

We are based In the Friends of the Earth building:

'The Warehouse'
54-57 Allison Street
Digbeth
BIRMINGHAM
B5 5TH

24 hour answerphone: 0121 632 6753

E-mail: secretary@pushbikes.org.uk

As we are a voluntary organisation, the office is not manned on a regular basis. The most effective means of contacting us is by e-mail.

We hold meetings on the first Tuesday of most months at 7:30 p.m. including: 6 November, 4 December

Members' Discounts From:

Bike Shop	Location	Exceptions
Action Bikes	Northfield	bikes
Bike Pro	King's Heath	none
Fletchers Auto Store	City Centre	none
Harborne Cycle Surgery	Harborne	none
Red Kite Cycles	Shirley	bikes
Scott's Cycles	Rubery	bikes
	Shirley	bikes
Sprocket Cycles	City Centre	none

Membership Application Form

I/we* wish to join Push Bikes

Name(s) _____

Address (inc. Post Code) _____

Home Telephone _____

Mobile Telephone _____

Work Telephone _____

E-mail address _____

I/we* enclose one year's subscription:

Individual, waged (£11) _____

Individual, unwaged (£5-50) _____

Joint/Family (£14-00) _____

Voluntary donation (optional) _____

TOTAL £ . _____

Signature _____ Date _____

I heard about Push Bikes from _____

I/we* would like to help by: (✓)

☐ Letter writing

☐ Helping on Push Bikes' stall

☐ Organising activities for Bike Week

☐ Reviewing plans

☐ Writing articles for Newsletter

☐ Setting up a Bicycle User Group

Getting Birmingham in the saddle

Cyclesolihull Rides

Cyclesolihull will be offering two rides each month throughout the and autumn winter months. On the first Saturday of the month there will be a Saturday Stretcher Ride (15 to 25 miles with no fixed route) and two weeks later (on the Saturday or Sunday), a Winter Warmer ride along one of the regular Cyclesolihull routes. Details of the rest of the winter programme will be available on the Cyclesolihull at:

<http://www.cyclesolihull.org.uk/>

Write To Your Councillor!

One of the most effective ways that you as an individual member of Push Bikes can influence provision for cyclists in our area is to raise your concerns with your local councillors. The web site: www.writetothem.com will identify who they are, what they are responsible for, give guidance about content and ensure it is delivered.

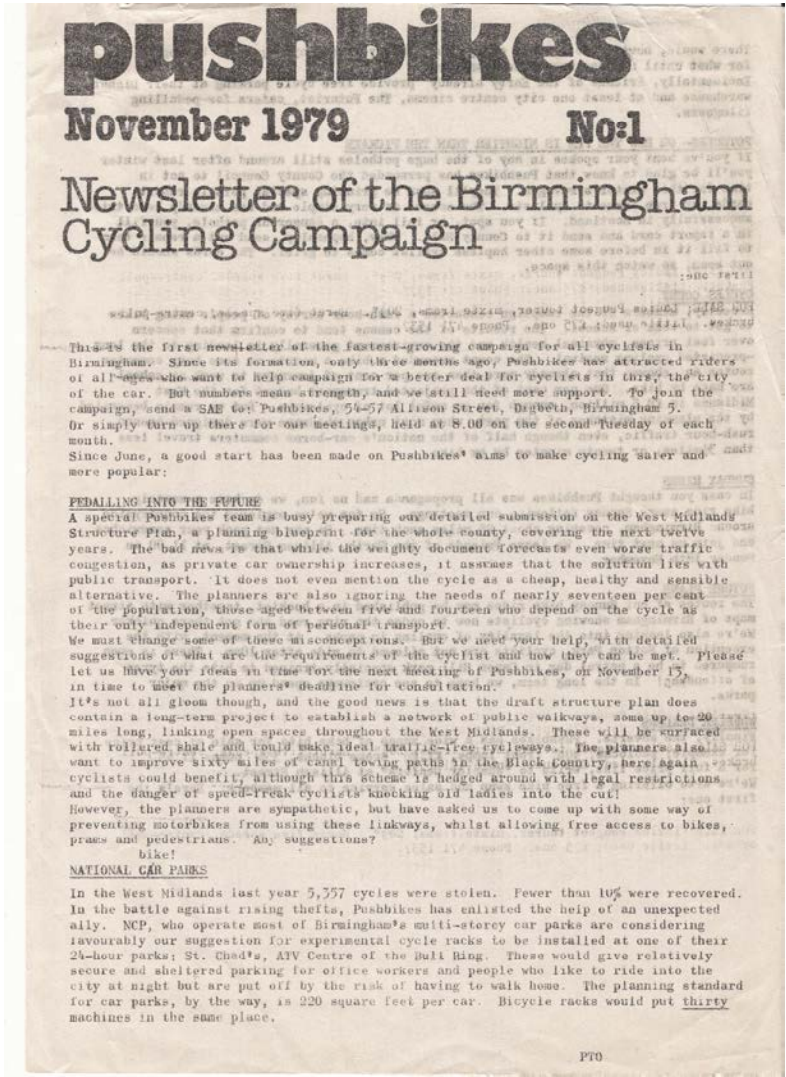
If you have a local problem with (say) a poor cycle path, blocked cycle lane, speeding traffic, lack of cycle parking, potholes, or any general cycling issue let the councillors know about it. It's their job to respond to you as a resident. If you don't tell them, they won't know, and as sure as hell, they won't do anything!

Please send a copy of any email to Push Bikes via: secretary@pushbikes.org.uk

Useful Numbers

Birmingham Cycling Officer	0121 303 7485
Solihull Cycling Officer	0121 704 8291
Sandwell Cycling Officer	0121 569 4021
Sandwell Potholes	0121 569 4129
Birmingham Potholes	0121 303 6644
Smoky Diesels	0121 789 7999
Emergency Line	0121 303 4149

Beacon Road Club	John Hitchcock	0121 427 5590
CTC N. Birmingham	Harry Child	0121 353 5814
CTC S. Birmingham	John Bennett	0121 459 9319
Royal Sutton Cycling Club	Bill Jinks	0121 681 7401



Welcome to the 100th edition of Birmingham Cyclist see p.8

Issue 100. Autumn 2007
www.pushbikes.org.uk

Getting Birmingham in the saddle

If you would like to help make the newsletter happen, please contact any of the Newsletter team.

