



We don't want any more of THESE!

- **Cyclists—what's wrong with Brum?**
- **London to spend £50m / year on cycling- how much for our city?**
- **What plans do the City Council have?**
- **What do you want?**
- **Now's the chance to have your say!**

Special cyclists' meeting with City Council

19.00 Thursday 9th October, Birmingham & Midland Institute, see p.3

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

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Newsletter:

Michael Groll,
John Bennett.

Graham
Hankins,

Birmingham Cyclist has a readership of nearly 1000 cyclists. We offer competitive advertising rates. For more information please contact Treasurer David Wilkinson on 0121 440 3072 or e-mail: DW@atft.co.uk

View from the Chair

Perhaps I'm biased but I think that there has recently been a significant increase in the number of cyclists in Birmingham. Maybe it's summertime, maybe petrol prices, maybe environmental or health concerns. Who cares? At a recent count outside the Central Library 120 cyclists passed in 2 hours: a rate of 1 per minute. (see P. 17)

I'm glad to say that in recent months Push Bikes has been very active in raising the profile of cycling in Birmingham. At the Council's Cycling Advisory Group meetings we have challenged the Council's meagre plans for cycling improvements and investment. We have had meetings with the Cycling Officers (now 'Sustainable Transport') to push our ideas for practical and achievable projects. We have 'flown the flag' at the city's Climate Change Festival and Bike Week with displays and literature at our stand in Chamberlain Square. We have offered advice on cycling training and on Centro's plans to encourage more cyclists to use Kings Norton Station. We have regular (and sometimes frustrating) contact with British Waterways (towpaths and barriers) and London & Midland trains (why no cycling logos/spaces on the NEW rolling stock?). We respond to road traffic consultations.

As always the workload is borne by a few dedicated individuals to whom we all owe our thanks. There's lots more to do so please come and join us - it can be great fun and it's a great cause. (see back page for the date of the next meeting).

John Bennett

Front cover picture shows a frustrated cyclist on the Northfield Bypass encountering more of the ubiquitous "end of route" and "cyclists dismount" traffic signs. Why should a route have to end here?

Cycle and Rail

The Centro 'Cycle and Ride' promotion.

Centro's 'Cycle and Ride' scheme intends to encourage passengers to cycle to participating rail stations, where they will find secure cycle storage for the bikes until the customer returns. Cycle facilities are being made available at stations across the West Midlands and the lockers are allocated on a 'first come first served' basis. But a fundamental 'hurdle' is, of course, persuading the passengers onto their bike (and out of their cars) then riding to the stations in the first place! Which is why Centro, the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive, has asked 'Push Bikes' to help.



After seeing one of our 'Consider Cycling' presentations at Friends of the Earth during National Bike Week, Centro placed a promo. advertisement/Press Release into the 'Go Green' supplement of the Birmingham Mail of July 29th, with a follow-up editorial piece a few days later, publicising further such shows over a fortnight. Response from the public was a bit 'patchy' but a respectable number came on the final Saturday.

LATEST NEWS: Centro, Push Bikes and Graham Lennard will be meeting in September to discuss taking these presentations into Birmingham districts.

Graham Hankins

Kings Norton Rail Station Travel Plan

In July, Kings Norton was confirmed as one of the 24 stations across the country to take part in this pilot project. A travel plan will be developed to develop alternatives to single occupancy car use to travel to the station, including cycling of course. A monitoring methodology which measures the before and after effects of the travel plan is still being decided upon at a national level. It is hoped that an initial survey of current travel patterns will be undertaken in November 2008. Then the plan is that all of the pilot schemes will start in April 2009 for a two year period. Centro has already met and will continue to meet with Birmingham City Council, Travelwise, London Midland, Sustrans, National Express Group, South Birmingham Primary Care Trust and local councillors to establish a potential action plan, for improvements to access, signage and promotion.

NOTE: Our current phone number will soon be disconnected (to save funds—we do not make or receive many phone calls). We will become an extension from FoE Reception. Meanwhile, to contact us by phone, please call 632 6909 and leave a message with Reception.

Special Cyclists' Meeting / Birmingham News

HOW CAN CYCLING BE IMPROVED IN BIRMINGHAM?

HAVE YOUR SAY

Push Bikes has arranged a meeting with the City's Cycling Officers for members and interested others to discuss

What YOU think Birmingham should do to make cycling better for YOU?

It is your chance to:

- **hear and respond to the City Council's Cycling Strategy and**
- **give your views on what Push Bikes should campaign for**

The agenda will be as wide ranging as you want to make it, covering:

On road and off road provision and planned additions
Cycle parking provision
Public transport connections
Funding and resources
Accident black spots

It is most important that as many members as possible are present and participate. Only then will both the Council and Push Bikes feel that a representative section of views are heard.

SO MAKE A DATE

7.00pm Thursday 9th October, Birmingham & Midland Institute, Margaret Street
(coffee, biscuits and samosas available from 6pm)

Cycling Hell

The idea of hiring out free bikes so we can cycle round the city is a good one - so long as the council also opens more cycle routes so we can travel safely. The roads of this city are a nightmare to cycle round.

F Evans, Kings Heath
(Your Say, Birmingham Mail, 07/08/08)

Push Bikes response: It's not about 'cycle routes' per se, cities with high levels of cycling have a whole environment conducive to cycling, including lower speeds and restrictions on motor vehicles. Needless to say there is much work to be done in Birmingham!

