

# The tale of the activists and decision makers

Paul Osborne, Leeds, United Kingdom.



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**SYSTRA**



**KING**





Leominster (A4)  
Hereford (A4)  
Malvern (A4)  
Elgar Road

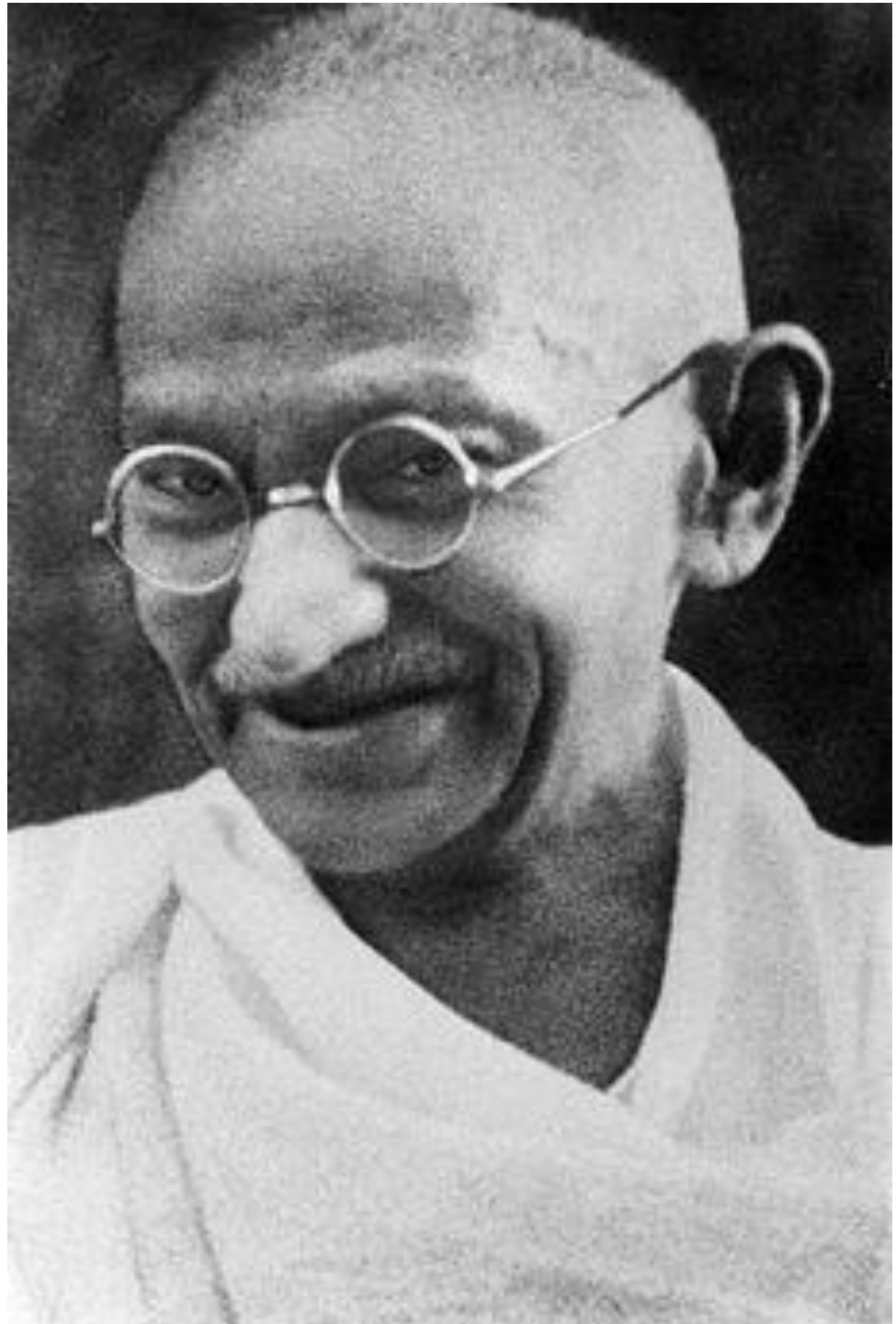
Bromsgrove (A3)  
K'minster (A44)  
Cattle market