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Views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect official Push Bikes' policy.

Newsletter Team:

Graham Hankins, Michael Groll

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From the Office

www.pushbikes.org.uk

The new Push Bikes' web site went up on 25 August. When I was asked at the 2007 AGM to become the Push Bikes webmaster, I was foolishly seduced by the 'master' in the title and even more foolishly agreed. My first look at the source for www.pushbikes.freemove.co.uk showed how much work Mike Paley had put into the Push Bikes site over the years. Indeed, most of the content of the new site is shamelessly ported from Mike's site. Push Bikes will continue to benefit from his work. Thanks Mike.

Facilitating participation is the aim of the redesign.

First: I need help in developing the site presentation. In particular in testing the appearance in various browsers. Being a true geek, I use an Apple Mac with OS X and Linux installed. Windoze has been expelled from the Little household. Pretty stupid given that Internet Explorer has 80% of the market. Anyone with Windows 98 onwards who is willing to put in 20 minutes or so viewing the site please email me at web99@pushbikes.org.uk. We also need to know what Push Bikes members' want on the site. Some possibilities are outlined below, please email or write with any comments.

In the medium term, if anyone is interested in working on the design, CSS etc of the site, your help would be most welcome.

Second: we need people to contribute content, i.e. the pages. The design of the site tries to make this as easy as possible. In particular, authors don't need to write HTML, just plain text.

The site is hosted at eukhosts.com which allows us to add things like message boards, mailing lists etc easily.

Members area: the Beacon Road Cycling Club have an excellent message board at http://www.beaconrcc.org.uk/message_board/index.php. A quick look suggests that it's of interest to some members but the traffic is fairly low. Much of it relates to the very active rides schedule of the club. While there is a need to support our rides through the site, would there be enough interest to support a message board?

Rides: the Folding Society's Origami rides are listed on the site & those who have previous rides get an email 10 days before the ride with full details. We have set up a mailing list to do this on our site. It would be fairly easy to use emails to provide an list of who is intending to come on a ride and make last minute announcements regarding expected bad weather etc.

Consultation: it would be good to be able to ask members opinions about issues as they arise e.g., what should the site do, responses to the recent proposed changes in the Highway Code etc. If we had a mailing list of members willing to be asked, we could either publish responses on the site or set up a forum for a limited time for contributions.

Special interest groups: some members with an interest, say, in facilitating cycling along the canal network could join a mailing list and be kept informed of relevant information as we receive it and of British Waterways User Group meetings etc. To be effective they would probably need to meet & talk about issues rather than just rely on the web, but the web could make it easier for more members to be involved. Other possible groups might be to support cycle training or helping with PushBikes stalls at various events.

Reporting problems: Members experiencing particular difficulties cycling in their area could let us know & concerns could be listed on the site to see if this was a one off or concerned a number of people. If we had a number of reports citing a specific problem, PushBikes could raise it through the best channel e.g. the BCC Cycling Advisory Group or set up meetings with the responsible Councillors. An example is the blocking of the Birmingham Wolverhampton canal by construction works with no warning signs so cyclists & walkers don't know to leave the towpath at the nearest exit but have to trudge back!

Ideas: please! Email comments & suggestions to web99@pushbikes.org.uk or write to PushBikes, 54-57 Allison St, Birmingham B5 5TH. It would be interesting to know if members would like to be emailed about upcoming meetings and consultations or would regard it a spamming.

David Little

Push Bikes' Rides

Sunday 21 October 2007 to Kinver

Leader: Nick Wattison

Meet at the Black Horse pub in Northfield at 10:00am. Expect a few hills and a round trip of some 35 miles to the attractive village of Kinver, taking lunch at a favourite watering hole.

Sunday 11 November 2007 to Shenstone / Chaddesley Corbett

Leader: Nick Wattison

Meet at Kings Norton Railway Station car park, at 10.00am. Total round trip of about 25 miles, with a few hills. Lunch will be taken at a hostelry in the area.

Sunday 2 December 2007 to Alvechurch

Leader: Nick Wattison

Meet at Kings Norton Railway Station car park, at 10.30am. A short ride to a pub in the Alvechurch area. Ride distance of about 20 miles in total, with a few hills.

Sunday 23 December 2007 'Christmas Ride'

Leader: Nick Wattison

Meet at Kings Norton Railway Station car park, at 11:00am. A short ride to a local country pub. Total ride distance of about 15 miles.

If you want to join the Push Bikes rides' mailing list, email web99@pushbikes.org.uk with subject "subscribe rides" and your name and email address in the body of the email.

All Push Bikes rides are free, open to members and non-members and are undertaken at the rider's own risk. Please ensure that your bike is roadworthy, has good brakes and working lights. Wearing "Hi-vis" clothing will improve your safety by making you more conspicuous to other road users. If you have doubts about wearing a helmet, wear one. Ensure it is in good condition and is a proper fit. It may help protect your head should you have an unscheduled dismount. All participants are expected to take great care and observe the Highway Code. The organisers do not accept responsibility for loss or damage to personal property, for personal accident or injury, or for any public liability.

Further advice on ride participation and changes to the rides programme can be found on our web site at: <http://www.pushbikes.org.uk> Details can be obtained from Nick Wattison on 07837 414236 on the day of the ride.

Committee

Chairman:	Howard Boyd
Secretary:	Graham Hankins
Treasurer:	David Wilkinson
Vice Chairman:	John Bennett
Rides Co-ordinator:	Nick Wattison
Solihull Co-ordinator:	John Tozer
Webmaster:	David Little
Newsletter Team:	Graham Hankins, Michael Groll

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the sum of (amount in figures) £_____.	
(amount in words) _____	
Commencing (date*) _____ / now* and thereafter every year on	
(date dd/mm) _ _ / _ _ until you receive further notice from me/us* in writing	
quoting reference _____ and debit my/our* account accordingly:	
Name of account to be debited _____	
Account number _____	
Name _____	
Signature _____	
Date _____	
Please cancel any previous Standing Order in favour of Push Bikes under the reference given above.	
Please write clearly and send the forms to Push Bikes, 54-57 Allison Street, BIRMINGHAM, B5 5TH	
*Delete as applicable.	www.pushbikes.org.uk Telephone: 0121 632 6753
Thank you.	