Cycle Confidently and more Safely



Cycle training is a proven way of improving your cycling confidence on the road. It's also an effective way for non-cycling adults and children to get cycling easily and quickly. We offer:

- friendly one-to-one tuition for all ages
- training for adult and child complete beginners
- help with starting to cycle on the road
- advanced training for busy roads

Purr-fect Pedalling provides CTC-accredited training to the new National Standard for Cycle Training. Our training is tailored to your needs and takes place in **Solihull, South Birmingham and Leamington Spa/Warwick**. Please email us at info@purrfectpedalling.co.uk or call **07896 885726** or **01564 779235** for further information or to book a lesson.

www.purrfectpedalling.co.uk


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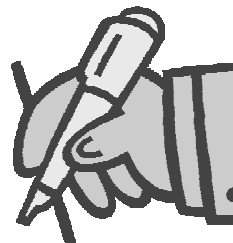
No time for cyclists at traffic lights!

We have complained in the past about the traffic lights at the Lordswood Road / Hagley Road junction not allowing enough time for cyclists to cross if approaching the lights from up the Lordswood Road hill. Several years ago, previous chairman Mike Paley managed to get the local press covering this story, and recently our new Membership Convenor Neeraj Malhotra mentioned it again as she cycles that way too!

So Graham Lennard of the City Council has responded to our raising of this issue again: "I plan to go and have a look at the junction, nothing like personal experience! If I feel there's a problem I'll raise it with signals folks - hopefully we can squeeze a few seconds!"

Push Bikes will keep everyone informed of progress.

Graham Hankins



ACTION POINTS

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

Birmingham News

Cycle City bid

As no doubt all readers are aware, Bristol was successful with its bid for cycle city status, fighting off the other two shortlisted cities, Manchester and Leicester. All those involved in the production of Birmingham's bid were extremely surprised at not being shortlisted. Preparation of the bid had generated widespread enthusiasm amongst a host of public, commercial and voluntary organisations within the city. Particularly strong were the links that were made between the transportation and health sectors, both seeing cycling as a common means of tackling their respective objectives.

Cycling England felt that a very well developed strategy had been presented and that the level of partner organisation and support was very impressive. However, Cycling England felt that awarding Cycle City status to Birmingham would be premature at the present time for a number of reasons.

Cycle City funds from Cycling England require match funding with local funds to at least an equivalent level. Cycling England were wanting to see a combined minimum fund of £10 per head of population per year, i.e. £5M of local funds per year for Birmingham's 1M population. A range of funds would have been eligible, however £5M was felt to be unachievable and a lower figure of £2.6M per year submitted. Little time was available to identify and get funding commitments and the bid submission deadline close to the start of the new financial year meant that funds had already been committed. It is likely that given time, further funds would have been confirmed. Nevertheless, Cycling England felt the match funding commitment to be insufficient to increase cycling levels by a significant amount within the 3 year programme. They also questioned whether there was commitment to a sufficient level of human resources to deliver the programme. One strand of our bid was to increase cycling in the city's suburbs and local centres; shorter trips that new cyclists would be more likely to make. Cycling England were not convinced that this priority would *"lead to the selection of a real cycling city in Birmingham as a whole"*.

Despite the bid not being successful, it's felt that preparing the bid was a valuable exercise in creating a stronger partnership around cycling, with organisations seeing how cycling can contribute to transport, health, climate change, humanising a

regenerated urban environment, benefiting our economy, aiding children's independent travel and much more! The objective now is to carry this broad support for cycling through into the revised Cycling Strategy and ensure partnership commitment for across the board actions to get more people cycling.

Cycling Strategy

Development of the Birmingham Cycling Strategy continues, with the feedback from the public consultation exercise held prior to the summer being fed into a redrafted document. In order to gather the views of people who are not currently cycling and assist in identifying "near markets" for cycling, a piece of market research involving focus groups has been commissioned for this August.

Other schemes

Scheme wise, sections of the River Cole route are being developed for implementation this year, as is the Harborne Walkway and the North Birmingham route link across Rectory Park to Good Hope hospital. Scheme planning is to take place on the North Birmingham route south of the Newhall Valley Country Park into the Pype Hayes area. This route is the focus for Birmingham's Connect2 project. Partnership working arrangements between the City Council, Sustrans and the BIG Lottery funding body are currently being finalised. Once complete, planning work on Connect2 routes linking to the North Birmingham route can commence.

In the Longbridge area, a study is underway looking at cycle links into the Birmingham Great Park. Section 106 funds secured from the Great Park development are available to implement measures.

A Harborne Lane contra flow, an essential element of the Augusta Road alternative to the Hagley Road, is a high priority. This view will be taken forward into decisions about the programme of scheme development and feasibility studies.

Opportunities are being sought for Sustrans "Links to Schools" funding to assist in constructing stand alone routes or links to other schemes.

Graham Lennard, Birmingham City Council

Bike Week in Birmingham

'Consider Cycling' Presentations in 'National Bike Week'.

With the 'clue being in the title', National Bike Week is an annual promotion of cycling when communities, local authorities and campaigning groups are encouraged to organise public events; there is even an 'Organisers Pack' that can be sent for – and we do. Here in Birmingham the council has in past years put on 'cyclists breakfasts' plus events in Cannon Hill Park. Last year and this it had a Family Day at Sutton Park, with Push Bikes there too - see photos of this year's event...

For National Bike Week 2008, I tried to put a bit more into the Week: arranging a series of presentations, titled 'Consider Cycling', with several daytime and evening sessions in the Friends of the Earth Meeting Room. A leaflet was devised (it was one of the 'flyers' in your previous newsletter) and distributed as best we could. It was even sent to a couple of journalists. At the last count, 91 'PowerPoint' slides (can we still use that term?) were in a laptop PC, with FoE providing the electronic projector.

Came the week, and came the sessions. I expected (and got) a few 'no shows'! But a few did come along (that's ok – you start small, word spreads and you end up at the NEC!) Those who did come along seemed to find the event (!?) plus the practical demos (inner tubes, puncture repair kits, 'reading' your tyres) very informative. And, of course, some useful contacts and emails were exchanged.

