



# 20 mph comes to Birmingham

Push Bikes supports the introduction of the 20 mph speed limits around Birmingham and believes that lower speeds are a key factor in improving safety for cyclists and pedestrians.

Fran Elder has been campaigning tirelessly for safer streets in Birmingham and heads up the cities '20 is plenty' campaign. She believes the new speed limit offer an initial step in the right direction but that this is only the beginning if we really wish to improve street safety.

Writing for our newsletter, Fran outlines the current status of 20mph limits and offer suggestions for the next steps which could be taken...

People of Birmingham will have noticed that 20mph signs have been installed on roads in many wards in the city. These include all or parts of Aston, Bordesley Green, Brandwood, Hodge Hill, Ladywood, Mosely and Kings Heath, Nechells, South Yardley, Sparkbrook, Springfield and Washwood Heath. A consultation was held recently to extend these zones in Edgbaston, Harborne and Selly Oak.

The first limits went live and were enforceable from the 10th October 2016. The police are enforcing the new limit and residents can help by going at no more than 20mph, monitoring speeds on their streets and reporting where drivers are blatantly ignoring the limits. Talking to people about the new limits, the main concern is – how can 20mph be enforced without cameras? An existing tool that could help with enforcement and bring about behavior change is telematics boxes. These are

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Getting Birmingham In  
the Saddle

# Contents

- Front page 20 mph comes to Birmingham
- Page 2 20 mph article continued.
- Page 3 City Centre Campaign - 'Contraflow'
- Page 5 & 6 BCR Update: Autumn / Winter 2016
- Page 7 & 8 The 'i's have it. Birmingham as a cycle tourist.
- Page 9 & 10 Leads to Bradford - New Route Review
- Page 11 - 13 Cycle City Active City Conference Report

The Push Bikes website has regular updates about cycling issues in Birmingham, including updates about the Birmingham Cycle Revolution.

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- ➡ *As a voluntary organisation, the office is not staffed on a regular basis. The most effective means of contacting us is by e-mail.*
- ➡ *We hold meetings on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 19:00 at Friends of the Earth in Digbeth.*

## 20 is plenty

(Continued from the front page...)

widely used for younger drivers to reduce their insurance premiums. One of the main manufacturers is in the West Midlands. Publicly owned vehicles and commercial vehicles also have these systems built in. Transport for London bus trials have found that these intelligent Speed Adaptation Systems work:  
<https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2016/march/successful-trials-prove-effectiveness-of-speed-limiting-technology-on-buses>

These systems are valuable in slowing speeds by not only providing information on driver habits but also linking the vehicle insurance. Public and commercial organisations could not only become a greater part of the campaign for safer roads but also reduce the fuel and collision costs of their fleet. An added bonus is that slower speeds are related to reduced pollution - particularly in the case of diesel vehicles - research from Imperial College proves this:  
[http://www.20splenty.org/emission\\_reductions](http://www.20splenty.org/emission_reductions)

Birmingham City Council, the NHS and local hospitals plus universities in the city have considerable financial power through the contracts that they place with commercial companies and the licensing of buses, taxis ...etc. If part

of their contractual and licensing agreements included a telematics requirement linked to insurance and also that these vehicles were required to carry bumper stickers saying: - *'20mph. It's the law. SLOWER IS SAFER'*, then the convoy or pacer effect of generally slowing traffic by buses, taxis, refuse trucks setting the example - would increase the effectiveness of these limits.

The first 20mph speed cameras are now operating on Southend seafront. Cameras are effective where drivers persistently ignore limits and endanger cyclists and pedestrians. BCC should not shy away from using this very effective tool.

It's an exciting time across Birmingham and we have the chance city wide to embrace the benefits of 20mph. This campaign is not just about reducing speeds but making our streets more democratic. People should be able to walk and cycle safely without high levels of pollution and noise. The economic benefits in terms of the health premium are significant and the change in driving will be an eternal benefit for all our futures.

Fran Elder  
Follow me on my twitter:  
Birmingham 20splenty  
@FranElder2  
[www.20splenty.org](http://www.20splenty.org)

# Cite Centre Campaign - Contraflow

Push Bikes' New Campaign for Birmingham City Centre

Over the summer, Push Bikes discussed a draft city centre plan with the Birmingham Cycle Revolution (BCR) team. The proposals were good, recognising the various barriers to cycling and suggesting good improvements. One area that we suggested changes in, however, was the way in which cycle contra-flows were being suggested - a limited number of streets, but with full physical segregation on those streets.

