

From the Verbatim of the 15th July 1992 Council Meeting
Minutes

RECREATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR BEDFORD: I move the Minutes in the terms of the notice, Deputy Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR RYATT: Second, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Deputy Lord Mayor, may I refer to page 276, Item 14, Headingley Cycle Track, with particular reference to Woodhouse Moor.

My Lord Mayor, for those of you who do not know anything about the inner city, and I think many of the people over there don't, Woodhouse Moor was opened in about 1857. It is one of the finest parks this City has. It is one of the most important parks that Leeds has. It is in the middle of an inner city area which many, many people in that inner city area use.

It seems to me the Members opposite, who do not really understand the value of that particular park, are quite happy to drive through the middle of that park a cycle track. They could not go round it, they can only go over the top. It is absolutely appalling, my Lord Mayor. I think it is wrong and I also think, my Lord Mayor, regardless of what advice has been given, there is great doubt just how legal it is, because proper use of that land by the City of Leeds means it can only be used for recreational purposes. A highway - and that is what this cycle track is - across that particular moor is not recreational purposes only; it is a means of getting from A to B. It is a means of getting to and from Leeds University. It is a means of getting probably to many of their people who go out and canvass but it is certainly not a means for a young family who want to go on that moor, who want to play and let the children play around on that moor and now are going to have to watch for cycles crossing it, and it is not as though there is another way round it. Indeed, when they sought legal advice, they were offered another way round it. They were told, "If you put the cycle track round the park, round the edge of the park, it could be used for both recreation and it could also be used for people to get from A to B, and it was felt by the barrister who gave that opinion that would be a better use of the park.

But no, we have been told it has got to be driven across the middle. It also, my Lord Mayor, is going to have lights across it. Now, that is fine because those lights may protect some of the people that use it, but really, even for cyclists, anybody cycling across there going back to University and coming out 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock, when they get on the top of that moor, if there is no other cyclist with them, I believe they are at risk and I believe, my Lord Mayor, that will come out at some stage in the future, regrettably.

My Lord Mayor, it would have been easy to solve it. It means the cyclist has to cycle 200 yards further to go round the edge of the park, to leave the park as open land for the people who want to go onto it, to play, to kick a ball about, for children to play. It means 200 yards. I think, my Lord Mayor, that is not too much to ask and I would still ask, my Lord Mayor, because this has got to come back to committee, if the Members opposite will come to their senses, remember this park is an important park, it is a major inner city park, and remember we should protect and look after it by trying to put the cycle track around the edge. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BEDFORD: My Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Carter knows very well what was said at the meeting in that we were agreeing in principle to a cycle track crossing Woodhouse Moor as a sporting facility with the sporting facilities adjacent to it. We did say that if Highways came up with a scheme that was different to the one we had in front of us, then we would look at that. Now, Councillor Carter has once again jumped up in committee and screamed and carried on and I gave an assurance in committee that we would look at the plans and, if need be, we would alter them, if it were felt necessary, in conjunction with the Highways Committee. I am still saying from the Council Chamber that we will do that. We are still in consultation with the Highways Committee as to whether the track is going through the right part of the park and we will come back when we have got the plans and everything and we will go into discussion and if Councillor Carter does not raise it and stop being naughty, I will invite him along and

Now, I refer in this White Paper, in fact, to some things that were already under way, and I refer particularly to the final paragraph, the restructuring of senior management. That has taken place. Notwithstanding the comments I made earlier, I do think that the structure being put in place, and I am not referring to individuals, I am referring to the structure, should complement now the new committee structure that has been put in place, but I regret very much that since the committee structure was put forward it has already begun to burgeon and burgeon even more. In fact, since you put in place the new structure, 25 more working groups have been set up since the Annual General Meeting of Council - 25 more working groups - and I have a list of them here, so if you want to challenge me, please do, but not only that the number of members who are on these working parties. There are 8 and 9 members of the controlling group alone on things that are working parties. It is a nonsense, a recipe for continuing confusion.

Before anybody says, "Well, the Conservatives are always asking for more places", well, when we are allocated one or two places against a majority of eight from the other side, there is no wonder we ask for more. It in no way undermines the basic argument that there are again going to be far too many committees and sub-committees of Council dealing with things that should be dealt with at a much more local level.