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Birmingham News

North Birmingham Cycling and Walking Route, (Coleshill Road to Good Hope Hospital Link)

An extension to the North Birmingham Cycling and Walking route from the New Hall Valley Country Park via Rectory Park, to Good Hope Hospital in Sutton Coldfield, is currently being proposed. The scheme is planned to be delivered as part of the Safer Routes to Hospital programme. Consultation has been undertaken with local residents who live near the proposed scheme. Birmingham City Council is now reviewing the responses and addressing points raised by the consultation. Subject to final approvals, it is hoped that construction on the route will commence in the New Year.

Connect2 Living Landmarks Bid

As part of the National Lottery's Living Landmarks initiative, Sustrans (the Sustainable Transport Charity which coordinates the development of the National Cycle Network with Local Authorities across the country) has submitted a bid to win the £50million Living Landmarks prize fund. Sustrans have called their bid 'Connect2'. As part of this bid, 79 projects from across the country are being taken forward. Of the 79 projects, the North Birmingham Cycling and Walking route is one. Route development would include completing the main route from Pype Hayes to Sutton Coldfield and creating a number of links onto the route.

So watch out for the National Public Vote scheduled for December 2007 and other events leading up to the public vote and please pledge your support for the Sustrans bid which includes the Birmingham project. For more information, please visit: www.sustransconnect2.org.uk

Get Cycling Magazine

Birmingham and the other West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities have produced a free 'Get Cycling' magazine which is a practical guide for anyone thinking about starting to cycle. It offers loads of information including bicycle riding advice, cycle training, routes and lots lots more. For a copy please email the address at the bottom of this article.

City Centre works

As part of the results from the City Centre Study, a number of small scale projects were identified. Subject to consultation and approvals, some of the schemes planned to be implemented within this financial year include; a contra flow cycle lane on Grosvenor Street West, Ladywood, new advanced stop lines and feeder lanes at a number of signalised junctions crossing the ring road and an upgrade of a pedestrian crossing at Camp Hill to a Toucan Crossing.

New cycle parking facilities are planned to be installed at locations within the City Centre (and within the districts) during this financial year as well.

Cycling Strategy Review and update

A revised and updated cycling strategy for Birmingham is currently being prepared for full public consultation. The strategy includes proposals for an enhanced strategic cycle network for Birmingham. Birmingham City Council and Push Bikes (along with other key stakeholders), have been working together during the development of the strategy. Full consultation is planned to commence in the New Year, where we will want to hear your views. Watch this space for news when the consultation is under way.

Harborne Walkway

Works to improve the condition of the path along the old Harborne railway branch line is planned to commence within the New Year. Works will involve making the route passable all year round. Works and the surface of the path will be undertaken in keeping with the unique environment of this tranquil route.

Contact details

If you have any comments, questions or queries, please feel free to call the Sustainable Transport Team on 0121 303 7485 or email: cycling@birmingham.gov.uk

Will Martin

www.cycleinjury.co.uk

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Saving money by cycling for you *and your employer*

One local cycle-friendly employer is design and business consulting firm, Arup at the Blythe Valley Business Park in Solihull. Here the 600 employees are offered 20p/mile for any business journeys by bike or they have the use of a fleet of pool bikes free of charge. An interest-free loan up to £3,000 is available to buy a bicycle, but the tax-free (and therefore more beneficial) Bike to Work scheme will be offered from next April. There is usually a cyclists' breakfast (or lunch) with a Dr Bike mechanic on hand on a day during Bike Week in June. Facilities available to cyclists include covered cycle parking for 40 bicycles, female and male changing rooms with 4 showers in each, plus luggage lockers.

One member of staff suggested that the other social advantage of having 'proper' bike sheds is that they are the traditional venue for smoking, clandestine romances, lunchtime conker fights and all the other traditional British activities that take place behind the bike sheds!

If your employer doesn't offer all of these benefits, perhaps it's time they thought about helping to increase levels of cycling and making the Birmingham area a better place to live? And it's good for business too!

Further information:

Pool bikes / workplace parking: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/green-transport/travel-plans.htm>
A Fact Sheet for Employers setting up Green Travel Plans

Cyclists' breakfasts: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/eimmanual/eim21664.htm> EIM21664 – Particular benefits: exemption for bicycles and cyclists' meals or refreshments

Cycle to Work scheme: http://www.bikeforall.net/content/cycle_to_work_scheme.php

Cycle Confidently and more Safely



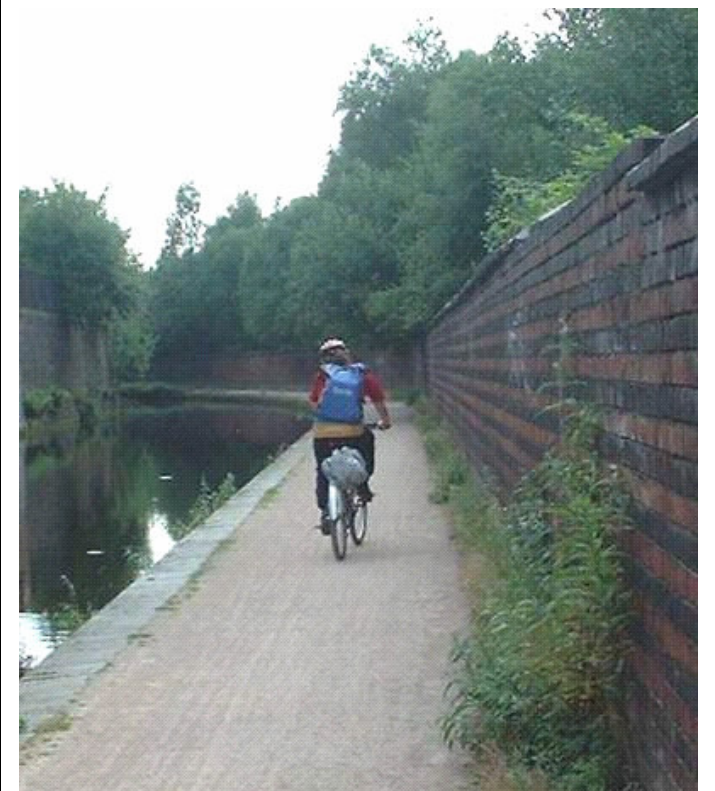
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Keep the wheels turning for less

