

Meeting Minutes | London Cycle Instructors & the Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB).

Date: Tuesday, 31st January 2017 - 16:30.

Venue: Premises Cafe, Hackney Road.

Attendees:

Alexandra

David

Derek

Margherita

Maria

Oliver

Phil

Rif

Sarah

Jon Katona (Vice President IWGB)

Jason Moyer-Lee (General Secretary IWGB)

Apologies:

Elton

Frederic

James

Josie

Laura

Matthew

Paul

Rachel

Sean

Will

Meeting purpose:

This meeting was called to explore the unionisation of London cycle instructors in response to specific concerns around pay, working conditions, employment status and general representation within the cycle training industry.

Minutes:

Jason introduced the IWGB union, who they are and what they do - mostly working with low wage issues and cases of employment status.

You can find detailed info here: <https://iwgb.org.uk/>; and their constitution here:

https://iwgbunion.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/iwgb_constitution-28-march-2016.pdf.

Jason asked for an overview of the cycle training industry, the mechanics of how we get and undertake work, are paid, pay rates, and our main concerns - this information was duly provided by the instructors present.

Concerns discussed:

- Lack of employment security, and a failure to honour verbal agreements around work distribution.

- Static pay rates..
- Lack of instructor representation at Local Authorities or training providers, TFL, The Association of Bikeability Schemes (TABS), or Steer Davies Gleave - the Government Contractor responsible for overseeing Bikeability in the UK.
- Lack of access to benefits such as holiday pay, sick pay, maternity & paternity leave / pay, and pension contributions etc
- Lack of transparency and accountability from the training providers in terms of how work is distributed, and what are the processes to get contracts.
- Lack of transparency and accountability from training providers with regards to instructor disciplinary procedures and processes, and concerns over potential 'blacklisting' of instructors.
- Little or no say when around changes to the training syllabus, or other decisions that affect our jobs directly.
- Inconsistent access to Continuing Professional Development.
- Arbitrary changes to working conditions or invoicing and pay processes without thorough consultation with instructors first.
- The employment of instructors on contract - often on poor rates of pay undermining/undercutting self-employed instructors and potentially dividing the profession.

After listening to the instructors present, both Jon and Jason confirmed that there are many similarities with the situation that couriers were in, and many areas of concern that the IWGB could support instructors with. Most Cycling Instructors consider themselves as being self-employed. However, there is a sense that changing our employment status to 'worker', may achieve many additional benefits. Jason explained that in law there are three main employment statuses:

(i) Employee: All employees are workers, but an employee has extra employment rights and responsibilities that don't apply to workers who aren't employees. Usually paid via PAYE, with an employment contract and employee benefits including statutory sick pay, maternity and paternity leave/pay, holiday pay etc.

(ii) Self Employed: A person is self-employed if they run their business for themselves and take responsibility for its success or failure. Self-employed workers aren't paid through PAYE, and they don't have the employment rights and responsibilities of employees.

(iii) Worker: is in between both status, where you are still an independent worker, but you provide a service within another business. You still pay your own taxes, accept or decline jobs and such, but you gain some rights, for example holiday pay and much more, see here for further information:

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-status/worker>

If we were to go ahead the IWGB would provide us with legal aid (through barristers and solicitors acting on a pro bono basis), but we would have to take care of everything else.

To set up a branch we would need to:

- Be approved as a Branch by the IWGB Executive Committee
- Adopt a constitution - template provided by IWGB
- Apply as individuals for membership to the main Union (who would approve or decline such applications) and upon acceptance be allocated to the Cycling Instructors Branch
- Set up and manage our campaigns
- Elect our Branch Committee (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, two Scrutineers and Trustees, others as required)
- Pay membership of £9 per month (this is set by the main union, we keep 50% to run campaigns, hire venues for meetings etc.)
- We'd get two seats on the Union Executive Committee (for our Branch Chair and Secretary)

All posts in the branch would be unpaid (there are only two paid positions in the IWGB main union), and will require a fair amount of time and commitment if we want it to be successful. Jason recommended that we would need to hold weekly meetings for all branch members, and a monthly meeting for the Branch Committee. Jason strongly suggested that we keep it London based (at least to start with) and that **anyone who is a cycling instructor, regardless of their current employment status, could become a member.**

Instructor concerns were raised about the impact of 'worker' status on pay rates – potentially resulting in lower hourly rates. It was also acknowledged that some instructors prefer the freedom and flexibility of self-employment, whilst others prefer more certainty through worker or employed status. This led to further debate about there being a choice between unionisation, or formation of another kind of professional association that might better represent all Instructor needs and concerns.

Next steps

We will set up another meeting to pass this information onto as many instructors as possible and to discuss in more detail if we want to go ahead, and if so, what the next steps would be. We can arrange for the union representatives to attend and answer specific questions in more detail.

Note:

A lot was discussed about specific grievances, work practices and more specific procedures regarding how the union works that are impossible to fit here. If you are interested and have any relevant questions, please come to the next meeting and have them ready. We will do our best to answer with the information that we have been given.