

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 3rd Tuesday of each month at 19:30 including: 19 February, 18 March & 22 April

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
Concorde Cyclist's Club	Denis Feasey	0121 747 6420

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

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. You may wish to write in support of a bid for a 'Cycling Town or City' where you live (see p.3). It's your councillor's 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

Members' Discounts From:

Bike Shop	Location	Exceptions
Scott's Cycles (see advert p.12)	Hall Green	bikes
Action Bikes	Rubery	bikes
Bike Pro	Northfield	bikes
Fletchers Auto Store	King's Heath	none
Harborne Cycle Surgery	City Centre	none
Red Kite Cycles	Harborne	none
Sprocket Cycles	Shirley	bikes
(see advert p.6)	City Centre	none



Connect2 funding boost for cycling in North Birmingham see p.5

Birmingham to bid to be England's Cycle City see p.3

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

Well, here we are, into yet another year of 'Getting Birmingham in the Saddle'. No, not a clever quip I have just invented, this is the 'Push Bikes' strap-line. 2008 will see more Cycling Advisory Groups, more British Waterways Canal User Group meetings, no doubt a National Bike Week event in the city, probably other Transport or Environmentally themed events in the city. Push Bikes hopes to be involved in them all.

But this is very 'broad brush' stuff. Those who already bike around the city have specific moans about specific routes: the Hagley Road corridor and Belgrave Middleway crossing were raised in the Autumn issue.

So at our first committee meeting of 2008, we were determined to make an early start on plans for the year. These are:

What's Wrong with Birmingham? - a meeting for all cyclists in the city.

The idea is to stage an open forum for cyclists to question a councillor with an interest in cycling. We have a councillor (sorry, no names at this stage) willing to be 'on board' as it were and three of the committee are a 'sub-group' to determine the final format of the meeting. But because we would like this meeting to happen 'sooner rather than later' please watch our web site (www.pushbikes.org.uk) for progress on this (please note: our previous web site (www.pushbikes.freeserve.co.uk) is still on line but is no longer the official site for Push Bikes) We may also send out mini-newsletters by email in between the quarterly print, so if you would like to be added to the mailing list, please email: secretary@pushbikes.org.uk

A re-approach to Leisure Centres and Further Education Centres.

We want to provide cycle training for adults; we have the personnel, and the means. But despite sending letters to various Centres and managers, replies are conspicuous by their absence. Personal visits to managers might be the only way to start. As a CTC Instructor, my 'brief encounters' with adults and 'children' (OK a 6 foot 15 year old!!) who want to cycle has shown, all too vividly, the astonishing lack of bike knowledge out there. You ask a client: "How do you know how much air to put in the tyres?" Dunno. Which brake does the left hand lever operate? Dunno. Which gear would you start off in, a small cog, or a larger cog? Dunno. Why are you riding so close to the kerb? Dunno. Now, were these the responses of the 'child'... or the adult, do you think.....?

Resurrection of the 'Five Mile Challenge'.

This was a light-hearted event that Push Bikes staged in Cannon Hill Park many years ago, as part of the 'Bike Bonanza' festival. Starting on the Rea Valley Route in the Park, adults and children cycled on a mapped route of quiet roads to discover how easy five miles was to cycle, for the averagely fit person. Nationwide 56% of all car trips are less than five miles, showing the real potential to increase trips by bike.

So we are going to try to stage this again. The route still exists in the office (as do the signing cards!) - trivialities like legal stuff and insurance we will sort - I hope! This is why such things need to be 'on the table' in January for an event in the summer!

A DVD video to introduce basic cycling.

This might sound ambitious but we have the ideas and basic means, even a few minutes a 'crude' footage (you'd be amazed what I get up to in my kitchen!) But this needs to be done 'properly' if it is to be distributed (e.g. to interested enquiries or new members) so we will be seeking any willing expertise.

So. All of the above. Ambitious? Easy? Certainly not the latter. But Push Bikes is determined to give them all its 'best shot' in 2008. And of course if any member thinks they can help us out on ANY of these, in ANY way, please communicate!

A belated Happy New Year to y'all,

Graham Hankins.