Saving money by cycling for you *and* your employer

Regular commuter cyclists already know that cycling is a good deal cheaper than running a car, but are employers aware of how cycling can save them money? As part of its "Green Travel" agenda, the Government has in recent years started offering incentives via the tax system to encourage cycling. Here is a round-up of the benefits that qualify for tax relief:

- **Cycle to Work scheme:** employers can loan bicycles to their staff as a tax-free benefit on the condition that the bicycles are mainly used to get to and from work or for work-related purposes. The employee 'buys' the bike at the end of the loan period for a nominal sum. The typical saving on a new bike plus equipment for an average taxpayer is between 38-45 %.
- **Business mileage rate:** employers can pay staff 20p/mile tax-free for using their own bicycle for business travel. Higher payments will be subject to tax. Nevertheless, many employers do pay a considerably higher mileage allowance and the money can be an obvious inducement to travel by bike. If your employer does not pay a mileage allowance for business travel by bicycle, a deduction from your tax can be claimed from your tax office.
- **Workplace cycle parking:** an employer will not pay tax or National Insurance Contributions on the cost of providing parking equipment.
- **Cyclists' breakfasts:** the employer may provide a free meal or refreshments at up to six cyclists' breakfasts per year, as long as they are provided on designated "cycle to work" days. This benefit would then be exempt from tax.
- **Pool bicycles:** if an employer provides an employee with a bicycle and safety equipment which is used for work purposes the employer will not pay tax or National Insurance Contributions on these costs.

Of course there are a number of other ways in which increasing cycling results in tangible savings for an employer:

- Cyclists don't get held up by unpredictable traffic and are more likely to arrive at work on time.

- Car parking problems can be eased - one car parking space will accommodate 8-12 bikes, therefore making more efficient use of limited land space. Department for Transport research indicates that the annual cost of running a car parking space is between £300 and £500.
- A healthier and more productive workforce - cyclists take fewer sick days than non-cyclists. A recent Cycling England report puts the cost of physical inactivity to employers through increased absence at £47.68 per inactive person per year. Inactivity also imposes significant costs on the NHS.
- Company bikes are cheaper and easier to maintain than company cars. It's often quicker to get across town by bike than by car e.g. for a meeting.
- Cycling reduces air and noise pollution. Showing a sound environmental policy can improve a company's image and therefore be good for business.

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Birmingham News and Campaigns

'Bike Land' (see page 7 of the Summer newsletter) again formed a substantial item at the September meeting of the Cycling Advisory Group. The scheme, to create a multi-disciplinary activity facility with an emphasis on cycling, seemed to at least be progressing as the advocate talked at some length – too long for some of us - about the project. But the meeting had begun with the new draft Cycling Strategy.

PB chair Howard Boyd had "read every word" of this massive tome, vice chair John Bennett too had studied it in depth and both put their firm views forward. John was amazed at the number of Birmingham schools where none, that's right, zero children cycled, Howard was concerned that, again, absolutely no mention was made of any initiatives to reduce congestion or car use. Both gentlemen had come to the meeting prepared with several comments all duly, firmly, politely put, although this latest draft was considered an improvement on previous versions. We were then treated to the staggeringly lengthy consultation process that the Strategy faced before publication some time next year. Others round the table – Dene Stevens of Sandwell PCT to name but one – made further comment on the Strategy so this main agenda item stretched into the evening. I had made it known that there were issues under Any Other Business, but at 9:30pm the doorman arrived to lock up! Next CAG – December 3rd.

With Push Bikes having the slogan 'Putting Birmingham in the Saddle' we have been trying to do this in practice. Thanks to the members who responded to the Road Safety Unit's request for experienced cyclists to train as National Standard tutors, four names have been forwarded to that department. Don't know of any further developments here. But within Push Bikes, we have been doing things ourselves.

After a phone call from one of the people attending a Health Centre in Erdington, wanting assistance to set up a cycle club and 'outreach' to the community, I devised and delivered a presentation to The Phoenix Centre. The slides explained the essentials of safer cycling and the content of the three NS levels of training. I hope this association with the Centre will be ongoing. There is also a person in Bournville who, after seeing that Adult Training was available (picked up a leaflet from our table at the Active Travel Day) is now being trained in road cycling. So that's one 'Bum on a saddle' for an hour a week anyway!

Talking of Adult cycle training, I still have this 'thing' about Leisure Centres, as I consider them an excellent environment for reaching active adults who would consider cycling. But a letter to two Centres, making such an approach and quoting my contact details has not yet produced any response. I think this has got to become a firm 'New Year Resolution', probably for personal visits.

Push Bikes is planning another event for early 2008 – a general meeting for all cyclists and attended by a selected councillor with an interest in cycling. We originally wrote to invite Councillor Len Gregory, Cabinet Member for Transportation and Street Services, but as there has been no response to that, another councillor has been suggested and duly approached.

Graham Hankins

Bike Week in Birmingham

Birmingham's Bike2Work Challenge

This year over 180 people registered for the challenge and as a result a total of just under 6000 miles were cycled during Bike Week 2007. We surpassed last year's total mileage of 5,500 miles cycled during Bike Week 2006. This is a great achievement, particularly as the weather was not brilliant for cycling during Bike Week this year!

Family Cycle Day

On the first Sunday of Bike Week (17th June and Fathers Day), Birmingham City Council and the Sutton Central Group held a family cycle day in Sutton Park. Participants were able to cycle together on a series of self-lead rides of 2km, 5km and 10km. More entertaining cycling was also available including 'blendavenda' - a bike-powered smoothie maker and a cycling road show which invited participants to try their hand at riding a variety of weird and wonderful bikes!

