway)**

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As noted above, users can ignore the web-based forum-style thread view, and interact with threads via e-mail instead / as well. The intention here is that users who like to manage workload by e-mail can use the system as if it were a standard e-mail list.

Users, however, will need to use the forum view if they want to add themselves to other threads that they are not automatically-subscribed to.

Users can follow a link in an e-mail to unsubscribe from a thread. This will not require login. [Is this sufficiently secure?] The webpage they are taken to will include a confirmation button to prevent accidental deletion.

When threads are sent by e-mail, e-mail addresses of other people will not be transmitted. E-mails will come from a system address that does not relate to any person's e-mail or username.

The system address of every e-mail will contain a unique and randomised number. The e-mail sender address will also be analysed. Together, this means that, when replying, other users cannot send a fake e-mail pretending to be from someone else. Unmatched addresses will result in a bounced e-mail.

Replies (to a thread) that are sent by e-mail will try to maintain threading:

- The use of the unique e-mail address will ensure matching of subjects.
- Outgoing subject lines will match the thread title; incoming subject lines (i.e. included in the reply from the user) will ignore changes to the subject line
- Quoting of text will take place, and the system will try to match up text using a variety of means. (Google Groups uses a similar technique.)

[This proposal needs auditing.] A user can start a new thread without going to the website:

- By e-mailing a known e-mail address of a list. They will be given this when signing up and encouraged to add it to their inbox.
- This will which will have the effect of creating a new, non-geographical, thematic discussion with the subject line being the title of the thread.
- Any user, including the original poster, viewing threads via the website (forum view) can migrate this new (currently non-geographical) thread to a geographical thread by giving it a location by clicking on the map.

### **34. Viewing and managing threads**

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Discussions on a topic can often contain useful information amongst other chatter which is less useful. Subscribers to a thread can therefore:

- Thumb up or down (i.e. a quick "I agree" or "I disagree")

- Be able to flag up useful things for future reference. They will be able to see these 'bookmarks' in their profile
- Be able to hide replies that they don't want to see any longer. This will only affect their view of the thread, and not anyone else's. [Is this needed - why not do a Facebook-style auto-scroll instead, or paginate with memory of the last page shown?]
- Set the way that a thread is shown, e.g. unread-only or view-everything. Where view-everything is set, they will be able to get to the last-viewed post quickly.

When someone is viewing a thread and, at the same time, someone else posts a reply:

- That reply will immediately become visible on the page in the relevant ordering
- If the person viewing the thread is also writing a reply at that exact time, this reply-writing process will not be disrupted.

A user viewing threads via the website (forum view) can migrate a non-geographical thread to a geographical thread by giving it a location by clicking on the map.

### **35. Thread prioritisation**

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An important feature of the toolkit is that issues can be prioritised in various ways. This is because there are often lots of issues to sort out in a city, but campaigners and councils obviously cannot tackle everything at once.

Prioritisation exists as a concept in three ways:

- Individual priority ("Importance to me: <...>"), not visible to other ordinary members, but visible to Committee members
- Priority to the overall group, set by the Committee
- And additionally, a time-based view of deadlines
- [Also: Importance within a cost banding - or is this an additional complexity?]

There are five levels of importance. Each level has a value, shown here in brackets, which is only of relevance to the Committee (as explained below).

- Top-priority (value: 10)
- Important (value: 8)
- Moderately important (value: 6)
- Marginal interest (value: 3)
- Not of interest (value: 1)

Changing the importance level can be set using a drag-and-drop style method or by a traditional drop-down list.

The latter category has the effect of saying ‘This is not a problem’, i.e. whitelisting an entry. It is particularly likely to get used for planning applications that are checked and then determined as not being important. In whitelisting an entry, people are encouraged to add a comment explaining why, e.g. “I’ve had a quick look at this planning application and it’s only a minor change that doesn’t affect cycling.” This affects only their own assessment of the priority, visible only to them.

Priority to the overall group is set by the Committee. In doing this, they will see each person’s assessment of priority so that they can judge things. For instance, if 5 people have all set a planning application thread to ‘Not of interest’ then they will see a very low score, namely “10% reviewed by 5 people” (which presents 5 scores of 1 point, i.e. total score of 5, out of a total potential score of 50).

Upon appearance as a new thread, issues have no importance attached to them. These will appear in a specific area of the page, set out in a way which will encourage users to go through them and prioritise them, thus removing them from the new threads list.

## **36. Search facility**

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A search facility, to find threads and information in them, and other things, will be available.

The search will be flexible, so the search will find matches in the title, comments and elsewhere.

The search will be accessible from the top of any page.

The search can be set to be across all threads of the group, or just those being watched.