So, ok, never done that before, might try actual paid advertising next time, because without REAL publicity i.e. a piece in the Mail perhaps, 'word of mouth' and a few leaflets just does not reach enough people to find that elusive percentage who would be interested. Anyway, the leaflet has now been modified to offer the talk free to any community group and distributed to every library in Birmingham (via the Central Library internal system).

See **'STOP PRESS'** on back cover.

Graham Hankins

Climate Change Festival

A brave and ambitious 9-day event organised by Birmingham City Council. There were lots of interesting and thought-provoking displays.

Push Bikes hopes this will become a regular fixture in the future.

Family Cycle Day at Sutton Park



Nice weather at Sutton Park with plenty of interest from the public



And a family shows interest in our table!

Sprocket Cycles

Child and adult bike sales, accessories, repairs and spares.

10% discount for Push Bikes' members

Buy now for Summer

Now open 10-4 Wed - Sat.

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Tel. 0121 633 0730

or 07904 732697

Canal Cycling



Recent street poster in central Birmingham - promoting the towpaths as a fitness and leisure facility. Ok, fine in the city centre for the office staff but—



Unfortunately, not all towpaths are like that!

This is a stretch of quagmire on the Grand Union near Yardley. Uncycleable? Nearly unwalkable!

And talking of canals..... Gordon's Bike Bits.....

Following the death of Gordon Selway (see Birmingham Cyclist Winter 2007/08), Howard and I were asked by his sister if we could collect several bikes and assorted cycle items from her house in Bromsgrove.

Amongst Gordon's possessions was a box full of books (mostly about cycling of course). 'Cycling without Traffic - The Midlands and Peak District' has details of several nice runs, so those pages have been folded over. But it also has a number of interesting quotes **about canal towpaths**:

"The British Waterways Board has undertaken a national survey of its 2000 mile of towpath to see what percentage is suitable for cycling". Ok, fair enough, good. No, not so good, because the quote continues: *"Unfortunately, the initial results are not very encouraging – only about 10% meet the specified requirements"*.

These 2000 miles are mentioned again, further in: "The theory is that there are 2000 miles of towpath in England and Wales, offering flat, vehicle-free cycling. The reality is that only a fraction of the towpath network is suitable for cycling; *the rest is too narrow, overgrown, muddy and rough*". Please note, dear reader, that these quotes were published in 1994; yes, that's 14 years ago! Another recently departed member, Alan Mason, who for years corresponded with Push Bikes and British Waterways about the state of the Lapworth Loop would, unfortunately, no doubt concur with this today. Sometimes, in the real world, very little seems to change.....

Gordon, Alan, rest in peace fellas,
Graham Hankins

Throwing some 'light' into the Edgbaston Tunnel

A new Push Bikes member recently added to the growing list of moans about the Edgbaston tunnel - well, she is not the first to complain!

Now, the Worcester and Birmingham Canal towpath is one of the better ones for cyclists: there are no derelict bridges, no slopes beside locks, very few poor or muddled stretches. In fact, the majority of the towpath is in comparatively decent condition and much used by walkers, runners and cyclists. Until, that is, they arrive at The Edgbaston Tunnel, about a mile south of the Mailbox complex.

Here the towpath runs through an approximately 100m length of tunnelling, long enough to justify lights in the structure above the watercourse; the path narrows to a width that I consider unsafe for cycling (although many do ride it), with metal railings along the water's edge. Sometimes the lights are out too; surprisingly this is not a British Waterways problem, but a department at Birmingham City Council. Our chairman John Bennett recently contacted them: and wow lights back on. But with lighting restored, riders can now see the state of the towpath!

To be fair, the towpath along the tunnel has been repaired in the past. But whether to inadequate standards, or just cannot take the foot and cycle traffic, it has become very uneven and sunken yet again. So John Bennett mentions this to Graham Lennard at the Council. An email from John: "Just to bring you up to date - Graham, at my request, had asked BW to consider resurfacing the towpath. Also (not my idea) to consider widening the towpath. It seems to me that interest in this matter will drop unless Push Bikes starts to exert pressure on BW and BCC; we maybe should try to decide if we want to get serious and how".

This is the response to Graham Lennard from Jon Oakes, Business Development Manager West Midlands for British Waterways:

"Graham, further to our recent exchanges I have now had the benefit of more informed engineering input and offer the following summary regarding cycle usage of Edgbaston Tunnel.

1. Currently the canal itself at this point is suitable

for two boats to pass, travelling in opposite directions.

2. Any reduction to the channel would make it single passage only—we would not want to restrict this, especially with it being a tunnel.

So the option to widen the towpath to meet your aspirations is not considered feasible from a navigational perspective - which is one of our primary obligations as an organisation. I should also highlight that the engineering challenges associated with such a development would likely be cost prohibitive.

3. On a more positive note - and this is offered without me having been able to familiarise myself with the details on site yet - I understand the width of the towpath and the entrances to the tunnel are as 'challenging' as some tunnels, so accommodating greater cycle usage might be more achievable.

4. The introduction of lighting, signage and possible upgrade of towpath surfaces would be a usual start in the consideration of such a proposal. However, BW does not see this as a priority at the moment and would therefore not have funds available for such a scheme in the foreseeable future. Were funding to be made available from other sources, e.g. from the likes of Sustrans or the City Council we would be willing to reassess the situation.

As a summary I think the practicalities of Edgbaston Tunnel being upgraded for suitability of a 'full status' cycle route is unlikely. We do not have any plans at this stage to undertake any amendments to the tunnel, but were funding to become available we could consider options to improve cycle usage at this location. I should add, this view is offered without commitment or obligation - we would be happy to discuss proposals but do not agree to any specific project at this stage.