Push Bikes' Rides

Sunday 24 February 2008 to Alvechurch

Leader: Nick Wattison
Meet at Kings Norton Railway Station car park, at 10.45am. A 17 mile round trip suited to the slower rider. This time the destination will be a pub in the 'Alvechurch' area. There will be a few hills on this ride!

Sunday 30 March 2008 to Belbroughton

Leader: Nick Wattison
Meet at Kings Norton Railway Station car park, at 10.45am. A few hills on this one, but with a round trip of about 17 miles at a steady pace this shouldn't prove too arduous. Lunch will be taken at a favourite watering hole in the 'Belbroughton' area.

Note: these are just 'stop gap' rides to get us through these dark, cold, winter days. In the Spring we will be committed to a programme of rides involving a variety of 'new' ideas: short rides for beginners, linking up with Sustrans' rides and other groups; non-pub rides, camping trips, long rides, pub rides, train-assisted rides and Kieran Walker's memorial ride starting at Lichfield City Station.

Wednesday Evening Rides in Winter

While the regular Wednesday evening rides are suspended during winter, ad hoc rides are arranged each week provided the weather forecast is OK and enough people say they are coming. The ride will be within Birmingham to avoid unlit, pitch black, country lanes. Some of the route may be along canals or cycle paths so proper lights are essential. Suggestions for destinations are welcome. Meeting place is the main entrance to the MAC at 19:45 for a 20:00 start i.e. outside the park as many of the gates are closed at dusk. The return ride usually starts at 22:30ish. Some rides could start & return earlier if participants want this. However check first that the ride is taking place: on each Monday if the weather forecast is OK a notice will be posted on the web site and sent to the rides mailing list. Depending on responses further details will be posted by 22:00 on Tuesday on the web site and via the rides mailing list.

Rides mailing list

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 high-visibility 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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Birmingham News

Marketing and promotion

For cycling promotion Birmingham City Council is awaiting the amended reprint of the Cycling and Walking Map, which should be ready in February. We are also proposing to arrange events during Bike Week (14th June - 20th June) - at the moment Sutton Park has been provisionally booked for a Family Cycle Day on Sunday June 15th. A Sandwell Valley Map is being worked on by Sandwell and Birmingham local authorities.

Bike rental schemes

For improving cycling facilities, we are looking at the evidence from the Bike Rental schemes around Europe, including the scheme that is run in Lyon - one of Birmingham's partner cities.

Extra funding for cycling on offer

We are also aware of the announcement from the DfT and Ruth Kelly on 21st January regarding the Cycling Fund of £140 million. With the Cycling Fund 500,000 additional ten year olds should be trained with Bikeability by 2012, and 500 more schools should be connected to the National Cycle Network. This announcement also includes the intention for 10 more Cycling Demonstration Towns, including a Demonstration City.

Scheme development

The proposed work for Rectory Park cycle and walking route is proposed for the next financial year. The proposed section upgrading of the Cole Valley cycle way and footway between the A45 and Hob Moor Road is also programmed for 2008/9.



ACTION POINTS

This symbol indicates items where readers can take action such as writing or emailing

Plans are in place to repair and reconstruct sections of the Harborne Walk Way which become wet and boggy. With the successful Sustrans Connect 2 Big Lottery Fund Bid, the rejuvenated Steering Group for the New Hall Valley scheme was held at Bishop Walsh School on 22nd January. The next meeting is on Tuesday 4th March at 18:00 in Bishop Walsh School.

Cycling Strategy

Cycling Policy is being addressed with the forthcoming Cycling Strategy consultation which will be commencing in February. Keep an eye on the Cycling pages on the Birmingham City Council Transportation web pages: www.birmingham.gov.uk

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

James Martin

Birmingham to be England's Cycling City?

In January the Transport Secretary, Ruth Kelly, backed by the Health and Education secretaries, announced a mammoth 500% increase in the budget for cycling. This equates to a £110m increase over 3 years. The Government justified the investment because of the health, environmental and other positive impacts of cycling; the successes of Cycling England in its first 3 years, and the high value for money of the proposed programme.

One of the components of the package is to enlarge the existing budget for "Cycling Towns" to include one "Cycling City". The original Cycling England funding proposal for a Cycling City spoke of a £30m budget. To be considered for this status, Birmingham needs to:

- Show it has need for such an initiative (easy)
- Show there is desire for it (more of a challenge!)