The event was a great success, not least because it took place on the one dry and sunny day in the midst of weeks of rain! 84 adults and 77 children took part in our 3 self-lead rides with over 300 people signing up for the Cycling Road Show.

Will Martin

Active Travel Day

On Thursday 2nd August the annual TravelWise Active Travel Day was held in Victoria Square. Birmingham City Council teamed up with Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust, Network West Midlands, BRMB and other partner organisations to provide a free family day out to promote the link between sustainable travel and healthy living.

The activities of the day included:

- Company of Cyclists try out roadshow – with their range of weird and wonderful bikes
- BRMB thunders – with pogo sticks, space hoppers, and other crazy forms of transport, along with music from Birmingham's best radio station
- BlendaVenda – to make fruit smoothies by pedal power
- Network West Midlands activity bus.
- Health marquee – Birmingham Primary Care Trusts provided a body MOT, along with help, information and advice
- Birmingham Bike Shops – presented the latest in bikes, clothing and accessories

Will Martin

Birmingham Bikeability Up And Ready To Roll!

The first meeting of the Birmingham Cycle Training partnership was held at the Brandwood Centre in Kings Heath Birmingham on Friday 21st September 2007. It brought together trainers from the police, the youth service, Hamstead school sports partnership, Sandwell PCT, Wolverhampton ITP, an independent trainer and the road safety team. They will all be delivering the Birmingham Bikeability course across the whole city. The City Council will take care of the administration of the course and all of the trainers will be able to log into a central web-based database (which is in the process of being developed) to file their training records and administer the courses. The City Council aims to hold regular training days to update the training staff. Andrea Johnson who is the scheme manager anticipates a need for more instructors (who are paid £40 per half day inc mileage) so if you are interested contact her (Andrea_Johnson@birmingham.gov.uk).

Hagley Road Woes

New Push Bikes member Neeraj Malhotra sent us this email:

Dear Push Bikes team,

"I have recently moved from London where I used to cycle everywhere. I know it is quite a different city but I still feel determined to try to continue to cycle. I have a copy of the Cycling and Walking Map of Birmingham which I was able to order from Birmingham City Council's website. I live in Bearwood and work in Walsall. My current method of travel involves cycling to New Street, then train to Walsall, then cycle to work (15 minute cycle journey from train station).

The main difficulty I'm finding is that Augustus Road is a lovely road to cycle along, but on the approach to Five Ways a large chunk of it becomes One Way. This means I can't use it to get home and I feel forced to use the Hagley Road".

Neerjazz continues: "The Hagley Road, whilst I do see cyclists using it, feels horrible to cycle along because of the combination of very fast moving traffic and being quite narrow. In contrast, the pavement is mostly very wide and there are hardly any pedestrians walking along it. I was wondering if there are any plans to create separated cycle lanes along the Hagley Road? It would make such a difference. I'm sure many more would-be cyclists would ride if such a lane was built because the Hagley Road is such an important route into the city.

I was going to write to the Council but I thought it best to contact you first to get your views and see if a cycle lane along this route is already under discussion. I look forward to hearing from you".

Well, Neerjazz did hear from Push Bikes: we told her that this email had been forwarded to Graham Lennard (Sustainable Transport Team Leader at the City Council) for any comment, a little while later I wrote a separate letter to him. But we were delighted when Neerjazz came along to our October meeting to see us. All members – indeed all cyclists – are welcome to do this of course.

continued p.7

James's 40 mile ride

9 September 2007



James challenged the group to do a 40 mile ride, roughly coinciding with his 40th birthday: "I haven't ridden 40 miles before".

But it didn't turn out that way.

10am start from the MAC, down the route 5 then a wander through the lanes of Worcestershire for 36 miles to Kenilworth. Punctuated by frequent stops for map reading: our esteemed leader, Nick, explained that "it's at the edge of the map". Two naughty boys had to be disciplined after 'racing' off ahead and missing the Pig Trot Lane turn. Asked a passerby how to get to the Virgin & Castle (wot no map?) which turned out to be really nice.

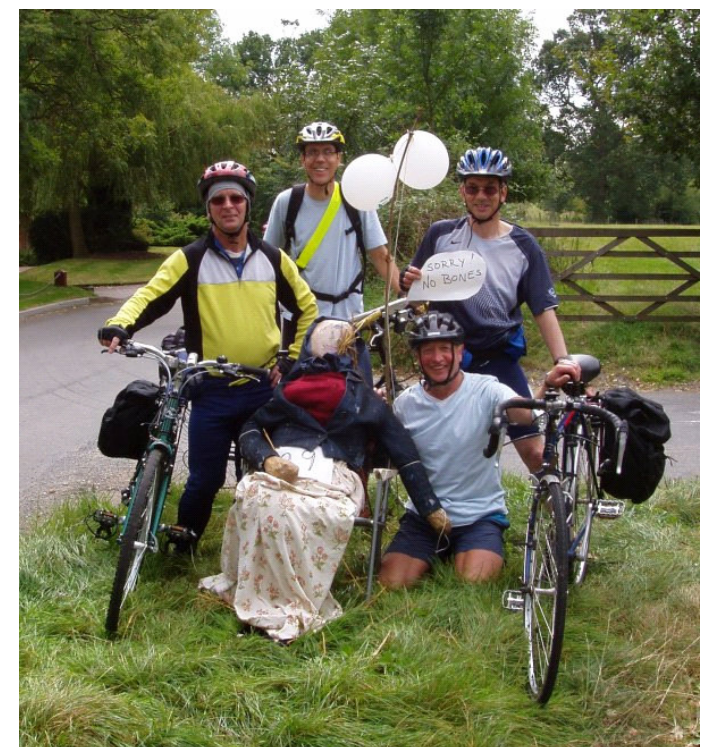
Spent 2 hours in the garden. The birthday boy, James, bought the first round. It was really frustrating to be told that they didn't do Chateau Lafite 1927 by the pint. On the way back our leader required a stop for a call of nature. Being sensitive souls we felt it only appropriate to ride on and give him a private moment.