Possibly not the positive feedback you may be seeking, but I trust you understand where BW is coming from on this idea. We have an open mind to any suggestions for increasing canal usage - especially where sustainable transport and/or recreational usage are improved with activity like cycling - but much as yourselves at the Council, unfortunately we have to manage our obligations and resources with some restraint."

*Jon Oakes, Business Development Manager
West Midlands for British Waterways.*

Those darned barriers!!!

Many off road paths and canal towpaths have barriers at frequent intervals. These are supposedly designed to allow legitimate users through but inhibit others. There are numerous different designs from elaborate shaped profiles that are intended to let cycle wheels and frames through but not those of motorbikes, to circuitous gates through which to lift or weave you bike. Rarely are they effective, at least in allowing easy access for proper users. It is irritating for ordinary cyclists to have to dismount and manoeuvre through a barrier. It is frustrating in the extreme if you happen to be in a wheelchair, on a tandem, a trike, have a trailer, or, as a pedestrian, a wide pushchair.

British Waterways has a key scheme (keys cost £7.50) for unlocking their gated barriers but this is not helpful for the casual user and unlocking, pushing through and relocking, interrupts any continuity. Sustrans, who are responsible for many off road paths, is against the need for barriers, but claim that local authority planners often insist on them being installed. Are they really necessary to prevent motorbikes etc? Do bikers want to use them? Several stretches of towpath have had barriers removed. Others (along the Rea Valley path) can be avoided because of open ground at the side of the path. Yet they are always free of motorcycles. Has anyone seen a motorbike on the River Rea Path or on the canal towpath?

So are the planners scared of a problem that doesn't exist? And even if there were a few troublesome users would this outweigh the discouragement presented to cyclists and other users?

John Bennett



Planning and designing for cyclists

The Hierarchy of Provision for cycling

Many professionals in local authority highway departments find cyclists difficult to please. The overwhelming view of the media, parents and the general public is that there should be lots of special segregated routes for cyclists, with as much of these routes off-carriageway and away from motor traffic as possible. According to this popular view, cycle tracks and lanes are essential for encouraging more people of all ages to make more trips by bicycle.

In practice, however, only a few weeks of training and riding experience can make most cyclists comfortable about riding on all-purpose roads so long as traffic volumes and speeds are not excessive. These cyclists can become intolerant of the slow and even dangerous conditions on many off-carriageway cycle routes. So local authorities receive, on the one hand, requests for segregated cycle routes and, on the other hand, complaints from some cyclists that the cycle routes are not what they want.

What is the best way to provide a successful highway network for cyclists that is safe, convenient and attractive? Should cyclists share road space with motor traffic? Should they share space with pedestrians? Or should they have their own dedicated routes, and if so how can that they be built within reasonable cost? And if special routes are to be created, what kind of cyclists - or prospective cyclists - will be attracted to use them?

Professional transport planners and traffic engineers and cyclist groups have been debating these questions for years. Some people in Sustrans think the answer is segregation, while others like CTC go for integration, with cyclists learning to co-exist with other traffic. Is there any guidance from the Government or anyone else to resolve this conflict?

Several versions of official guidance have come from the Government's Department for Transport over the last few years, but so far they have not been widely followed. However there is now one good accessible source of guidance. The "Manual for Streets" came out in 2007 and can be downloaded from the Internet. You can also order printed copies from Government bookshops or the Internet.

The Manual for Streets has really been written in response to requests from local authority professionals for new guidance in designing and building new residential streets, for example access roads in housing estates. However, it is hoped that it will be extended in the future to cover any urban street where drivers

can expect to find pedestrians and cyclists shopping, going to school or work, any road or street in fact apart from the motorways and trunk roads which already have their own Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. So it is a bit limited but it's the best we've got at the moment. The good news is that specially written advice on providing a safe and convenient environment for walking and cycling is on its way. What Manual for Streets says about cycling is short but seems very helpful.

Go to:

www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/manforstreets/

for Chapter 6.4 on pages 71 to 72.

One of the key recommendations in the Manual for Streets is the "Hierarchy of Provision." This recognises that some of the ways to assist and encourage cycling are likely to be more effective than others. Reductions in motor traffic volumes and speeds should be considered first as they are potentially the most effective. At the other end of the scale new cycle routes segregated from motor traffic should only be built if the other alternatives had proved impossible or unlikely to achieve the desired benefits for cyclists.

Solutions for meeting the needs of cyclists should be considered, and if necessary rejected, in the following sequence:

Con- sider first	Traffic reduction
	Speed reduction
	Junction treatment, hazard site treatment, traffic management
	Redistribution of the carriageway (bus lanes, widened nearside lanes, cycle lanes etc)
↓	Segregated cycle tracks constructed by reallocation of carriageway space, cycle tracks away from roads
Con- sider last	Conversion of footways/footpaths to unsegregated shared-use cycle tracks alongside the carriageway

Howard Boyd

Not long after the approach from Centro, yet another 'official body' came to chat, 'exploring' any areas of closer working with Push Bikes.

'Sustrans' is a contraction of 'sustainable transport' and has provided many thousands of miles of National Cycle Routes throughout Britain, to encourage more people to get on their bikes. But another 'arm' of its efforts is directed towards children – getting them on their bikes to and from the schools via its 'Bike It' programme; Rachel Hallett, Sustrans' new 'Bike It' officer in Birmingham came to talk to PB about how – or indeed – if – we could "work together". Rachel and I had a chat in the Cafe.

I had to admit at the outset that I was not very clear about the objectives and content of 'Bike It' (BI) or how it related to the council's 'Bikeability' (BA). Sustrans' BI involves the parents significantly, so it was in this area, that of talking to the relevant adults, where 'Push Bikes' may be most able to help – perhaps by offering a 'Consider Cycling' presentation if requested.