An advanced search will also be available, so that more specific searches can be done, e.g. “User X posting between dates Y and Z”.

The search will show different types of results separately, e.g. threads, documents and info blocks would each be shown under separate headings.

## **37. Deadline management**

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A key issue for an effective campaign group is ensuring that deadlines, both for transport scheme consultations and planning applications, are dealt with in time. Groups will be able to add key dates and schedule reminders to help them focus on important issues that are also urgent.

A time-based deadline view of threads will be available to all users.

Users can tick a deadline entry in a thread, to indicate that they wish to be notified about deadlines approaching. This ‘Reminder’ will appear as an indicator when they log in (and in the top ‘My info’ bar of the site) and can be set as an e-mail reminder.



Reminders can be set in a customised way. For instance, someone might wish to receive a reminder “Deadline for consultation response” 5 days beforehand and the day before.

Deadline reminder e-mails will be issued by a scheduler in the morning at 7am so that people see these at the start of the day when they log in or check their e-mail.

### **38. Info blocks**

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Info blocks [Is there a better name?] are widgets containing structured information which can be pulled into the discussion (literally dragged across the page, so it then appears as a thread reply).

Info blocks are intended to be factual so that they do not attract argument. The idea of these is that they are reusable whenever an issue needs them. This avoids, every time, people having to research things that are already researched.

Types of info block (each of which has its own template) available will initially be:

- Infrastructure solution
- National guidance
- Local policy document
- Case study outlining best practice on an issue
- An organisation (e.g. DfT, or a part of a council) and information about its structure
- Council officer
- [What others?]

Creation of an info block will be done in a Wizard-style format, which will require the inputting of the following (roughly in the order shown):

- An overall type (e.g. Cycle parking)
- A title (e.g. Sheffield stands). The toolkit will try to auto-detect potential duplication with existing info blocks.
- Whether this is local or national (in this example, national)
- Whether it relates to any other info block, i.e. so they can be linked together
- The main details, which could include a photo, links and documents, based on the type of info block. [Need further details as to how this is managed]
- Whether this info block can be seen by other groups. For info blocks having a national status, sharing between groups will be strongly encouraged.
- Permissions for allowing others to edit it [Need further details as to how this is managed]

Info blocks then become available for use in any thread:

- Once an info block has been created, it can be ‘dragged’ from one side of the page into the discussion.
- Threads will include a box where info blocks will be auto-suggested based on heuristic matching (e.g. if ‘one-way street’ is in the title, a resource about contraflow signage will suggest itself, encouraging someone to review it and ‘drag it in’ to the discussion.)
- For instance, if someone proposes cycle parking, a type of infrastructure which has a clear set of best practice associated with it, the “Cycle parking best practice” info block could be dropped in.
- Someone who is not familiar with the contents of the info block can then click on the icon to see more details (visually, it will appear to expand).

In terms of managing info blocks:

- New info blocks can be created by anyone.
- Each info block itself has a thread attached to them for discussion and eventual editing
- Editing will be possible and is determined according to the permissions set. Where a user does not have permission, they can request it from the original creator of the info block.

### **39. *Document management***

---

When documents are added, perhaps as part of an info block, the system will encourage descriptive summaries to be added about them, and any other details such as a date or web reference.

This will result in a growing document repository, which can be navigated through in a file-viewer style view, or via the search, and documents downloaded when wished.

### **40. *Thread branching and splitting***

---

A member using the forum view can split a thread into several issues. This is useful if, for instance, if a discussion about a street has developed into two separate issues. Or a discussion about a Committee paper includes several different themes. Splitting will work as follows:

- Pressing a specific button that has the effect of splitting the discussion into one or more new threads.
- The splitting process requires that new subject lines and categories are created and that the geographical basis (or lack of it) for each of the new issues is established.

- The person doing the splitting (branching) will be required to say whether this is merely splitting or whether it is creating a ‘master’ issue and sub-issues. [Whole issue of master and sub-issues is not clear.] For instance, a main thread could be considering a Committee paper, and each item on the paper could be sub-issues. [UI needs consideration here]
- The original thread can still be contributed to. However users [which? – just the first?] will be warned that it has been split and advise them to follow one of the new threads instead.
- Subscription of the new threads works on the same basis of being geographically or thematically-related, i.e. users will be auto-subscribed to them in the same way as any other thread, depending on what the location/category now is.
- Split threads copy (inherit, once only) the access control basis of the parent, by default. So if, for instance, a Local Authority official has been invited into a thread, they will also be able to see the new thread.

## **41. Thread grouping**

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Threads may need to be grouped together as a ‘cloud’ of issues. This is so that issues can be grouped into logical groupings that users can understand.

