

Speech by Lucy Johnston at Wild Park, Brighton

Saturday 5th October 2013

Councillor Jason Kitcat, Councillor Ian Davey, Minister Baker, ladies and gentlemen.....

I'm standing up here today to say the most enormous THANK YOU on behalf of my sister Jo's family and friends and the Jo Walters Trust. For us, it is such a relief to know that the chances of anyone else suffering a similar accident to Jo's are now so very much less.

She was cycling along the stretch of cycle lane, met someone coming the other way, wobbled on the narrow track and fell into the path of a van. While there is never going to be an upside of any kind arising from her death, it is really helpful for us to know that everyone who uses this cycle lane now is going to be so much safer – be it a student like Jo from one of the Universities, a sports fan travelling to see a match, or a commuter trying to get to work a little faster and more energetically on their bike.

Jo was a fantastically enthusiastic person, always finding new ways to improve the world around her. She had come to Brighton after an already successful career at Google in Dublin as she had realised that she really wanted to be a teacher. So she came to Brighton to do her teaching qualification, training to be a Maths teacher and was planning to take a post at Uckfield College when the accident happened.

Jo loved activity in Brighton. She bought most things from charity shops. She was in the sailing, kayaking, running and hockey clubs and always did things that she saw needed doing straight away.

When we launched the campaign to improve the cycling infrastructure on the Lewes Road 18 months ago, I explained all of this and – possibly rather bossily – said to everyone in the room - “Jo was someone who just got on and did things – I really think that you should get on and do this”

To their immense credit, the Brighton & Hove City Council and all other parties involved really DID just get on with it! The works have been finished ahead of schedule and include all the major features that we hoped to see. I'd like to thank them for this - as well as everyone else who has helped to bring it about, particularly my Uncle, Andrew Walters; Peter Mynors who you will hear from in a minute who has been so important in making it happen; Simon Ames, Duncan Blinkhorn and all from the Brighton Bike Train.

We set up the Jo Walters Trust in Jo's memory to support causes that she believed in. There are some flyers on our table over there. Please come along and help yourselves if you are interested in learning more about the projects that we support. Finally, I thank you all most warmly for being here today.