Push Bikes has learnt that Birmingham is now preparing a bid to become the Cycling City!

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Pan Wales Ride - The Lôn Las Cycle Challenge 2008

Bobath Children's Therapy Centre is looking for enthusiastic cyclists to join their Lôn Las Cycle Challenge 2008, pedalling 254 miles from Holyhead to Cardiff Bay in a spectacular 6 day event. The exciting challenge, which takes place on 15 to 20 April 2008, crosses three mountain ranges and captures Wales' breathtaking scenery as the route passes through North, Mid and South Wales. The charity, which provides specialist therapy to children throughout Wales who have cerebral palsy, is looking for cyclists over 18 with a good level of fitness.

Emma Baldwin Fundraising Coordinator at Bobath says "The cyclists who took part in last year's Lôn Las Challenge had such a fantastic time - there was real camaraderie amongst the group. There are some arduous parts of the route but what makes it so satisfying is that for very mile you pedal you will be helping to improve the lives of children who have cerebral palsy."

Outline of Itinerary:

- Day 1: Travel to Holyhead aboard See Wales Luxury mini coach (official charity sponsor). Spend the evening at a 3 star environmentally-friendly bunkhouse in Rhoscolyn, situated in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Day 2: Holyhead to Tremadog, via Caernarfon. 67 miles, easy/moderate.
- Day 3: Tremadog to Corris, via Dolgellau. 40 miles, strenuous with major ascents.
- Day 4: Corris to Rhayader. 44 miles, strenuous, long and steep climb.
- Day 5: Rhayader to Brecon, via Builth Wells. 49 miles, moderate.
- Day 6: Brecon to Cardiff Bay, ending in a spectacular grand finale. 54 miles, moderate.

All cyclists will be required to raise a minimum sponsorship which will cover travel, support vehicle, accommodation and meals throughout, and a specially designed bike jersey, with the remainder

going directly to Bobath Children's Therapy Centre Wales.

To receive an information pack and to register, contact 029 20522600 or email: fundraising@bobathwales.org

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Cyclesolihull Rides

Cyclesolihull will be offering two rides each month throughout the 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/>

Christmas Ride on Sunday 23 December

Starting at Kings Norton Railway Station car park, a short ride to a local country pub led by Nick Wat-tison. Total ride distance of about 15 miles. And what a great day it was!

Starting with great confusion, as the web site ad-vertised the ride at 10.30, while all the notices placed in Libraries etc. stated 11.00 am, we all set off – all ten of us !

It made a great way to round the year off with so many people – new and current members – you really felt like part of a team.

The weather proved to be excellent – the bright winter sun giving you some warmth, while the val-leys along the route stayed foggy and cold – great contrast.

The day was so good – it had encouraged many people to come out – we passed several walkers, and one group of horse riders who had the best idea of dressing up their horses for Christmas (hint for 2008!).

Nick had devised a route of his usual (high) stan-dard – i.e. no major roads, great country views, and with many of us having absolutely no idea where we were until we arrived at the pub – the Coach & Horses pub at Weatheroak (a favourite of mine – so cheers Nick !!).

With the fire roaring and the food and beer (and vodka) on tap, it was good for all to sit and chat – a very enjoyable way of spending a Sunday lunch-time.

The ride home was good – I think – as I went off towards Solihull, while the others meandered back to Birmingham – so I really can't comment much on that part....

(The best way to travel to Solihull at Christmas is by bike – while the cars queued – I just cycled along the cycle paths quite merrily – and beat most of the cars!) SO – a big thank you to Jill, John, Nick, Trudi, Nigel, Keith, Juliet, Rob, and Carol (apologies if anything spelt wrong) – for taking part in the last ride of 2007 – here's to 2008!.

James Le Grys.



Enjoying the countryside out in Worcestershire.

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Connect2 funding for Plants Brook route

Connect2 funding secured

In December 2007 Sustrans' UK-wide Connect2 project won the public vote in the Big Lottery Funds: The People's £50 Million contest, which means that the 79 Connect2 walking and cycling schemes will go ahead.