We think that instead of a limited number of streets with expensive physical segregation, we should have a blanket policy that the default for any one-way street in Birmingham is to have contra-flow cycling permitted. Birmingham has had an unsegregated contra-flow cycle route along Hurst Street, next to the Hippodrome, for many years now and it is successful. The main issue is that at the blind corner next to the Hippodrome, people in cars do not always expect cycles to cross in front of them. If we could change that expectation, then the route would be improved even further.

Birmingham city centre has many one-way streets that are now 20mph and have low volumes of motor traffic. If all those streets had contra-flow cycling permitted on them, people in cars would come to expect cycles and modify their driving to fit in. There will be exceptions - where the volume

of motor traffic is too high, or the speed too fast - but the default should be to permit contra-flow cycling. Expensive segregated cycle lanes should be saved for those roads which truly need them.

BCR could make cycle users' city centre journeys easy very inexpensively by just putting up some 'except cycles' on 'no entry' signs. We're looking to have a cycle revolution, and this would be a good step in that direction.

Chris Lowe

Push Bikes Chair

Writing on behalf of Push Bikes

*Push Bikes will be writing and campaigning regularly on contraflow implementation in Birmingham City Centre.*

*If anyone would like to help us develop this new campaign then please do contact us!*



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# BCR Update : Winter 2016

The Birmingham Cycle Revolution (BCR) programme has had this December the announcement of a major change to the approach to on-road infrastructure, after a summer where not much happened on roads. In the meantime the green routes and canals have been progressing very well, and the soft measures, such as training, are improving.

## **Main road schemes:**

Over the summer, most of the main road schemes that were planned were not delivered, with the money from phase 1 of BCR being reallocated to canal work and green routes that were brought forward. This month the BCR team have revealed why there was so little progress this summer - the £11 million will instead be focused onto two main corridor routes into Birmingham city centre, one from Selly Oak along the A38 and the other from Perry Barr along the A34. The BCR team have been negotiating with the DfT to get permission for this major change without having the funding clawed back. As it stands, the money will have to be spent by March 2018, so the BCR team will be moving forward with consultations at the start of 2017.

We have already seen draft plans for the Bristol Road (A38), with a segregated 2-way cycle track from

the Middleway to Selly Oak. Both the Bristol Road junction with the Middleway and with Priory Road will have segregated space for cycles, and the Priory Road junction will have long over-due pedestrian crossings installed as well. The plans represent a significant change in the type of infrastructure, from painted mandatory cycle lanes that stopped at every bus stop and junction, to full segregation. This change has been in response to feedback on the original consultations as well as the better quality infrastructure being built in places such as Leicester, London, Cambridge, Manchester and Leeds.

The BCR team tell us that there is still the long-term aspiration to deliver the rest of the network that the BCR bid promised. If these two routes are well-received, then plans for the other routes will be drawn up and further funding sought. The BCR team have already secured funding from the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) for part of BCR, and they would look to the LEPs again, rather than national government.

Over summer there were two routes that were mainly delivered, the A47 Parkway and the Lichfield Road routes. The improvements to the Lichfield Road route will not increase the number of cycle users, but the A47 Parkway route

[www.pushbikes.org.uk](http://www.pushbikes.org.uk)

is a high quality route, although it needs routine sweeping. In BCR stakeholder meetings, Push Bikes has called on the BCR team to install better signage and carry out promotional activities for the A47 Parkway route; although the route is good, it will not be used if no-one knows it is there.

### **Canals and green routes:**

The majority of the towpaths in Birmingham have been resurfaced, and attention is turning to the canal access points - such as at Northbrook Street and Brookvale Road. Options for widening the towpath through Edgbaston tunnel are also being explored. Sheldon Country Park and works along the Rea Valley Route have been completed, and a full business case for Woodgate Valley, for BCC cabinet to approve, is being drafted. There are other schemes being developed in Castle Bromwich and Highbury Park.

### **Green Travel Districts:**

There are several of these GTDs scattered across Birmingham, but the two that will receive the most attention in the immediate future will be Selly Oak and Perry Barr. Push Bikes has been arguing in stakeholder meetings that BCR needs to focus more on filtered permeability to help return streets to being places for local people, rather than for cars. We were pleased that the BCR team talked about looking at the permeability of the GTDs, rather than focusing on delivering more parallel routes. We

look forward to seeing more details on developments in the GTDs later in 2017.