Sustrans is aiming to work with 12 'selected' schools in Birmingham. Given that there are over 400 in the city, this is of course very few, but hey ho, these things have to start somewhere. But as I consider that **the overwhelming majority of Birmingham roads are no place for an unaccompanied child cyclist (9 to 11 years)** I believe it is the parents and/or the adults to whom efforts and education to encourage more adults to cycle (WITH their children?) would be most effectively directed.

Graham Hankins

CONNECT 2 PROJECT

This was the winning project from the National Lottery scheme, and is developing a network of cycle routes around the country. Ours is in Sutton Coldfield. Although I attended the first Steering Group meeting earlier this year, I have not been to subsequent ones. However, we still get the Minutes—these are extracts from the July meeting:

There are five routes being developed;

- Newhall Valley to Parade via Ebrook Road
- Rugby Club to Newhall Valley, crossing Walmley Road
- Sutton Park, Wyndley Gate to Parade via Manor Road
- Falcon Lodge to Parade via Rectory Road.
- Good Hope Hospital to Lichfield Road via Bishop Vesey School playing fields.

A Plan for Sutton Town Centre will be available for public consultation in September 2008 (hey, that's NOW folks!)

Being investigated: linking the four adjacent stations to the C2 scheme. GH



WHEN DID YOU START CYCLING?

When I was very small. I shared a bike with my brothers and the assault course they made with bricks and planks. I actually learnt to ride on a downhill road with a lake at the bottom of it!

AND AFTER THAT?

When my children were teenagers we bought bikes from Tommy Godwin - an ex-olympian who had a bikeshop. We had a cycling holiday in Ireland. The kids were not too impressed but I was. Later when I saw a CTC [Cyclists Touring Club] leaflet I became a member and joined the Southern Wheelers group.

WHAT BIKES DO YOU HAVE?

A Brompton and a Raven tourer

WHAT DO YOU USE YOUR BIKE FOR?

For transport, holidays and days out with CTC friends.

WHAT DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU WHEN YOU CYCLE?

Waterproofs, Hi-Viz clothes, full toolkit and pump.

CAN YOU MEND A PUNCTURE?

Of course.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE PUSHBIKES TO DO TO IMPROVE CYCLING IN BIRMINGHAM?

How much space have I got?! Put pressure on the city council to put up more signs on cycle paths (*and come along to the meeting, Gina! GH*)

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THE GOVERNMENT TO DO FOR CYCLISTS?

Encourage cycling as a form of transport. Invest real money in cycle paths and path maintenance. AND take traffic accidents involving cyclists seriously!

Thank you
Gina

This piece was researched and compiled by PB member Kate Fox.

Finishing this page with a word of thanks from a member:

"I would just like to say that I do appreciate the work that Push Bikes is doing to support and promote cycling around Birmingham. Many thanks and best wishes",

Theresa Summerfield

And thank YOU, Theresa—nice to know that at least SOMEONE'S happy :)

Solihull News

Cyclesolihull Summer Success

Cyclesolihull, the volunteer-led initiative to promote cycling in Solihull, now in its third year, continues to go from strength to strength. On 20 July nearly thirty riders took part in the 100th Community Cycle Ride organised by the group. Despite the unsettled weather over the summer, the average attendance on the rides has increased significantly since 2007. Most rides now attract over 20 riders and there were over 40 on one ride early in the season! There has been at least one ride every weekend since the spring and, new for 2008, a programme of evening rides which proved to be very popular.



Celebrating the 100th ride with a cake!

Part of the success of the Cyclesolihull rides is no doubt due to the network of quiet lanes south of Solihull which are an ideal environment for this type of ride. The town has not many off-road routes so it is a case of making the most of the opportunities that are available for pleasant cycling. The 16 Cyclesolihull routes now cover virtually all the quiet lanes in the area!

The aim of the rides is to try and remove some of the many barriers that can put people off cycling. The use of quiet lanes to provide a pleasant cycling environment is only part of this - not having to worry about getting lost and

the availability of friendly help if there is a problem are also attractions for some people. Another feature of the Cyclesolihull rides is that they start from thirteen different locations, which gives people the chance to 'sample' a ride from near to their home. This is often a convenient way into the rides with people then being willing to travel a little further for future rides.

Helped by a constantly updated website (www.cyclesolihull.org.uk) and support from a local newspaper (The Solihull News), the rides have become a popular feature of the Solihull cycling scene and an excellent way into cycling for novices and the many people who are starting to rediscover the fun and freedom cycling offers!

Cycle to Solihull Day Sunday 21 September

On the back of the successful Community Cycle Rides (above) Cyclesolihull is promoting the first of a (hopefully) annual day when people will be encouraged to cycle to Solihull Town Centre. Cycling in Solihull (like many towns in the UK) tends to be rather invisible so the aim is to flood the town with bikes and make people notice and begin to see the potential for more cycle use for work, social and shopping trips.

Unlike some similar initiatives elsewhere which are mainly aimed at commuters, this event is leisure-orientated which means that anybody can take part simply by heading for the town centre on two wheels on that day. It is estimated there are more than 50,000 bicycles in Solihull so even if only 1% took part that would still be a lot of bikes! Cyclesolihull will be promoting a number of rides to the town centre in the afternoon and there will be a promotional stall in the town centre. Other activities are also being considered but, most of all, it is hoped that people will head for the town centre just for the fun of being part of Cycle to Solihull Day!

Cyclesolihull invites all Push Bikes members and supporters to support this new initiative by heading for Solihull on the afternoon of Sunday 21 September. Details will be available from: www.cycletosolihullday.org.uk from mid-August.