One of the 79 successful schemes will be the Plants Brook route, an open space running through north east Birmingham and part of the North Bir-mingham Cycle Route. The Connect2 challenge is to link the nearby communities to it, providing ac-cess for schools, hospitals, Sutton Coldfield town centre, the enormous Sutton Park and, at its south-ern end, the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal Tow-path. Although this Lottery bid has been a long drawn out process, it has had a number of advan-tages. It has allowed the opportunity for positive public consultation to gather strong, local support with a large number of individuals committed to seeing the scheme realised. The high profile of the process will also mean that Government agencies and other funders are more likely to be that bit more supportive and to go that extra mile which makes all the difference, at least we hope so! The first Birmingham Connect2 Steering Group meeting following the vote on Tuesday 22nd Janu-ary at 1830 in Bishop Walsh School on Wylde Green Road (*report in following article*). The pur-pose of the Steering Groups before the vote was to raise the awareness of the scheme within the wider community to gain their support. Now that the vote has been won and we can deliver the pro-jects Steering Groups are still fundamental in al-lowing public participation/ownership of the schemes. The groups will be involved in design, planning, implementation, governance and ensur-ing continued long term usage.

Sustrans

Connect 2 Steering Group – Bishop Walsh School, 22 January 2008

Sustrans' area manager Edward Healey had called the meeting, which was chaired for the moment by Graham Lennard of Birmingham City Council and attended by a couple of CTC members, a consult-ant contractor, various residents from interested groups, a police officer and myself to represent Push Bikes. Eventually a dozen of us in the school library.

At first, lots of talk and plenty of potential paper! Sustrans was to produce a 'Memo of Understand-

ing' for each project, which required an update of all 79 projects in the next three weeks – this made Graham Lennard win a bit! Then there would be a "wodge document" for the role of the Steering Group! Various voices, particularly from the resi-dents, had commented on how vague Sustrans was to the general public, many of whom do not really understand what Sustrans is. There was a similar feeling about the particular project.

Anyway, after further talk around all this, Graham Lennard eventually produced an A0 (that's big, folks) map of the Sutton area, showing the routes constructed to date. This was a principal 'spine' with a number of feeder routes and the emphasis was that this was a walking and cycling provision – not exclusively for either. But as the various op-tions on the map were shown and discussed a number of consistent issues and constraints emerged.

Oh dear, there is so much actual or potential con-flict out there. Budgets of course, also land owner-ship, rights of way, the needs of traffic flow man-agement to name a few. Traffic managers want (are desperate) to keep vehicles flowing to mini-mise congestion and every crossing point or 'all red' phase at traffic lights conflicts with that. A pro-posed cycle route will emerge THERE so a Toucan crossing over a main road would be nice, but the residents of sheltered housing 100 yards away also want a crossing. The City cannot provide both and probably does not really want to provide even one – see above. A Pelican crossing costs around £50,000 by the way. Then another part of the proposed route would cross private land – the owner presently says: "No way, Pedro".

Anyway, there will be feasibility studies, probably a series of library displays and 'public consultation' so that the eventual routes will feed where people actually want to go and not stop at fences – as in one case at the moment! So, I'm sure it's going to happen, but it ain't going to happen tomorrow folks! But there is a five year timescale limit for completion of Connect2 schemes – so some of us may still be alive to ride it.....

Graham Hankins

Front cover picture (by permission of Birmingham City Council) left to right:

Graham Lennard, TravelWise Team Leader, Birming-ham City Council; Michelle Smith, Newhall Valley Coun-try Park Ranger; Edward Healey, Area Manager, Sus-trans; Huw Davis, Technical Director, Sustrans.

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Hagley Road woes

Following Push Bikes' feature on the difficulties of cycling on the Hagley Road corridor (see Birmingham Cyclist Issue 100, pp.6-7), Birmingham City Council's Sustainable Transport Team Leader Graham Lennard responded as follows:

The Hagley Road corridor is clearly a major transport axis in the city and as such I am confident it would feature on a priority cycle route network for the city. Sheer numbers of existing travellers will mean that cycle flows are likely to be similarly relatively high. Given the current traffic flow, improving conditions for cyclists could result in some relatively significant numbers of people opting to cycle (bearing in mind that cycling "conditions" are only part of the picture). Any investigations into improving cycling in the corridor would need to consider all options. I say corridor rather than just the Hagley Road as it is apparent that there is the Augustus Road quieter parallel route which may be the best option. At this stage I do not think it is possible to say that a footway conversion on the Hagley Road is necessarily the best option. With such arrangements, priority at side roads is not easy to achieve, especially where there is no room to "bend out" the cycle track from the main road into the side road mouth.