Green Gull Millway  
Birmingham  
Newport Street  
Craft Road  
(Cars, Coaches & Lorries)  
Pilsbrett



















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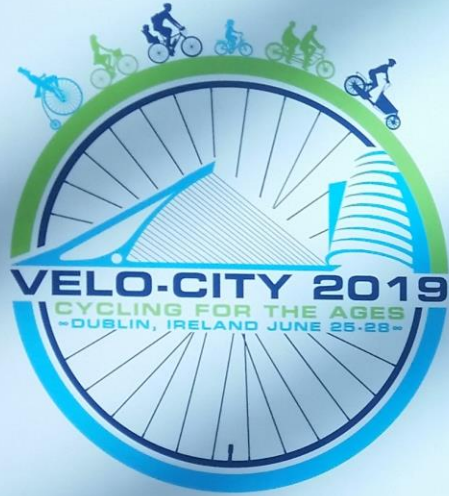






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Velo City Abstract, 2019

***Building synergies between active travel activists, transport planners, and decision makers***

***Format: Presentation or Pecha Kucha***



Paul is a qualified transport planner and engineer. He is passionate about the arts, coaching and sustainable transport. Before joining SYSTRA as an Associate in 2017, he was regional director for Sustrans in Yorkshire. His key skills are communications, stakeholder engagement, policy support, cycling network development and travel plans

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Effective campaign groups can make a loud noise. But with sufficient numbers and a clear plan of action, they can also work behind the scenes to help cities to plan, manage and to grow better. Much of their effort is often spent responding to policy consultations and commenting on the design of new facilities. As public resources become more stretched, and in the face of growing global challenges including austerity, climate change, obesity and social inequality, activists can offer much more: network planning skills, cycling data, good news stories that inspire newcomers and leadership to develop informed debate around contentious decisions. The difficulty of course is to harness the energy and passion of a collection of individuals, who often hold differing views, and to feed this into often complex planning and political structures.

This presentation will cover how the objectives of campaigner and implementer can better align for the public good; how a refresh of campaign strategies, and coordinated action can open doors to new audiences, and how to create stronger working relationships. The ideas and evidence presented will be based on the work of the City Connect advisory group, which advises the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's cycling and walking programme, a recent refresh of the York Cycle Campaign strategy, and conversations with successful UK-based walking and cycling groups.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority's City Connect programme is delivering £60M of new walking and cycling routes and active travel engagement work in the Leeds City Region. York is a historic city which has a strong tradition of cycling but where the potential to transform travel across the city remains untapped. The author is a transport planner with expertise in active travel, Chair of the City Connect advisory group and a member of York Cycle Campaign.

Paul Osborne, Associate, SYSTRA

SWAN. Hello. My Grandad was from County Roscommon. He was a man of few words – I'd watch him scribe his initials in fresh concrete, he loved to watch the horse racing on TV and whenever he saw a Swan he'd tell me they were magic. Years later I found out about how swans have a mythical role in Irish folklore. So Once upon a time...

A POLITICIAN. There was a King. He was very unhappy. Whatever he did, no one liked it. Taxes, crusades, urban planning. When his kids left home, he retreated to the shed at the end of his overgrown rose garden. He wouldn't take visitors, or answer calls. He left decisions to his senior ministers and watched back to back series of Game of Thrones.

CONGESTION. Every day, the people in his kingdom became more unhappy too. The traffic got worse, no one could get to work or cross the roads. The King noticed that his soldiers arrived late and had become fat and lazy. The air seemed muggier and he had developed a nasty cough. So he just stared at his phone instead.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. But the people still had ideas. There was an older man with a long beard who knew the solution and had been banging on about it for years. When people dismissed him as being too old fashioned and wouldn't listen to him, he became very angry and stamped his foot so hard that he got it stuck in a floor board.