If you would like to get involved helping with some of the rides, please email:

help@cyclesolihull.org.uk.

Tudor Grange Circuit Completed

Ahead of schedule, the new cycle circuit in Tudor Grange Park was all-but-completed in time for Bike Week, with cyclists invited to give it a spin on 19 June. The 0.5 mile long figure-of-eight circuit is 5 metres wide and was the idea of members of Solihull Cycling Club who had long recognised the need for this type of facility locally. Funding was secured from Sport England and Solihull MBC agreed to include the circuit in a planned redesign of the park.

The circuit will be used by Solihull CC and others for formal events and training but will be freely available to the public at other times. A formal opening day will take place on Bank Holiday Monday, 25 August when the Tudor Grange Park Cycle Races take place. There will be races for different age categories plus a 'Go-Ride' Skills competition for all riders under 12 years old.

For more information, please contact the organiser, Robin Fox:

Email: track@solihullcc.org.uk

Phone: 07740 538508

Web site: www.solihullcc.org.uk.

Or why not visit the circuit during Cycle to Solihull Day on Sunday 21 September 2008?



Solihull CC members trying out the circuit in Bike Week

Stephen Holt

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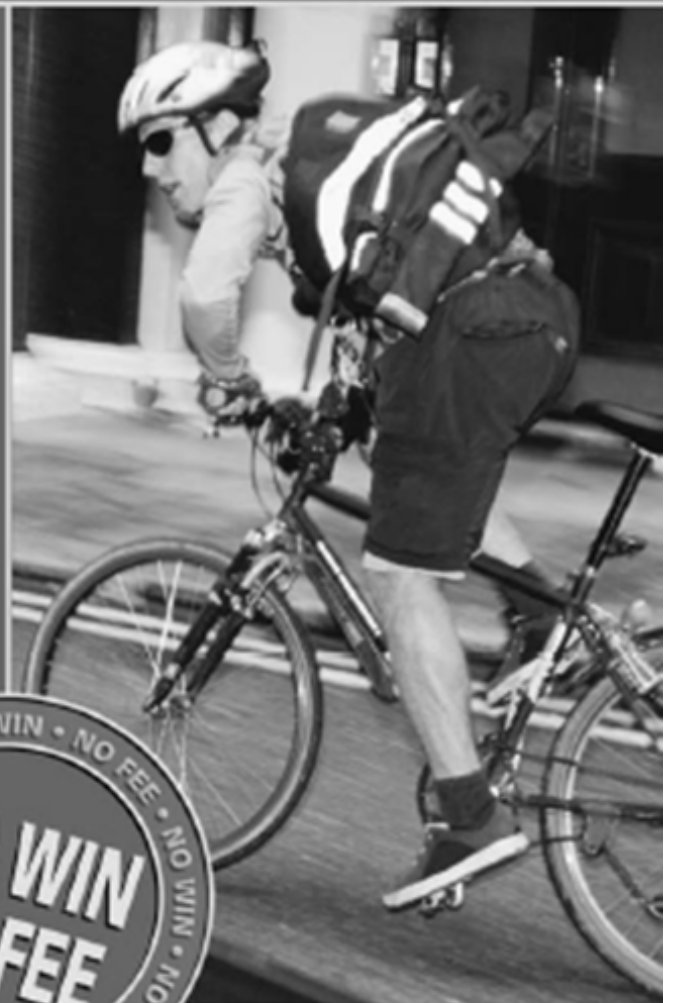
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Bad cycling infrastructure

A chance to have your say!

Push Bikes would like to have examples of bad signs that members come across. Signs that (for instance) direct cyclists to hazards, that are impossible to obey, or ones where a better solution is available. Let's have your photos and a brief explanation: location and problem. We'll then tackle the council about them.

Here are a few to start the ball rolling:



An overgrown and badly worn cycle path on Bristol Road. Hardly surprising that nobody uses this path.



A 6 metre length of cycle lane on the outer Ring Road at Cotteridge: what's the point?



Lack of a dropped kerb and a cycle sign at the top of The Parade (feeds Paradise Circus) in the City Centre showing a lack of joined-up thinking.



The end of the cycle path at Bristol Road/Priory Road junction-just where a serious hazard exists, cyclists are pitched onto the major junction.

John Bennett



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Push Bikes' Rides

Sunday 17 August - The Mailbox

Meet at University Station at 11:00am for a short kid's ride along the canal to the Mailbox for an ice cream and back (3km each way). If enough adults want, we could extend the ride along the canal.

Sunday 31 August - Summer Mystery Ride

Start at the MAC at 11:00 for a treasure hunt to James's in Shirley and a barbecue. We will need to know how many are coming and collect money for food: details will be posed on the message board.

Sunday 14 September - Treasure Hunt and BBQ

Start at the MAC at 11am for ride to Shirley.

Sunday 28 September - North Worcs.

A ride in tribute to our dear friend Gordon Selway. Nick will be leading a round trip of about 35 miles. Meet Hare and Hounds, Rednal at 10:15.

Sunday October 19th, Chaddesley Corbett

20 miles to The Swan at C.C. Meet Kings Norton station, 11am. Led by Nick. (As on web site, Sunday August 31st, 10am)

Sunday November 9th - Suggestions please!

Any good ideas for 20 miles?

Sunday November 30th. Waseley

20 mile round trip. Meet at MAC at 11am. Leader Nick.

Sunday December 21st - 'Tinsel Ride'.

Push Bikes gets all festive, destination pub - The Coach or Weighbridge. Kings Norton Station, 10:45am.

Remember to check the website for the full and latest details, especially before setting out to join a ride. One of the downsides of flexibility is changes happen!