A fuller feasibility study would be required to arrive at the best option in the corridor to provide for cyclists. We did discuss the Hagley Road at a meeting with (Push Bikes' members) John Bennett and Howard Boyd on Monday 19th November. This focussed on the Augustus Road option.

Belgrave Middleway Crossing

Graham Lennard also responded on the issue of crossing the Inner Ring Road between Longmore Street and Horton Square and conflicts between motorists and cyclists (see Birmingham Cyclist Issue 100, p.7):

As regards the Longmore Street / Horton Square crossing of the Ring Road, I will be discussing this with Dave Miller here, now he has returned from leave. Dave has expertise in road safety. You may be aware the inbound white lining has changed recently following resurfacing. I am investigating this, although now narrower outbound lane on Longmore Street might deter cars from overtaking cyclists when they are looking to move right into the cyclists right turn box to access the cycle track. I believe the box is also wider than it was. I'll confirm matters.

Cycling the Northfield Bypass

What a waste of money! The new Northfield bypass may have some benefits for motorists but it is of little use to cyclists if they follow the designated cycle paths. It seems to have been designed by people who have no idea of the needs of any cyclist – be they shopper or commuter, fearless or timid, fast or slow. The only exception may be those cycling with young children, but I would argue that they should be acceptable on normal pedestrian paths. No doubt the route ticks the boxes on the planners check list:

- Does the layout separate cycles from other vehicles? yes.
- Are there safe crossings for cyclists at road intersections? yes
- Is the signage for cyclists clear? yes

But rather more relevant:

- As a cyclist does it ease my journey? no
- Would a cyclist use the cycle lanes? no

Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 placed a duty on all Highway Authorities to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) for their area by November 2007. The first Solihull Rights of Way Improvement Plan was published on the 23 January 2008 and is available to download on Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's web site.

The plan is intended to be a strategic document that will provide the means over a ten year period for a local Highways Authority to identify and propose management strategies in order to improve public rights of way and access to the countryside.

The Solihull Cycle Steering Group was instrumental in securing some changes to the draft RoWIP which increased the number of references to cycling and included a number of bridleway improvements which are listed as 'quick wins', which could improve the surface for cyclists.

Kenilworth to Berkswell Greenway

Following the success of Sustrans Connect2 bid which includes Warwickshire County Council's scheme to improve the Kenilworth to Berkswell Greenway and extend it into Kenilworth, Sustrans is also looking at ways of improving access to the Greenway in Solihull. At present it ends near Berkswell station but there is no proper access., especially for cyclists.

Birmingham Airport links

Some useful new short lengths of shared-use pedestrian/cycle paths are under construction at Birmingham International Airport (completion due end of February). They provide a new safe route under Bickenhill Lane between the Airport and Birmingham International Rail Station, a new ramp from the Airport to Bickenhill Lane, providing an alternative to a steep unmade muddy path, plus a new path along an Airport road. These routes are designed to eventually become part of National Cycle Network Route 53 through Solihull.

Cycle Solihull Steering Group

New cycle circuit at Tudor Grange Park

Borough cycling enthusiasts will get a boost next year as work starts on a state of the art cycle circuit at Tudor Grange Park.

The one kilometre figure of eight circuit, the brain-

child of Solihull Cycling Club's Olympic Silver medalist, Harry Reynolds, has also clinched a £400,000 grant from Sports England's Community Club Development Programme to fund its construction.

Work on the circuit is due to begin early April 2008 to coincide with a £1 million re-development of the park, which will also see improvements to the lake and water courses, creating new woodlands and floral area, and better security, CCTV and lighting.

The opening of the cycle circuit will see the start of an exciting new partnership between Solihull Council and Solihull Cycling Club to operate the circuit for the benefit of the community. The key aim is to attract as many young people as possible from the Borough into the activity of cycling.

The new facility will enable coaching to take place in a safe environment away from busy public roads. Competitive events will also be organised to aid the development of riders who want to make cycling their chosen sport.

The new circuit has also gained support from local schools, other cycling groups along with the Hand cycling Association, which represents disabled sportsmen and women, and Snow sport England for Nordic Cross-Country Roller Skiing.