For instance, a range of issues relating to the construction of a shopping centre could be pushed into a new ‘cloud’ of issues grouping these together. Each issue or cloud then becomes one entity in terms of discussions and commentary, and divergence of discussion between several entries is avoided.

[This section needs further expansion – this is the master/sub-thread issue again, and its UI and consequences need to be defined.]

## **42. Dealing with disputes**

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Cycle campaigners sometimes deal with very divisive topics (e.g. ‘helmets’) and so heated disputes can occasionally arise. It is important that unproductive users do not drain enthusiasm of others.

The system will work on the basis of trying to encourage cordial and polite discussion, even where views are divergent.

In dealing with disputes:

- Disputes within groups are entirely managed by that group and not by CycleStreets.
- Committee members can ban disruptive people, with the process for this being determined according to a policy in the settings.

- Committee members can enable a swearword monitor which will flag up, early on, a thread which appears to be attracting vitriol rather than cordial discussion.
- Users can report abuse to the Committee via a button on the page.

Thread discussions are never moderated, because they are not public by default and therefore visible only to the group themselves. People can easily unsubscribe if they want to, by unticking the thread.

Likewise, threads cannot be shut down by a Committee member. The reason for this is again that people can easily unsubscribe.

Where a member is acting abusively, and action is taken to deal with the specific replies in the thread that are problematic:

- Any removal (actually blanking out) of an individual thread reply will be clearly marked. For instance, "This reply made by [name] was removed by [committee-member-name] at [time/date]." This is important if, for instance, a defamatory remark or highly sensitive material has been made that should not continue to be seen by others. This is done purely to avoid the website being sued for continued hosting of defamatory text.
- Because some members may have subscribed to a thread by e-mail, an abusive posting will already have been sent to their inbox. This cannot be undone therefore.

[Would a StackOverflow-style reputation system help deal with these problems, or just add additional complexity and more buttons?]

[Are there any governance issues here?]

## **Section G: Integrating different source of data**

### **43. Linking with a group's public e-mail address**

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Because an aim of the toolkit is to provide a 'one-stop-shop' for managing all areas of campaigning for a group, irrespective of how the problem has been reported, the toolkit can accept and process incoming e-mail from a group's public e-mail address(es).

To set this up, the group's e-mail account must allow mail to be forwarded to another address. (Gmail and many other systems allow this.) A committee member for the group would go to their group's control panel in the toolkit, add the group's e-mail address, and the system will specify the e-mail address that the group should have their existing public e-mail address forwarding to.

A future feature would be that groups would be able to set up real mailboxes on the system and point its DNS record to the toolkit, so that, e.g. [contact@placefordcyclecampaign.org](mailto:contact@placefordcyclecampaign.org) would be directly processed by the toolkit.

Incoming mail gets turned into a thread like any other. However, these threads are treated as initially available to the Committee or specified members only. The recipients can migrate them to public threads ('Set as normal thread for group discussion') in the same way as managing any other thread, by adding a category and/or geographical location. In doing so, they will be reminded of the importance of ensuring that personal data is not transmitted to others, so a facility to strip e-mail addresses and names will be available.

### **44. Planning applications**

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Dealing with planning applications can often be an important part of cycle campaigning but one easily overlooked. New developments, whether small localised changes, or major new developments, affect travel patterns for decades. In this regard:

- Planning applications will become threads, in the same way as anything else.
- Where deadline information relating to a Planning Application is available, this would automatically be set in the deadline management controls noted above.

This will use the Planning Alerts API, detailed at <http://planningalerts.com/apihowto.php>. This currently seems to be paused for updates, and the site maintainer have been contacted about this. It is understand that work to reinstate operation is being undertaken.

## **45. *Importing data***

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Groups may have existing datasets of e.g. cycle parking locations or other databases. Tools will be added to enable these to be imported so they become threads like any other.

The importing tool will be a simple webform that requires a spreadsheet to be pasted in (so that the data is then interpreted as tab-separated values).

Data imported in this way must then all have titles (and other similar thread requirements) added before it becomes available. The importing tool will enable such titles to be added.

Sometimes this could result in hundreds of new threads appearing at once, cluttering up other data. Data imported will have a tag associated with it so that users can filter out large datasets easily. [Tag concept needs further expansion.]

## **46. *External data layers***

---

Additional static layers can also be switched on for information purposes, in the map view, to give context to issues in the surrounding area.

These could include:

- Cyclist collision locations (subject to availability and licensing compatibility by area), although a warning will be shown as to the limitations of such data (e.g. under-reporting and variability by year)
- Potentially transport-related crime (if available)
- London Cycle Hire locations.
- Accessibility analysis [which is basically a whole set of work itself and lower-priority for implementation.]