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

Chair:	Howard Boyd / John Bennett
Secretary:	Graham Hankins
Campaigns Coordinator:	Howard Boyd / John Bennett
Treasurer:	David Wilkinson
Rides Co-ordinator:	Nick Wattison
Membership Convenor:	Neeraj Malhotra
Webmaster:	David Little
Newsletter Editor:	Michael Groll

Standing Order Mandate

To (your bank) _____
Address (inc. Post Code) _____

Please pay The Co-operative Bank, Birmingham Branch
Sorting Code 08-90-01
for the credit of Push Bikes account number 50011748
the sum of (amount in figures) £ _____
(amount in words) _____
Commencing (date*) _____ / now* and thereafter every year on
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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
<small>*Delete as applicable. www.pushbikes.org.uk Telephone: 0121 632 6753 Thank you.</small>

Would you like your next newsletter sent by Email? See back cover....

YES! You HAVE seen this before! This is a brief reminder! :)

HOW CAN CYCLING BE IMPROVED IN BIRMINGHAM?

HAVE YOUR SAY

What YOU think Birmingham should do to make cycling better for YOU?

It is your chance to:

- **hear and respond to the City Council's Cycling Strategy and**
- **give your views on what Push Bikes should campaign for**

It is most important that as many members as possible are present and participate. Only then will both the Council and Push Bikes feel that a representative section of views are heard.

SO MAKE A DATE

7.00pm Thursday 9th October, Birmingham & Midland Institute, Margaret Street

So, what don't YOU like about cycling in Birmingham?

As a 'starter for 10', here's some off MY list!

ROADS:

Speed bumps that go all way across road.

Wide footpaths without shared or segregated use for cycling.

One –Way streets without contra-flow.

Road narrowings at Pedestrian refuges

CANALS:

Stretches of dreadful towpath surfaces.

Towpath barriers along straight stretches.

Disused bridges which no longer 'bridge' anything.

Unlit tunnels

Broken handrails through tunnels.

Raised bricks. GH

Dear Push Bikes members

Push Bikes is gathering new impetus to affect change in Birmingham and we need your help to do it. We are motivated to constructively work with the Council to identify and implement solutions to make Birmingham a more friendly place to cycle in.

But we can't do that without your support. Our voice will be heard much more loudly and clearly if we can demonstrate we have a strong and engaged membership and that we are represent the opinions of many cyclists and would-be cyclists.

For these reasons we REALLY NEED YOU to come to the public meeting we are holding on 9th October, from 6pm at the Birmingham and Midlands Institute.

We want to hear

- what bugs you about cycling in Birmingham
- what ideas you may have for improvements
- your opinions on changes to the environment
- cycle sharing schemes
- training needs

And we want you to bring a friend too...someone you know who cycles but isn't a member so isn't reading this....and someone who doesn't cycle but would if the situation was different. Please do come on 9th October and help make our dialogue with the Council a success.

We look forward to meeting you and your friends then.

Regards

Neeraj Malhotra

Push Bikes membership convenor

Ps. The plans include a VERY LARGE MAP where you can mark your routes and where the problem points are..... GH

Cyclists in the City Centre

A cycle count was recently undertaken outside Paradise Forum, Chamberlain Square, in front of the Central Library, by Push Bikes member John Newson. This was on 24th July, a fine Thursday evening, from 4.30pm to 6.30pm. In the two hours, there were 84 adult cyclists passing through Paradise Forum going out of the Square towards Centenary Square/Broad Street and 38 coming from Broad Street. This is 122 cyclists in 120 minutes - so one every minute, on average.

This is a small flow by comparison with the great river of pedestrians, but proves that this is a significant route for cyclists. Some conflict results when people try to get bikes through the doorways into and out of Paradise Forum.

The proposed demolition of the Central Library and the Paradise Circus complex would allow a proper re-connection of Broad Street to New Street. Push Bikes really needs to be involved in such plans and to ask for a cycle route separate from the flow of pedestrians.

Dr. John Newson

From the Archives.....

'Push Bikes' has been doing some 'downsizing' lately to reduce costs. Most of the paper has been sent for re-cycling, but some interesting archive has been saved from pulping:

Cycling Proficiency Test; in 1982 the West Midlands County Council put 8,618 children through their CPT - 5,685 passed, 2,151 failed (782 didn't take the test anyway). Two things of note here - the quantity of children taking the test (in 2008 BCC is aiming for 1000 children through 'Bikeability') and the significant proportion of failures. By 1984 the numbers on the course has shot up to > 12,000, with roughly the same proportion (< 3,000) failing. So at least it was not a 'rubber stamp' affair....

Annual Cycling Public Meetings; back in January 1999 and again in 2000 BCC held annual meetings for cyclists! Strap line in 1999 was: "Promoting Cycling in Birmingham" - in 2000: "Come and tell us how cycling could be improved in your part of the city" (how long have you got???) I cannot remember any subsequent 'annual meetings' but wait - there MAY be another one in 2008.....

'Encyclopaedia of Cycling' 1994/95; listed various world cities and their affinity (or otherwise) for cyclists. Birmingham IS included, but concludes: "The city council has made some pro-cycling efforts, but cycling is certainly not top of their (should be 'its') agenda". Now, as then, unfortunately...

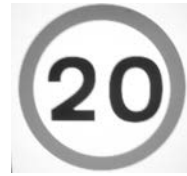
Sustrans 'Bike It' Review 2007: quote: "It is rare that a child will need to cycle along the busy road that parents use to drive them to school. Traffic-calmed back roads and routes dedicated to pedestrians and cyclists will be an option for many". Not an option for VERY many in Birmingham, I think....???

'Cycling in Birmingham's Parks' - strapline: "A Feasibility Study for the Birmingham Cycling Project" by Dr John Newson (still seen walking the boards of FoE!) 15 pages, 1992.