We reached a T-junction after 100 yards Brian: "Let's hide in this field & see if Nick knows which way to go!". Shambles. Bikes dropped in the gateway in full view. One in hi-vis kit in full view peeing – back to the road so couldn't be seen? The rest shouting at their top of their voices at

the jolly jape. After a bit of hiding "who's looking?". DOH, no-one. So we spied for 15 minutes, no Nick. Does he have a medical issue? Is he lost? Quick pedal back to the private zone – nix! Think about ringing but Nick's phone off. Eventually, he turns it on and phones – "I'm at Packwood House, where are you?".

So we meet up and with one minor confusion when three of us divert down the canal near Hockley Heath, all goes well. No wonder I got home an 6:45, having done not 40 but 65 miles. But a great day.

Email from James: I did 56.6 miles – so yep – I achieved my ambition + cheers to you all for (Nick) organising / (everyone) doing it with me!



David Little

1998



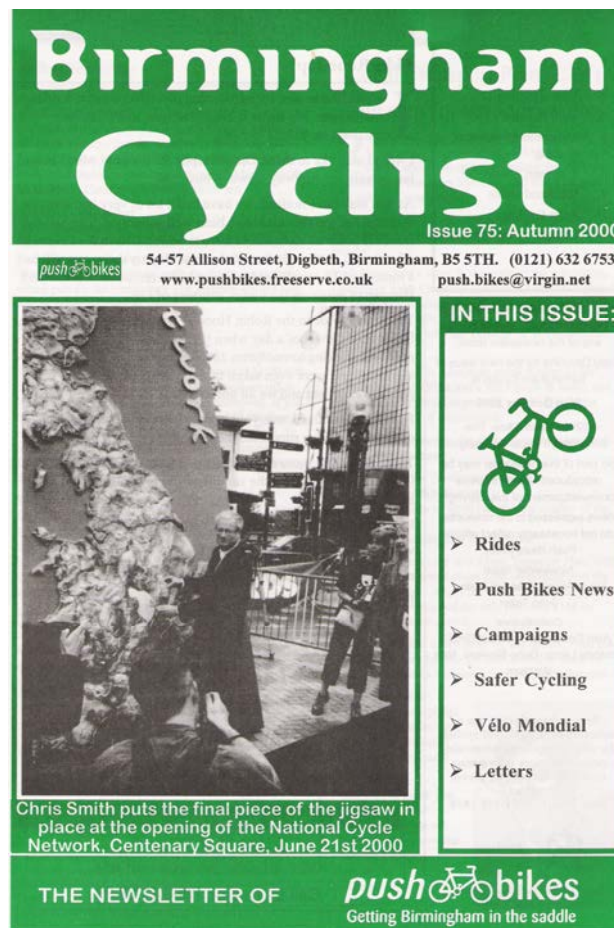
By now Push Bikes has relinquished responsibility for the whole of the county of the West Midlands and concentrates its campaigning activities on the Birmingham and Solihull areas. The highlight of the year was Bike Week, which for the first time in Birmingham included a festival of cycling, the Bike Bonanza in Cannon Hill Park. Organised jointly by the City Council, Push Bikes and the British Cycling Federation the aim was to showcase cycling as a mode of transport and a sport. Central to Push Bikes' efforts was the 5-mile Challenge, an event designed to show non-cyclists just how easy it is to cycle 5 miles. Over 136 riders took part on an on-road / off-road course marshalled by Push Bikes' members, with the prize of a bike on offer to one randomly drawn participant. A great variety of other events on the day included: grass track racing, bicycle polo, children's treasure hunt and an exhibition of veteran bikes.

2000

Into the new millennium and Centenary Square was the focus for the opening ceremony for the National Cycle Network. Several hundred cyclists riding from London, Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff brought pieces of a giant jigsaw of the network to Birmingham. Minister for the Arts, Culture and Sport, Chris Smith, put the final piece of the jigsaw in place and is shown on the cover of the Autumn 2000 newsletter (below).

Push Bikes reproduces a series on safe cycling by John Franklin, one of Britain's leading writers on cycling matters and the author of Cyclecraft.

Push Bikes played an important role in securing increased funding for cycling through the Local Transport Plan bid to Central Government. The City Council attempted to gloss over the results of public consultation which showed a preference for between 4 to 8% of the transport budget to be spent on cycling. Previously the budget for cycling had been only 1% but thanks to hard lobbying and support from Cllr. John Chapman it was increased to 4% (£5m over 5 years).



Michael Groll

Hagley Road Woes (continued)

Nigel Pedley, one of the Wednesday cyclists, came in September, Neerjaz explained her problem in more detail and several of us studied the Cycling and Walking Map to recommend any alternative home-ward routes that she could take. But it was obvious that other choices involved significant detours and junctions. Neerjaz added the very valid comments that the Hagley Road IS a Strategic route, IS straight, flat, quick and potentially easy for her start and finish points. BUT the road is too narrow, too busy for comfortable cycling. The meeting agreed that two solutions were feasible: designate the footway for shared or segregated pedestrian and cycle use, and put a contra flow cycle lane in Harborne Road. This would be, Neerjaz considered, a "small investment for a big return".

So. The Government SAYS it wants to encourage cycling. So does Birmingham City Council. Looking through some of the archive documents in the Push Bikes office I found this: Birmingham Cycling Strategy Policy Document, dated January 1999. "Hagley Road parallel Route - identified but not started".....



Hagley Road: traffic lane widths too narrow for safe and easy cycling?

Belgrave Middleway Crossing

'Incidents' between cyclists and cars crossing the Belgrave Middleway from Gooch Street form a frequent 'thread' on the Cycle-iseWM email chat room. Hardly a week goes by without a message reporting conflict (usually verbal, but occasionally physical) being posted, then inevitably followed by several responses. The crossing is where Gooch Street (actually Horton Square at the junction) and Longmore Street meet the Belgrave Middleway section of the Inner Ring Road. Longmore Street has an off-road segregated pedestrian/cycle track along one side. Gooch and Longmore are part of the popular River Rea Cycle Route.