HANSEL and GRETEL. A young couple, let's call them H&G, were also finding times hard. They were sick of eating bony bits of chicken, spending all day in the woods and getting locked up in remote cabins so they went to see the King. They fought their way through the roses and demanded change but the King told them to get on their bike, and go and bother someone else. So they did

BIKE RIDE. They noticed how things were very different. The air was cleaner, people seemed to move around much easier. They saw wild flowers, butterflies, and other cyclists. It all seemed very idyllic but when they stopped people to ask HOW it was so nice, they just got a smile, a shrug or a blank stare. On the last day of their trip they met a roadside street vendor.

GHANDI. He listened to their story and told them that he had once been a politician. He advised them that whilst a king could show leadership, others had to change the weather. Well that seems to be happening already they said. No I mean the conversation, the knowledge, the general hubble bubble. And he gave them a map and a list of contacts.

SAFE ROUTES. They travelled to Denmark, where they saw children cycling to school and mermaids swimming in the harbour. They met a campaigner and after they had asked her what it was she still needed to campaign about, they asked How do we change the weather? Hmm that's difficult she said. Perhaps by being persistent.

CAMBRIDGE. Then they caught a ferry to England and went to Cambridge where they asked a man who spent his time commenting on designs and plans. He told them that they should ask the King's ministers just how his comments could help them achieve their work. Whilst doing this he had come to understand how decisions were made and now knew the most compelling information they needed.

CAMBRIDGE. He also told them that it was important to build a large group of like-minded people who lived locally and who could talk confidently about their ideas for better quality of life, health and prosperity, not just for cycling. They had done this by raising funds to employ staff, running events, sharing stories, and offering ideas to the local media.

CHRIS BOARDMAN. In Manchester they met another king who told him them to listen well, speak with conviction, with integrity, prove their experience and perhaps, demonstrate a modicum of fame. This man said that local citizens had established a network of community groups across the city who could comment on ideas and detailed plans with full knowledge of their local area.

DISCUSSION GROUP. They found one such group and noticed people who did not have beards. There were women, children and people with local accents! They said the young people had more to gain and most to lose and it was vital they were involved. The group took pity on them and told them they had done enough cycling and should catch a train to Yorkshire.

YORKSHIRE GROUP. There the local administration had formed an advisory group. They were a mixed bunch of walking and cycling activists, with others interested in public health, tourism and disabilities. This group was empowered to be a critical friend to the authority – able to suggest future schemes, comment on proposals and which received the same information as the ones who made all the decisions at the same time.

BRADFORD OPENING. They were also invited to the opening of a new cycle route. There they met people who had never cycled to their city centre before. How do we make the weather? they asked them. By celebrating our success and by showing our gratitude, they said. Luckily they were able to take their bikes on the train, but only with a reservation

YORK MINSTER. In York, the campaigners said that they had changed the weather by focussing their efforts only on the work that was within their control and which matched their campaign objectives. They had provided the council with information for which it didn't have resources, including cycle counts on city bridges and producing a city vision for cycling and walking infrastructure.

BOAT As they travelled home, Hansel and Gretel were full of ideas, ready to compile them in a presentation for the king. The ship's captain, a wily seasoned skipper and never one to keep his thoughts to himself, said that he knew all about mobility as a service, and disruptive technologies, and bike share schemes and why didn't he drop them off at the Velo City Conference to find out more.

VELO CITY So they did, and there they heard from different countries where activists had changed their weather by becoming more professional, being constructive in their activities and focussing their message on benefits for citizens rather than what they wanted as individuals.

**BUNS.** By now they were getting hungry after all this cycling, so they bought some sticky buns and found the angry man with his foot stuck in a floorboard. They fought their way through the overgrown rose garden which made him even crosser. In his shed, the King looked despondent, so they gave them their buns and while their mouths were full, they told them all about what they had learned.

**SUMMARY DIAGRAM.** They had prepared a copy of their plan. This was a good job because the old cyclist was deaf and hadn't heard a word they had said, whilst the King had been distracted by his social media messages. H and G thought this was very rude so they pinned a tweet to his phone and stuck the plan on the old man's floorboard.

**HARMONY** Now, if you go to the place where Hansel and Gretel live, you can see bikes and cars and pedestrians travelling in harmony, children are playing in the street, everyone is just a little less angry and as for the weather, well as they say over here (In Ireland), "There's great drying out but you still wouldn't put a dog out in it."