## Section H: Sharing information with others

### 47. *Sharing best practice between groups*

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Groups will be able to mark an issue as being of particular interest to other groups elsewhere in the country. For instance, a campaign involving a successful set of tactics (e.g. allowing cycling in a pedestrian zone, as happened in Cambridge for instance) could be shared with other groups.

In this instance, a user can add a 'Case study' entry as a type of info block and set the case study as public.

### 48. *Engagement with Local Authorities*

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Engagement with Local Authorities will be crucial for effective campaigning in many cases. As noted above:

- Groups can invite their LA officer/Councillor contacts into discussions.
- Groups will also be able to make compiled data available to Local Authorities. This will 'close the loop' from submission of material, through campaigning, to action.
- Councillors could be contacted directly, as noted in the thread contents section.

### 49. *Publishing*

---

Groups can publish 'What we're working on' pages based on the prioritised issues, using a variety of preset templates, and generated dynamically.

[Needs further consideration as to how the info about these is generated. E.g. title + summary or more detailed, with pictures, etc.]

These will be available as public page components (effectively HTML snippets) that can be added as iframes/HTML-via-PHP/JS importing into another page, e.g. the group's website.

[Should these be available on the toolkit page itself?]

As issues (threads) are resolved:

- The campaign group would mark it as resolved, either successfully (and giving themselves some credit) and adding a new photo superseding the issue, or unsuccessfully (giving reasons why – as that will help the public understand why the problem remains and will thus be less likely to complain in future). This will show on the public map submission page.

- The CycleStreets journey planner has a Photos-en-route feature, whereby journeys planned along the route show photographs submitted by users. Where a successfully-resolved issue is on such a route, a message along the lines of “Cycle infrastructure here has been improved thanks to campaigning work by <groupname>”, together with the group’s logo, will be shown.
- Markers on the map change colour.
- A variety of attractive views of the resolved locations will be available, so that campaign groups can easily point people to the effect of their work, i.e. the outcomes that result when people join and get involved in their group, thus helping increase membership.

## **50. Exporting data**

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Groups will be able to export sets of data at any time. The data that can be exported is:

- For entire category ‘All cycle parking problem locations’
- Area-based
- Search-result based

For the-area based export, this will need to be a simple box or area boundary. However, in future it is hoped, subject to funding, that this will be expanded to allow areas within the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) area only.

Data export formats will be:

- Published as public page components (see next section)
- As a spreadsheet (CSV file, which will open in Excel)
- KML (Google Maps view)
- GeoRSS will also be considered.

In each case, fields (from the standard requirements of a thread) will be specifiable (e.g. title, description, outcome summary), with a default sensible set defined.

‘Export all group info’ will be available to Committee members:

- Groups will be able to export their entire set of threads (i.e. the entire dataset for their area), including discussions, to e-mail, to avoid any suggestion of lock-in. In practice it is hoped that the toolkit will be so good that this would hopefully never need to be used.
- Export to e-mail will be in mbox format. Other formats could be added in future.
- Full export may take a while to generate and is likely to be implemented as a scheduled job, run overnight.



## **Section I: Event management**

### **51. Event management**

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Arranging campaign meetings and ensuring that people attend Council committee meetings is often an important part of cycle campaigning. The toolkit will therefore include a module for managing events.

Users will be able to create events. They will:

- Add details of the event
- Specify whether this an internal or external meeting
- Determine whether it can be openly advertised
- Be able to set up Doodle-style polls for finding the best time
- Include a map showing where the meeting is, which will have an automatic 'Cycle there' journey planner link available

Other campaigners can then say they are attending the meeting. The list of those going will be shown.

Each event also has a thread attached to it, so that it can be discussed in exactly the same way as other threads. For instance, if a Council meeting has been added, campaigners will often want to discuss things on the agenda. These can be branched into multiple issues (threads) in the usual way.

Event listings can be exported as public feeds in RSS, iCal (which is compatible with Google Calendar), and HTML formats (retrieved as a .js file, for adding directly to a page and then styling in the site's usual style). These exports will not show attendees, for privacy reasons.

### **52. Deadline management**

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Deadline management is discussed in a section above.

Deadlines can also be added as public events, e.g. to encourage members of the public to respond to a consultation.

## **Section J: Privacy and security**

### **53. Privacy**

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The system will have high regard to user privacy.

Full attention will be paid to data protection issues.

User profiles need contain no more than username, postcode and routes where supplied by the user, plus association with a campaign.