Councillor Diana Holl-Allen, Cabinet Member for Quality of Life & Neighbourhoods, said: "The new cycle track will create a fantastic opportunity for Borough residents to cycle in a safe environment and will also be a great resource for serious cyclists and clubs to hold events."

Steve Town, Regional Director, Sport England, said: "This off road cycle track will be a great addition to the sports facilities being developed in the Tudor Grange area. The cycle club can now offer excellent opportunities for current members and will also be able to attract new members. As the track is open access it can be used by the local community for a range of track-based sports. The new facility will be a real asset to community sport and I congratulate everyone involved in the project".

Solihull MBC

Notice of 2008 Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the 2008 Push Bikes Annual General Meeting will be held at the Warehouse, 54-57 Allison Street, Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 5TH on Wednesday 21 May at 19.30. Nominations for the committee and any propositions for debate should be sent to the secretary no later than 14 days prior to the meeting.

Centro's cycling and walking officer

Push Bikes is encouraged to hear that Centro, the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive with responsibility for promoting and developing public transport, has recently created a cycling and walking officer role. This new position has been filled by Emma Thompson. Push Bikes asked her what her work will involve:

"I will mainly be focusing on the promotion of walking and cycling to public transport interchanges within the West Midlands. A great deal of work has to be done in terms of establishing what current cycling provision we have at interchanges (both bus and rail) against existing usage. This will lead to promotional work and ongoing monitoring which will enable Centro to 'identify gaps' where facilities are inadequate. I will then be interfacing with colleagues in the Districts, cycle users and Centro's projects team to identify priorities for cycling and walking improvements to public transport interchanges in the West Midlands. The key focus of my role is to facilitate integration across all modes of the transport system.

The other key part of my role is the promotion and monitoring of car sharing initiatives to our park and ride sites."

Push Bikes looks forward to working with Emma and Centro to improve integration of public transport and cycling, making these modes of transport in combination a viable alternative to the car.

New West Midlands rail franchise holder

In November 2007 Govia won the contract to run the West Midlands franchise through a subsidiary named the London Midland Railway. The franchise combined the Silverlink County services between London Euston and Northampton with most of the West Midlands local and regional services previously operated by Central Trains.

One of the particular objectives in relation to the West Midlands franchise is:

"provision for cycle-rail integration and access to stations by all modes".

Push Bikes will endeavour to make sure this objective is met through better provision for routes to stations, at stations and on trains.

Cycle parking at stations programme

Centro's programme of improvements to cycle parking at rail stations continues. New installations in our area since the last newsletter include:

	lockers	shelters	Sheffield stands
Blake Street	5		
Four Oaks	10	1	5
Hampton in Arden	2		5
Marston Green	5	1	
Yardley Wood	5		
Acocks Green	5		
Kings Norton	6		
Whitlocks End	2		3

New lockers will be managed centrally by Centro, with users being issued with a code for a combination lock.

If you think that better cycle parking or other facilities are needed at your local station, please let us know and we will collate requests for Centro.



New cycle lockers at Kings Norton Station

Michael Groll

Cycling the Northfield Bypass (continued)

Why not? Well it is very simple. At the beginning of the bypass (in either direction) the cyclist has to leave the carriageway on to the pavement, press the crossing button, wait, cycle to the centre refuge, negotiate the chicane barriers, repeat the process and then repeat it again at least SIX more times on the northbound (into Birmingham direction) or, if travelling south, dismount and walk across a pedestrian area and then repeat the crossing procedure. Stopping and starting are the main points of danger for cyclists and any nearby pedestrian because it is when the cyclist is least stable. There are other minor inconveniences like occasional posts erected in the centre of the cycle lane but as no-one will be using it this is of little consequence.

It would have been so much better if the cycle lane had been incorporated into the roadway (transferring its width from the pavement and widening the road), then separating cyclists from traffic by a raised kerb along its entire length. In that way cycling could have been as free flowing as other traffic at a fraction of the cost- surely what should be the intended outcome of the bypass.

However, if you do decide to try out the cycle paths they should provide an extremely safe way of travelling the half mile round Northfield. It took me 10 minutes. As an alternative the original, pre-bypass route is still available of course. The familiar pot holes, badly resurfaced drains, cable works and manholes make it interesting and now there is less traffic. There are 2 traffic lights, none with any cycle crossing lights. It took me 2 minutes to cycle through.

