Web technical officer report 2023-2024

Since the AGM in April 2023 the post of web officer has been divided into two.

My post is called "web technical officer" and is predominantly a technical role (in the sense of "computer technical", not "bicycle technical"). I continue to manage the website and the technology that lies behind it (particularly the rides database and the diary manager tool that Rupert uses to edit it). I also edit, convert to HTML, and deploy web content written by others.

I share the role of managing the website with the "Communications and web content officer". This is a new post; for the past year this has been Angela. The holder of this post focusses on the actual words on the website, particularly the general advice and information pages. Angela writes the words and I put them on a web page.

Inevitably there is an overlap between the two roles. I continue to edit ride reports and ad-hoc news items provided by others.

Over the past year, Angela and I have worked together on updating and improving the website, and have updated most of the main pages on the website. Angela has provided a separate update on this. There's always more to do, and we expect this work to continue over the next year. Overall I think our website is still a bit overwhelming and complicated, and a lot of web pages are very long. But this is an excellent start.

New technical features

In general the website just "works" and doesn't require a lot of technical work. However the website in its current form is nearly fifteen years old and some of the underlying technology has needed updating over the past year. This has kept me busy but has in general been invisible to website users. There have been a few issues (e.g. booking requests occasionally not getting through), which I have been working to resolve, but in general the website works well.

Route hilliness: I have made a few detailed changes to the route library, in conjunction with Rupert. Our goal is to improve the information we provide about each route. One change is to display information about how "hilly" then route is. I decided it's not enough to display "number of metres climbed", we need to give an indication of how steep the climbs are. So beneath every route map there is now a coloured bar which is intended to give an indication of how much of the ride is at each level of steepness.

Here's an example of a ride into Essex (`https://ctccambridge.org.uk/routes/43`)

Elevation gained: 519m over 88km.

Steepness:

Show distance covered at each grade...

If the user clicks or taps on "Show distances covered at each grade" they see some information about how to interpret those colours:
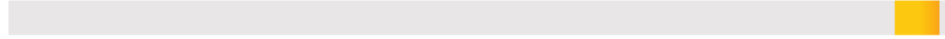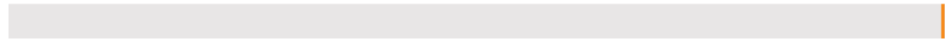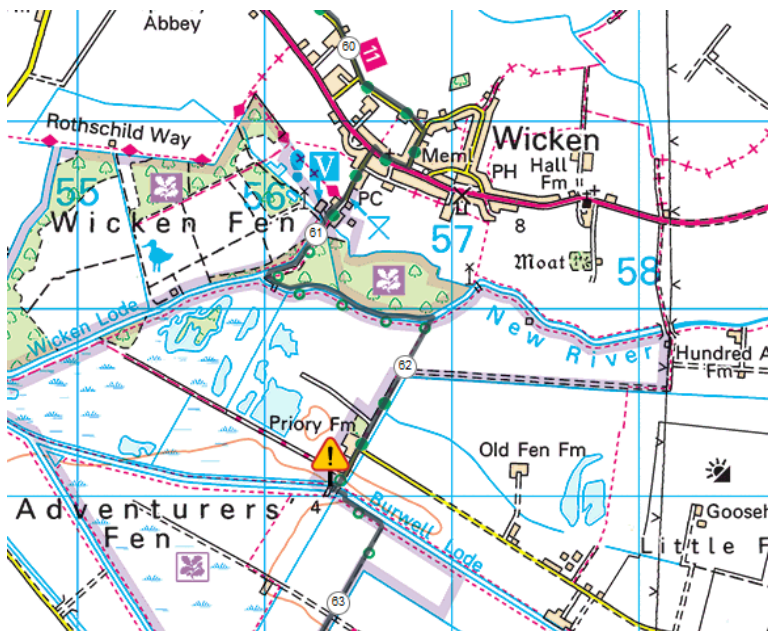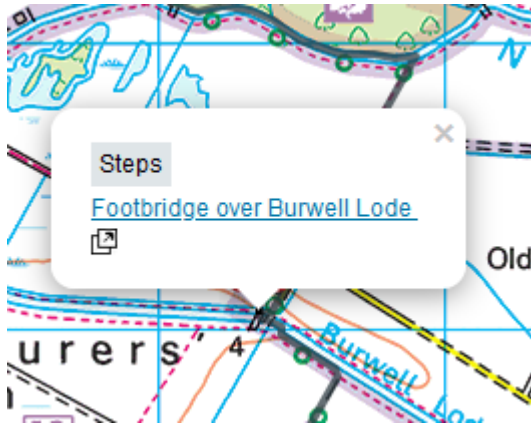

Comments on the website are always welcome. Is the information on climbing useful? Does it tell you what you need?

Route issues: Another new feature is allowing Rupert to display "trouble spots" on our routes.We call these "route issues". These are problems on our routes which we want potential riders to become aware of. So far Rupert and I have focussed on warning riders about locations which pose "accessibility issues", such as stepped bridges which we know some of our members simply can't use, or poor surfaces which may make a route unusable or unpleasant during the winter. We've also had to cover various places where routes were blocked or diverted. There is a new page which lists all these "route issues" in a single list. https://ctccambridge.org.uk/routeissues . However there is no need for anyone to ever use this page as the route library automatically includes warnings of issues on each route.

For example all routes which use the stepped bridge over Burwell Lode now look like this.

The user can click/tap on the warning sign for more information.

Again, comments are always welcome. Is the information about "route issues" useful? Does it tell you what you need?

Increase in costs

Inevitably the cost of running the website has increased over the years, and last year was no exception. Over the past year the website cost £213. We pay about 60% of that to a company called Ionos, who provide basic web hosting, and about 40% to Google, who provide the technology that lies behind the website, such as the rides database. That's quite a lot of money but our website is quite a sophisticated one, and it is our main promotional tool.

Nigel
Web technical officer
April 2024