### **Big Birmingham Bikes:**

Over 95% of the BBBs have been given out now, and the remaining bikes are being targeted at people who have been involved in the activities at the BBB centres around Birmingham. The BBB team are delivering 'Ride Active' sessions, which use fun, social activities to develop the skills of the learners. The students attending these sessions receive more hours of training than on a standard Bikeability course, but they develop more confidence and experience. 90% of the participation in the Ride Active sessions is from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, and 70% of the participants are new to cycling. This is a very strong success in extending cycling's appeal beyond traditional cycling demographics in the UK. Phase 2 of the BBBs will start in April 2017, with a children's cycle library and a further bike giveaway. Push Bikes hopes that the BBB scheme continues to build in strength, but we are worried about how long participants will continue cycling if the road conditions are not improved at the same time.

Chris Lowe  
Push Bikes Chair

## *The 'i's have it!* Or, maybe, there's no 'i' in Birmingham?

I happened to be in Victoria Square last year when I met a middle aged couple who had just arrived in the city by bike along the canal from Sandwell and were wondering where they could enjoy a cycle ride across the city. I was able to give them a Birmingham cycling map and point to a few pleasant routes.

### ***What if I hadn't been there?***

Wherever I am on holiday with my bike I always head for the local tourist information centre. Even in villages and small towns across Europe there is an i sign outside a prominent central building and invariably a fund of useful information inside. You can browse, collect leaflets and seek advice. Of course nowadays with a little planning using the internet much can be found beforehand, but speaking to a knowledgeable person is much more revealing. I find they can answer most queries, give advice on cycling routes and provide a local map. These well staffed centres are a real asset for visitors and, equally importantly, to the town in which they are located.

So posing as a cycling visitor to Birmingham I wondered where is the Birmingham i? Unbelievably there isn't one! Up to a couple of years ago there was a Visitor Centre in the new central library and a 'pod' in New Street. Both

have now gone as a result of an austerity cutback. How short-sighted! Birmingham is branding itself as an 'international city' eager to be recognised as a major tourist attraction- in a rapidly expanding but highly competitive worldwide tourist industry.

Is there anything available for a visiting cyclist? The central library can give you a Birmingham Cycling & Walking map but nothing else. The Museum & Art gallery can sell you the (brilliant) Birmingham Greenway map (covering a wider west midlands area). Waterstones has a very useful book for sale- Ordnance Survey Cycle Tours Around Birmingham. I dare say there are other guides available -if you look hard enough. Of course, as a casual visitor, you are unlikely to want to scour book shops on the off chance. There are many posts throughout the city centre giving visitor guidance but unfortunately nothing on them about cycling. I doubt if you could cycle far or see many sights based on the free information that is easily available.

### ***What is available via the internet?***

Googling 'cycling in Birmingham' gives links to:

- [www.mapmyride.com](http://www.mapmyride.com) <http://www.mapmyride.com/gb/birmingham-eng/> which has routes of 17 local journeys across the city. These

are mainly commuter routes but nevertheless useful.

- [www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/themed-routes/urban-adventures/top-cycle-routes-and-around-birmingham](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/themed-routes/urban-adventures/top-cycle-routes-and-around-birmingham). Sustrans has produced a series of routes along the National Cycle Network of between 6 -20 miles.. These are limited by the extent of the NCN and include some start further afield.

- Success! Googling 'Birmingham city council/cycle routes' gives a link to Birmingham Cycling Revolution and a further link to cycle routes where maps of 16 short leisure routes are shown.

- Thankfully Push Bikes ([www.pushbikes.org.uk](http://www.pushbikes.org.uk)) has a series of maps and Urban Explorer routes that are very useful and comprehensive.

### ***What can you conclude from this?***

As residents we may know of good routes for leisure cycling both within the city boundaries and beyond, but there seems little to inform, or attract visitors. Yet cycling tourism can be a valuable resource -providing useful income (apparently more worthwhile because cyclists carry less and therefore depend on local goods and services).

If only there was a suitable and welcoming centre at which relevant cycling routes could be available. The recent addition of leisure cycle routes published on the BCR website is a positive step to inform visitors of the opportunities available.

John Bennett  
Push Bikes Treasurer


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# Leeds to Bradford Route

A review of the new cycle route.