The bigger picture? This latest example of idiotic planning raises the question: what training and experience do road planning engineers have? Why do they assume that cyclists will willingly behave in such a self-deprecating manner? If the purpose of a bypass is to encourage free-flowing traffic, why should this not apply to cycles as well as cars?

This bypass is a multimillion pound project. A significant proportion was spent on the provision of cycle paths. Who decides that in allocating scarce financial resources this is the best way to encourage cycling? Are there not other better ways? Of course safety is a major consideration –but if it is the only one everyone would walk and no cars (or

cycles) would exist.

The whole approach to planning for cycling in the UK is poor. Cyclists are deemed to be second class citizens: the courts reflect this in sentencing, and, unlike in many continental countries, cyclists involved in accidents are not presumed to be innocent hence encouraging bad driver behaviour. Are there any instances where cycle paths crossing side roads are given preference over cars? What do the 'Cyclist Dismount' signs say about planners? Does no-one in the practical decision making world (in contrast to the world of politics) realise that the cost benefits of cycling to both health and environment exist?

And, to members of Push Bikes, how do we get our message across in Birmingham – surely one of the least cycling friendly cities in the UK? Finally, will the Selly Oak Bypass be a repeat performance?



Northfield Bypass: ubiquitous 'end of route' and 'cyclists dismount' signs - are they necessary? why doesn't the route continue?

John Bennett

Gordon Selway (1949–2007)

In late November cycle campaigning lost one of its most valued assets. Gordon Selway died from a heart attack two days after attending the Cycle Campaign Network / CTC Good Practice seminar in Oxford on 19th November.

A cyclist from an early age, Gordon's first involvement with cycle campaigning was with the London Cycling Campaign in the late 1980s. A few years later, living in Redditch, he became involved with Push Bikes. He gave himself the very useful task of sorting out our information bank, correspondence and general filing and then helped to develop a strategic plan. He was also responsible for signing the Great Midlands Bike Ride. As with everything that Gordon put his hand to, he did the most thorough job.

Gordon graduated from Oxford and for a while taught Latin and Greek. He then practised as a solicitor until ill health forced him to retire. Although Gordon was a fount of knowledge on so many subjects, which he made freely available to others without hesitation, it was his understanding of legal matters that was particularly valuable to his later work with both the CCN and CTC. As if his cycling work was not enough, Gordon was also heavily involved with the Council for the Protection of Rural England, Friends of the Earth and Transport 2000. For the past few years he was a local Liberal Democrat councillor, fighting in particular for improved train services at Bromsgrove, the town where he was born and where he lived for most of his life. A remembrance service held at St John's church in Bromsgrove had a large attendance including many friends from the world of cycling. Gordon is going to be greatly missed, but we must be grateful for his valuable work from which we have all benefited so much. Our thoughts are with his sister and her family.

Alan Mason (1940-2007)

Alan Mason, a Push Bikes member, recently had a fatal accident whilst cycling on a stony track close to Gorcott Hill near Beoley.

Alan has been an enthusiastic cyclist as well as an international orienteer. He loved canal towpaths and had pursued British Waterways about their slow response to completing the Lapworth Loop towpath cycling route. As a member of the CTC Southern Wheelers he regularly led their rides into Warwickshire.

There was a large gathering of family and friends including many cycling companions at his funeral service at Robin Hood Crematorium.

John Bennett

Kieran Dennis Walker (1956-2007)

On 11 November 2007, Kieran Walker sadly passed away.

As some of you may know, he was an English teacher and had worked in many parts of the world. Recently he had been working in Oman, where he was tragically hit by a car and died shortly after of his injuries.

His involvement with Push Bikes will be greatly missed. He was my main contact in the north of Birmingham. He led some wonderful rides through areas of beautiful scenery we don't normally see. You could always guarantee plenty of 'liquid refreshment' stops along the way and some very stimulating conversation.

I'm sure that those of you who knew him would wish to pay tribute to him in some way. Therefore I am planning to organise a 'Kieran Walker Memorial Ride' in 2008 and hope that as many of you as possible could turn out. It will most likely be in the spring or summer and we will meet as in the past, at Lichfield City Railway Station. So bring your bike by train if you like.