The crossing is also a route for some bus services. The junction is traffic light controlled, with 'Toucan' crossings for cyclists and pedestrians. Traffic travelling out-of-city from Gooch Street will find a 'Buses Only' (yes, not buses, cyclists and taxis) lane at the immediate approach to the lights, with a nearside cycle lane feeding the Toucan. But car traffic must keep left and turn at a left turn only restriction controlled by the same light sequence. Thus out-of-city traffic wishing to access Longmore Street, which it can see from the junction, must instead turn left, go up the Middleway, loop around the traffic island at Moseley Road, return down the Middleway and turn left into Longmore. I spent an hour during a peak time (4:30pm to 5:30pm on a Friday) watching car and cycle numbers and movements through the junction; for many cars heading for Longmore Road, the compulsory Turn Left was just too big a detour for them to comply. During that hour, I counted 42 cyclists crossing the junction out of city. Just 18 used the cycle lane and toucan crossing, while 24 cycled across in the centre of the Bus Lane. But these figures were beaten by the 47 cars that entered the Bus Lane to cross into Longmore Street, seven of these even 'jumping' the red light, probably aware of the significant 'all red' phase at this junction. Some of the cyclists in the Bus Lane were not blameless either - four of the bikes chanced a crossing on the red. Watching the cyclists after they had entered Longmore, while a few used the road to continue ahead, most wanted to access the cycle lane, which for out-of-city cyclists requires a right turn manoeuvre onto the offside footway, only a short distance after leaving the junction. The cycle lane before the junction has placed them at a nearside position as they cross and enter Longmore, so I think it is the need to carry out this turn from the nearside, with sometimes several cars behind (who have crossed illegally) that creates the problem.

During the hour I only counted eight public transport buses crossing out-of-city. I do not think that cars can be prevented from using the bus lane without camera enforcement but with only eight buses crossing out-of-city in that hour, the presence of cars is hardly a significant impediment to the service flow or frequency, which this 'Bus Gateway' is supposed to assist. But by definition the cycle lane places cyclists in the wrong position for a right turn immediately after the junction.

So, what to do? How about adjusting the Traffic Regulation Order and adding signage to permit cyclists to use the bus lane, then moving the out-of-city cycle lane to become a lead-in lane to an Advanced Stop Line (ASL) at the traffic lights. Cyclists could then take up the primary position in front of traffic ready to more safely cross the junction and negotiate the right turn. The Toucan crossing becomes a Pelican. Install a camera to enforce the bus lane or signals; although I did not perceive the cars to delay buses due to the relative infrequent service. On 29th September, Martin Stride commented on Cycle-iseWM: "On my regular commute, when travelling away from the city centre, I now make a habit of occupying the bus lane section of the crossing at the traffic lights. This puts me in a safer position for turning right onto the off-road section of the cycle route."

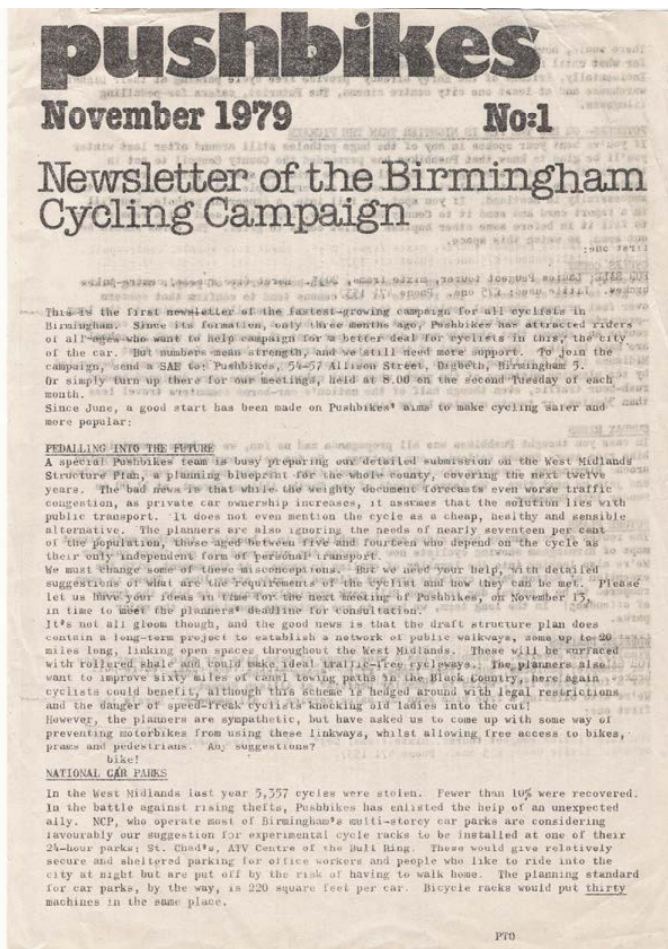
So, move the cycle lane, change the TRO, install an ASL. That's what I would do. I have no idea what the Council will do. If anything. If Graham Lennard of the City Council responds, we'll let you know in our next issue.

Graham Hankins.

Birmingham Cyclist Review

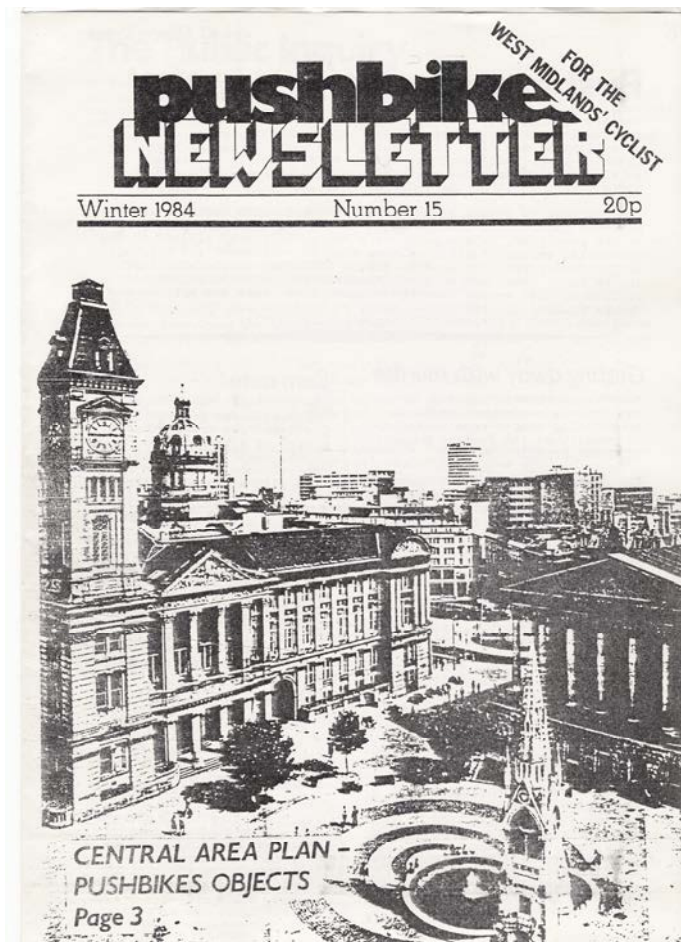
Since the formation of Push Bikes in August 1979, our newsletter, Birmingham Cyclist, has appeared regularly to keep members and others with an interest in cycling up-to-date and in touch. Rather than try to cover over 28 years of news, I've selected some items of interest from across the years.