While Birmingham Cycle Revolution promised to deliver a network of cycle routes, other cities in the UK just designed a couple of routes. Leeds and Bradford went for a single route joining the two, but with a higher level of segregation for cycles than we have achieved in Birmingham. Adrian Lord, of Phil Jones Associates, visited the newly completed route in October, and we felt it would be useful to provide a summary for push bikes member's.

At around 9 miles long, the Leeds-Bradford route is perhaps the longest urban cycle track in the UK - for the most part it is not a 'shared footway' but a genuine road for cyclists. The route has received quite a bit of stick for being 'sub-standard' from online cycle campaigners in the past year, but with the complexities of the route there needs to be flexibility and creativity in designing routes like these. Leeds-Bradford is all about the art of the possible - what can be done in a hilly, low cycling neighbourhood with high car ownership and limited public support.

There have been only a few compromises from the original plans - mainly at junctions too expensive for the original scheme. Most of these are due to be upgraded at some point,

such as at a crossing point of the ring road. When that happens, hopefully cyclists' needs will be accommodated in the designs - a 'European style' parallel green system would be useful, and something that British Cycling is about to campaign for. Some of the narrow bus stops have been criticised, but in practice they only have a couple of people using them so conflict will be rare. Finally, the 'shared space' at Stanningley Bottom was due to a road too narrow for cycle facilities. It feels out of place compared with the segregated provision on the rest of the route, but the replacement of a T-junction with a mini-roundabout has helped to slow traffic.

A lot of lessons were learnt in building the route, and later sections are noticeably better than those done first. Some of the infrastructure only became possible with new rules from the DfT in 2016, such as low level traffic lights for cycles and parallel cycle/zebra crossings. The route has not seen the same over-night success that London's superhighways have, but since June 2016 cycling has increased along the route by 30%, and everyone we saw, from old ladies to lycra-clad club cyclists, were using the cycle tracks. When I visited in 2015, I was sharing the carriageway with cars driving at 60mph to reach the next queue,

where I had to squeeze past. So I can certainly see the benefits of being able to cycle at a consistent speed on this route. Finally, this route has proven that multiple political and technical obstructions can be overcome, which has helped to secure future political support for new cycle routes.

To read the full article and see many more photos, please visit Adrian's blog: <http://adrianlordcycling.blogspot.co.uk>

Adrian Lord  
Summarised by Chris Lowe



The Leeds to Bradford route.  
A section of the new 2-way cycle track, with a bus stop bypass.  
Photograph courtesy of Adrian Lord

# Reflections on Leicester...

## Cycle City Active City Conference Report

Back in May this year, on behalf of Push Bikes, I attended the Cycle City Active City conference in Leicester for 2 days. The conference is an 'Active Travel Network' event which aims to share information and knowledge for professionals who are 'tasked with creating more walkable, bicycle-friendly and healthy communities in Great Britain and Ireland.' Cycling is the dominant element of the conference; however there is a more holistic side to the delivery and content as its aims are to 'deliver better towns and cities' for people 'to live, work and play.'

### **'Safer Cycling for All'**

Dr. Rachel Aldred Reader in Transport at the University of Westminster had to be one of the most informative and progressive of the speakers. Her research into the perception of cycle safety in the UK has collated data which looks at non injury events, near misses and rates of injury amongst cyclists. This has been used to identify the barriers which make cyclists feel unsafe and perhaps prevent others from taking up cycling.

Other research includes calculating the extent to which rat-running is creating dangerous residential neighbourhoods and that this is a key concern if we want to diversify cycling and open it up to children,

women and the elderly. Two key findings which cycle campaigns should be aware of is that urban minor roads present 50% more risk to pedestrians than major roads and motor traffic volume is correlated with injury risk as is speed.

The parallel routes delivered by BCR team are located in the so called 'quiet streets' away from the main A roads, however these are the very streets which are used for rat-running, have high volumes of traffic, more junctions and many obstructions to visibility such as parked cars and street clutter. If we are serious about people being able to safely cycle and walk from their door to school, work or to go shopping then Rachel urges us to address the through routes in our neighbourhoods. You can keep informed of Rachel's work including recent news and videos on her blog: <http://rachelaldred.org/>

The BCR team have recognised that the parallel routes they have delivered are not providing safer cycling and I hope they will perhaps take inspiration from the mini-holland neighbourhood schemes delivered in London, namely; Waltham Stow, Enfield and Kingston.