User data, especially real-life routes, will not be shared with other users except if the user chooses to do so. As noted above, users are required only to reveal their username to other users, though they will be encouraged to reveal their real relname in the interests of accountability.

Those users who opt to receive threads via e-mail will not see others' e-mail addresses, even if the user profile of the other user(s) has set to allow their e-mail address to be visible on the website. This is both to improve security but also to discourage e-mail conversations taking place away from the site, which will split conversations and therefore alienate other users. If users really need to discuss things directly, they can use the profile messaging system to send a message.

User contributions are their own copyright.

The system will remind all users, in a variety of ways, that discussions should be considered confidential to members, unless agreed by others, in the same way that quoting and forwarding of an e-mail should be done only when permission has been sought from its author, under the standard principles of netiquette.

No financial data is needed by the system and indeed this would be undesirable to store.

### **54. Security**

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Password security will make use of industry best-practice:

- Passwords will be stored encrypted, with a strong encryption mechanism.
- Users can request a password reset by entering their e-mail, which will send them a link to change it.
- When a password has been changed in any way, the user will be informed by e-mail.
- Passwords will never be sent by e-mail, which is an insecure medium.

The system will be patched regularly.

An off-site backup will be made regularly and stored securely.

Data will only be transferred in an encrypted manner, e.g. using SSH or SCP.

Sections of the site dealing with user login (and therefore passwords) will run under HTTPS.

CycleStreets will run the system according to the requirements of the Data Protection Act and be registered accordingly.

Financial information of any kind will not be stored on the system.

Code will be open source. [Discuss whether this increases the likelihood of attack against personal data.]

## **Section K: Technical matters**

### **55. Data sources**

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A variety of data third-party sources will be used:

- An OpenStreetMap tile base, probably OpenCycleMap, will form the map base
- OS Boundary-Line Open, used to ensure that the campaign group gets only material relevant to the Local Authority/Authorities they exist within.
- OS CodePoint Open, combined with OSM Nominatim, to form the Gazetteer
- Databases constructed by local campaign groups (LCC, CTC, Cyclenation, etc.) subject to their interest and data protection considerations. (This would not involve any member details.)
- The existing CycleStreets Photomap database (including data from customised GUIs such as CycleParking4London that write to it).
- Database of political representatives, e.g. Goveval (would incur licensing costs)
- Planning applications, as discussed above

### **56. Browser compatibility**

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All development will be on the basis of progressive enhancement, i.e. the site will be usable for older browsers (i.e. IE6) but drag-and-drop style functionality and other advanced use will be available only in standards-conformant browsers.

By way of an informative: Local Authority users are much more likely still to be using IE6 compared to other users.

### **57. Relationship with the CycleStreets Photomap API**

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The CycleStreets Photomap API will form the basis of submissions.

[Needs expansion – which is the master database, i.e. which direction does the API flow?]

Threads simply reference (hook on top of), rather than alter, the initial submissions made by the public.

It is believed that extension of the CycleStreets photomap towards this wider-ranging system would be acceptable use in terms of intellectual property. [Needs auditing.]

## **58. *Developer API***

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An public API covering some components (e.g. submission, export) will be made available so that more mobile apps and external data inputs can be made created.

[Further consideration needed.]

## **Section L: Priorities for implementation**

### **59. The specification: priorities for implementation**

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The specification outlined above contains a lot of features.

This specification will be turned into a formal coding specification at the start of the implementation process.

During that process, feature priority will be formally defined. Roughly, it is expected that the priorities will be as follows:

Top priorities:

- Group basis and management
- User registration
- Plot-my-route (part of user registration)
- The core thread system
- Mail-to-web gateway
- Prioritisation
- Info blocks
- Usability
- Deadline management
- Search facility

Medium priorities (could be delayed implementation):

- Thread branching and splitting / grouping
- Event management
- Dispute management
- Reporting and exporting data
- Cross-group / cross-boundary sharing
- Planning application importing
- External data imports

Lower priorities:

- Accessibility analysis module
- Developer API

## **60. Potential expansion**

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The following features could be added:

- Membership joining / payment / management system (though this opens up many security issues)
- Groups would be able to set up real mailboxes on the system and point its DNS record to the toolkit, so that, e.g. [contact@placefordcyclecampaign.org](mailto:contact@placefordcyclecampaign.org) would be directly processed by the toolkit.
- For the area-based export, it is hoped, subject to funding, that this will be expanded to allow areas within the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) area only.
- Integration of the elections system created for Cambridge Cycling Campaign at [www.camcycle.org.uk/elections](http://www.camcycle.org.uk/elections), which is used to send pre-formatted questionnaires to election candidates at election time, and to compile the results automatically.