Now, if you think I am merely talking for the benefit of the people who live in the former outer areas, I am not, because I can tell you this. We had as much positive comment from people in wards that have always been within what has been defined as the City of Leeds for 100 years, as we did from people who live in the areas where they think, quite rightly, in my view, they have been deprived of a proper Council.

Now, to me the message is clear, and you must have had the same message when you were canvassing and I do hope that you will accept --- Well, that, of course, is if, after the General Election you actually went canvassing, but there we are.

You I hope, will take on board the serious nature of what I am saying. It is not supposed to be a way of scoring points. We had a debate some time ago on the same issue when I took the Liberals to task over attempting to pinch our ideas. I think that was (Interruptions) pretty much proved that that was the case, and we had to refer Councillor Winlow back to verbatim reports long before he graced us with his presence in this Chamber, and there is no doubt at all that people in Leeds believe this is a good way forward to bring local democracy back down to a proper level, and I would hope that the combinations of what I am suggesting - a reduction in the over-centralised committees; a stop on the proliferation of working groups which are unnecessary, and the setting up of committees at a local level would bring a much better service we will talk about it again.

(The Minutes of the Recreation Services Committee were carried)

(The Minutes of the Co-ordinating Committee were moved by Councillor Lyons, seconded by Councillor Mrs. Middleton were carried)

From the Verbatim of the 7th October 1992 Council Meeting

Deputation

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon. In accordance with Standing Orders of the Council, you have a period of not exceeding five minutes in which to address the Council. Would you please start by giving the names of the deputation and the spokesperson. Thank you.

MS. McGEE: Fiona McGee, Rachel Paxford ienkins, Evrenome Avdi and Morag Fotheringham. The spokesperson is myself, Fiona McGee.

I am the Women's Officer at Leeds University Union. I have been actively involved in women's affairs in the Union for the past 4 years, holding this office as a non-sabbatical last year. I am here representing the 15,000 students at Leeds University Union, a large proportion of whom either have to cross or go round the Moor to get between the University and flats or halls of residence as well as the private rented sector. Therefore, the introduction of this cycle track is likely to affect a large number of our students.

My concern is that a cycle track across the middle of Woodhouse Moor will provide an obvious shortcut home for many students, thus encouraging more people to walk across the Moor at night - something we have always tried to discourage.

Although we welcome the principle of a cycle track and the fact that Leeds City Council is committed to improving safety for vulnerable road-users, we do have strong objections to the current proposal to route the track directly through the middle of Woodhouse Moor for the following reasons:

Lighting only the cycle path and leaving the surrounding areas unlit makes users highly visible whilst providing even better cover for potential attackers.

Having a lighted path across the middle of the moor will encourage pedestrian use. Lighting the path will give the impression that it is safe to cross the Moor at night, whereas in fact the opposite will occur. Crossing Woodhouse Moor at night will become more dangerous. A lit path will create a false sense of security.

Whilst we acknowledge that the intention of the Council is to act with the best interests of vulnerable road-users at heart, the plan in its current form will be at the expense of pedestrian safety. An unlit track across the middle of Woodhouse Moor is not a feasible proposition. The safety of both pedestrians and cyclists would be jeopardised.

The best plan would be to reroute the track around the edge of the park parallel with Moorland Road. I understand that hitherto there have been two main objections to this alternative plan. It has been suggested that usage of this route would be limited as it is less direct and one-third longer than the route across the moor. At present most cyclists already use Moorland Road rather than going through the park, therefore using a lighted cycle track routed around the edge of the park will not make any difference to the length of their journey but will improve the conditions and reduce the risk of accidents.

It has also been argued that locating the cycle track alongside Moorland Road and Hyde Park Road is not possible because these roads would require widening to accommodate a segregated cycle way, making significant encroachment on the Moor unavoidable.

Whilst we appreciate that the Council must take into consideration the cost of any proposals it is, however, the safety of users of the proposed cycle track which must be the primary concern. The initial difficulties incurred by widening these roads will be far outweighed by the increased levels of security for both cyclists and pedestrians.

With these arguments in mind, we feel that it would be highly irresponsible of the Council to proceed with plans to route a lighted cycle track across the middle of Woodhouse Moor. We feel it will be only a matter of time before someone is attacked and one person attacked is one person too many. Are you prepared to take that risk? (Applause)

COUNCILLOR MITHCELL: Lord Mayor, I move this matter be referred to the appropriate Council committee.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I thank you for bringing your deputation to Council. It will be now referred to the appropriate committee. Thank you.