## **'Lessons from London'**

Speaker Asha Sinha CEO for the London Cycling Campaign inspired me to believe that cycle campaigning is a piece of cake! He talked passionately about the development of the 'Go Dutch' campaign in London and the progress of the previously mentioned 'Mini Holland' schemes which are showing reductions of car use in the areas they have been implemented:

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/mini-holland-scheme-in-walthamstow-hailed-as-major-success-as-traffic-falls-by-half-a3389936.html>

Asha had some powerful statistics to hand such as '10,000 people dying in London due to pollution'; he said the key is to use these 'stats to mobilise people on the ground' and gain political will, something which members of push bikes have been working towards as a key part of our campaign work. As Push Bikes' members we can all be helping to raise awareness by talking to people who might be adverse to cycling and getting the message to our local councillors that we need to support the promotion of cycling and other sustainable transport options.

## **'Progress despite the difficulties..'**

It was interesting to hear reports from New York and Leicester as Birmingham faces similar issues to both cities – American cities such as New York are wedded to the car

and Leicester is facing low budgets and a large proportion of people living on low incomes – some of whom are spending 12% of total household income on travel alone. The importance of cheap transport now is such a pressing issue and really can't wait.

The representatives from New York have made fantastic progress using little money by creating cheap segregated lanes by taking over existing roads and devoting it to cycle use. If they can do this is New York then I firmly believe in Birmingham! We have to accept that funding for cycle infrastructure is not always readily available and high quality segregated infrastructure is expensive and slow to implement. Safe but cheap and quick methods are a good way of ensuring our city feels safe to cycle in sooner rather than later!

The New York they reallocated space for cycling using temporary barriers first. This got cyclists to start using it and then later they plan to install the high quality infrastructure once the money is available.

## **In Conclusion...**

In Birmingham I feel we need to seriously question why we have multiple lanes for cars and yet no cycle infrastructure. The two ... segregated lanes we will be getting through BCR will be a welcome asset but finding a cheaper option for other areas is, in my opinion, critical to encourage mass cycling.

# Reflections on Leicester...

## Cycle City Active City Conference Report

In Leicester they have focused on incorporating cycle infrastructure where there is planned maintenance or developments.

Although some parts of the network aren't joined up, they are making serious headway and some parts of the city are really well connected. This is a creative and determined way of creating infrastructure without much money. The cheapest and quickest way to make our streets more humane is to restrict car use and both of these transport departments have not been afraid of tackling that head on!

I believe we all deserve to live in places which are healthy, inclusive and beautiful. Infrastructure and buildings should be designed in such a way to be in harmony with our environment. In Birmingham we have had decades of road building and although the council are now committed to putting pedestrians first, it seems that car drivers should still not be inconvenienced! Private car ownership has been seen as an acceptable norm, rather than being able to walk safely in our neighbourhoods or good quality air for us to breathe. It was disappointing; therefore that at the conference I felt there was still a reluctance to seriously discuss reducing car use. I believe this is fundamental to readdressing the

balance of our how much space people have been allocated in our towns and cities.

Cycle campaigners should be advocating the development of sustainable environments which suit all people and not just grabbing the chance of space at the expense of street trees, public squares and generous pavements. As one expert at the conference said, before looking at a new cycle lane opportunity we should be stripping back the area or street of all functions and then putting each function back one by one, as per a hierarchy which puts pedestrians first, then cyclists, the public transport. I would say that most areas and streets have no room for cars and therefore we need better connected and more reliable public transport to take its place. If Birmingham City Council were to actually put pedestrians and cyclists first, then we would really see a sea change in how it is to navigate and live in our city. We need to be readdressing the balance now, as the latest figures are estimating that 900 premature deaths are attributed to poor air quality in Birmingham alone, if we do not take some drastic action to reduce car use now, then many more thousands will die before we see change.

Catherine Watton  
Push Bikes Secretary

## Join Pushbikes

Birmingham is starting to plan better for cycling, but there is still a lot to do.

We currently have several campaigns in progress and are in frequent contact with local councils over cycling issues whether raised by cyclists or matters the councils contact us about, as they believe they might affect cyclists and therefore ask for our views.

We will begin 2017 with two campaigns, one based in the city centre to encourage contra-flow and the other focused on preventing rat-running from our local centres and residential streets.

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