1979



The first edition of the newsletter took the form of a double-sided A4 stencilled single sheet. It highlighted the lack of consideration for cycling in the West Midlands County Council 10 year Structure Plan, ignoring the large proportion of the population who have no access to a car. The plan did include walkways and canal towpaths. Push Bikes formulated a suitable reply. We thought we had got the City Council to provide pot hole reporting cards but they changed their mind so we eventually made our own. Sunday cycle rides were held from the earliest days. Initial membership of Push Bikes was free as we thought the more members we could claim the better politically!

1984

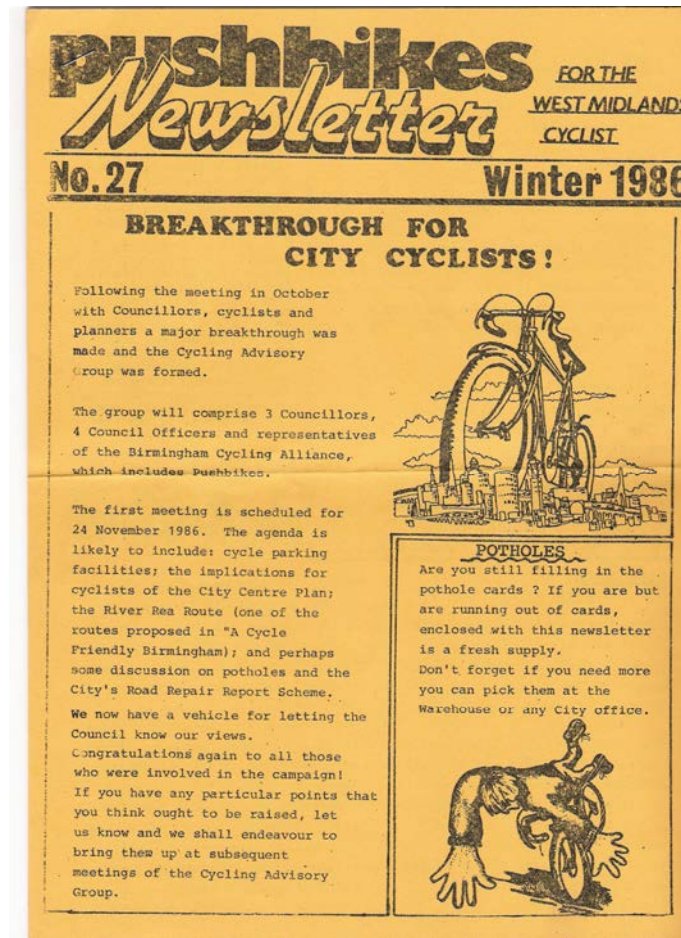


By 1984 Push Bikes had become a West Midlands County wide organisation, helping to set up campaign groups in Solihull, Coventry and Wolverhampton. The newsletter covered news across the West Midlands.

Push Bikes presented well researched objections to the Birmingham Central Area Plan, which were read out by member David Davies at a public inquiry. We were supported by a professional transport consultant, Peter Trevelyan, who criticised the council for its inadequate plans for cyclists. As a result significant changes were made to the Plan.

On a less positive note the winter newsletter opined that the West Midlands was “undoubtedly the least enthusiastic of all the metropolitan councils about cycling”, “apart from Tyne and Wear”, relying entirely on cycle campaign groups to find and progress schemes!

1986



A major breakthrough was made in the forming of the Cycling Advisory Group, a forum for discussion of all cycling issues, and comprising councillors, council officers and representatives from Push Bikes and other user organisations. On the agenda for the first meeting in November 1986 was the River Rea Route (now long completed and part of the flagship National Cycle Network route 5 in Birmingham).

Push Bikes' member, David Davies, was appointed Cycling Liaison Officer for Birmingham City Council, with the hope of cycling being given a higher priority in transport planning in the city.

Push Bikes worked in partnership with a number of different organisations on the Birmingham Bike Rides project organising bike rides for young people, women and the unemployed in Handsworth and Small Heath. Funding was obtained to buy 18 mountain bikes from Raleigh and nearly 100 people visited destinations such as Clent Hills and Birmingham Airport by bike.

1994

Central Government produce new planning guidance on the need to reduce car use and Birmingham City Council hold a 'Transport for a Better Birmingham' conference. Push Bikes commissioned a transport consultant to produce a paper entitled 'Cycling—not an option, a necessity', which was delivered at the conference and attracted some media interest. The paper set out a 15-point strategy to boost cycling and proposed a modest target for 10% of journeys not on foot to be made by bicycle.

National Bike Week sponsored by Hovis now takes place every year in June. In Birmingham events included a 5 mile challenge (to demonstrate that this is a distance anyone can cycle), a Tolkien ride, a Cyclists' Breakfast and the mass-participation Great Midlands Bike Ride. Perhaps the most eagerly-anticipated events though was the Commuter Challenge where users of a bus, train, car and bicycle (by 3 different routes) all set off from King's Norton for the City Centre during the morning peak. The event was televised by BBC Midlands Today and the 'winner' (of course) was a cyclist on a recumbent in just over 14 minutes.