On behalf of Push Bikes, I would like to send our deepest sympathies to Kieran's family and friends.



Kieran with bike in Shanghai

Nick Wattison

Most of you may be familiar with a computer 'chat-room', via various web sites and on every topic to provide a forum for the exchange of views. Some 'chat-rooms' are unregulated i.e. you can send whatever you want and it will appear, others are 'moderated', where every message or reply is seen first by the moderator before being passed into the group – or not. Messages are emailed to all subscribers. The cycle-iseWM room carries exchanges of view from cyclists all over the West Midlands. A few unattributed quotes from users in recent weeks:

The 'cycling on canal towpaths' thread...

"Some of the towpaths in London are well used by cyclists, but there's also an excellent network of on-road routes. In European cities where cycling is even more popular cycling isn't seen as something special. Upright city-bikes are popular, and people happily cycle in suits or dresses."

"Most of Birmingham's canal tow paths are fine for cycling provided: -

- * You only want to cycle in good weather or don't mind cycling hub deep in mud.
- * You only want to cycle in daylight.
- * You have tyres impervious to broken beer bottles.
- * You don't mind being whipped by the overgrowth in summer.
- * You don't mind being dunked in the canal by ice and/or mud in winter
- * You don't want to use a road bike.
- * You don't mind stopping every half mile to negotiate a locked gate
- * Stopping to chat to glue sniffers is your idea of an intellectual debate.
- * You live near one, and it goes in the direction you actually want to go."

"Can Pushbikes please push for higher standards - the removal of concrete blocks, raised bricks and barriers on cycleways? "

"Oh yes, those raised bricks - how does one get rid of them? I did try an experiment of removing one with my elbow, but this lead only to fracturing my elbow"

GH – "Push bikes has often questioned raised bricks and barriers at Canal User Group meetings. The 'raised bricks' issue usually gets cries of "Heritage" from the boaters, who generally want no changes at all."

All these messages were sent via the Email address Cycle-iseWM@yahoo.co.uk

This is a Yahoo 'chat room'. Go to the Yahoo web site to subscribe.

Graham Hankins

News from Birmingham's forum for cycling stakeholders

Draft Cycling Strategy. Summary consultation leaflet; made available, full draft available on-line at www.birmingham.gov.uk/cycling. But even this leaflet ran to a reduced ten pages of A4 including a rather vague 'map' of the draft proposals for a Strategic Cycle Corridor Network. The strategy will be available for consultation between the end of February and 31st March.

The Cole Valley Route: a section will be resurfaced by the end of March this year and Bordesley Green to Packington Avenue would be in the next financial year.

Harborne Walkway. A long 'running sore' with some Push Bikes members. This will be classified as a shared route 'restricted byway' – a Public Right of Way as a footway with provision for cycling. The major issue has been achieving a legal definition of this route to also allow for cycling on this Walkway and the search for a legal definition has gone all the way to legal departments in DEFRA and central Government. Open next year and maintained by Birmingham City Council.

Grosvenor Street West: A one-way road that was considered for a contra-flow cycle lane in the City Centre Consultation. Completion by end of March – yes, THIS year!

Harborne Road proposed one-way with cycle contra-flow: it was thought that the car parking might create a problem for the installation of a cycle lane – I pointed out that there was no parking allowed in a second and wider one-way section of Harborne Road further out from the Five Ways island.

Hill Street Contra-Flow. A one-way road up the hill and another long-standing desire by cyclists to be permitted to cycle down it! But made a bit more complex by the light – controlled junction at the bottom and the fact that it is a bus route – we were told that a safety audit might require that a bus must be able to overtake another bus without encroaching into any cycle lane. The junction is also a very busy one (which junction isn't?). Ongoing.

Advanced Stop Lines at traffic lights: some have no 'feeder' cycle lane to reach the cyclists' reservoir making their use by cyclists technically illegal. Concern noted for (possible) action.

National Bike Week: 14th to 22nd June. BCC has booked Sutton Park events, as last year.

On Street Bike Rental: Idea is to provide bicycles at railway stations. At a very early stage of discussion.

Gooch Street crossing did not have working demand buttons for cyclists travelling north – noted again.

Graham Hankins / John Bennett