However, this is a mere 'leaflet' alongside **'Planning for Cycling in the West Midlands'** by David Davies, then a Ph.D, submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in September 1986. This tome of 475 pages (yes) is just liftable by strong men. What can I say? I understand that this might be sent to the National Cycling Archive.

GH

Two views on



After I had expressed my own concerns to the CTC about traffic-calming (eg. Speed ‘bumps’) as a measure to achieve 20mph restrictions, I have received this reply:

“CTC very much agree that many **traffic calming measures make matters worse for cyclists**. Our aim is to try and make the regulations for installing 20 mph zones and limits more flexible so the use of traffic calming doesn't have to be so extensive. The expense of traffic calming, after all, is one of the reasons why 20 mph limits are not as common as we would like.

There is considerable evidence that 20 mph zones and limits greatly reduce the number of collisions and injuries, particularly amongst vulnerable road users. Since fear of traffic and danger is one of the main reasons why non-cyclists say they don't use bicycles, we believe that calming traffic and reducing casualties are one of the key ways to increase the numbers of new cyclists.”

GH

And a Government reply (circulated on Birmingham's email list CycliseWM) to an Internet petition:

“There are no plans to reduce the urban 30mph speed limit to 20mph. The Government believes that local authorities are best placed to decide which speed limits are appropriate for their roads as they will invariably understand local needs and conditions. The Government provides local authorities with guidance to ensure those speed limits are appropriately and consistently set.

The Government recognises the need for reduced vehicle speeds in areas where the more vulnerable road user may be present, such as roads around schools. However, research shows that simply reducing a speed limit from 30mph to 20mph will only reduce vehicle speeds by around 1mph unless proven traffic calming measures are also introduced. This is why the Department only recommend local authorities consider 20mph speed limits where vehicle speeds are already relatively low. A good example would be vehicle speeds of around 24mph. When a 20mph speed limit is introduced local authorities are required to place repeater signs along its length; traffic calming measures are not required but they can be used if the local authority considers it appropriate.

Where lower speed limits are desired but vehicle speeds are in excess of 24mph, the Department strongly recommends local authorities consider introducing a 20mph zone. A typical 20mph zone will cover a number of roads, often incorporating school premises and must have proven traffic calming measures along its length to physically force drivers to reduce their speeds. The self-enforcing nature of a 20mph zone is such that additional enforcement is considered unnecessary. Research by the Transport Research Laboratory has found that accident frequency fell by around 60% and that the number of accidents involving children reduced by 67% in 20mph zones.

The new research project titled "Local road safety evaluation and action learning" was commissioned in February 2008 and will take three years, with an interim report due in March 2009. The research is likely to include a survey of local authorities, which will cover 20mph zones and other local road safety issues”

A few words about Advanced Stop Lines (ASLs)



Feeder Lanes at Traffic Lights

In order to allow cyclists to proceed on the inside of a line of traffic waiting, or approaching, traffic lights, it is common practice to provide a feeder lane. These lanes are normally marked with a cycle symbol on a post and on the road surface which itself is painted green. Presumably they are seen as a benefit to cyclists and as one way to give cyclists some degree of preference at potentially dangerous junctions.

But what happens if a vehicle turns left? It is quite possible for there to be no signal, and the driver may not see nor be aware that a cyclist may be approaching. Left turns by lorries is well recognised as a serious hazard accounting for many accidents. It is also a hazard caused by other vehicles.

The Highway Code is silent on these dangers; the only mention is that at ASLs drivers should not enter the area and should 'give cyclists time and space to move off when the green light shows'. No special advice is given to drivers about feeder lanes though left turning drivers are told that 'cyclists, motorcyclists and other road users may be hidden from your view'.

What should a cyclist do to minimise risk at this type of junction?

- Be very cautious about proceeding up the inside of stationary or slow moving traffic.
- Hold back if there is a possibility that the lights are about to change to avoid any chance of 'undertaking' a vehicle just as it is about to turn left.
- If in doubt sound your bell/shout. *JOHN BENNETT.*

I think that most cyclists welcome ASLs as a useful feature; certainly the ones I use regularly (Fazeley Street/New Canal St junction, Coventry Road/Morrisons junction, Pershore Road/Gooch St junction) work quite well. The idea of course is for cyclists to enter the 'reservoir' centrally and place themselves ahead of the stationary queue and in direct view of the lead vehicle. IF, however, the light begin to change to green as the reservoir is approached, cyclists should avoid coming alongside the lead vehicle. Advice on using ASLs is included in the 'Consider Cycling' presentations. GH



'Push Bikes' information is that feeder lanes and ASLs will be provided at all new signalised junctions (see end of column).

Here are good markings at new (a few months ago) traffic lights at the Coventry Road/Cattell Road junction. Cattell Road is similarly marked.



Not so good! Old (or just incorrect?) markings. Leading STOP line extends to kerb, so LEGALLY cyclists cannot enter the box! Sometimes this line even crosses a feeder (!) lane. "Tell us where they are" says Graham Lennard, at a CAG. Ok, this is Pershore Street/Ladywell Walk junction, Arcadian Centre. The 'arm' coming in from the left is similar. Another is at the Meadway/Netto lights, Tile Cross (I get everywhere!)

I am SURE you know of others—tell us and BCC!

STOP PRESS! Latest junction for signalisation (work starts 18th Aug for 8 weeks) will be Drews Lane/Washwood Heath Road.

We are presently based in the Friends of the Earth building:

'The Warehouse', 54-57 Allison Street, Digbeth
BIRMINGHAM B5 5TH, telephone: **0121 632 6909**
This is the Friends of the Earth reception. Staff will answer and take messages 10am till 5pm, Monday to Saturday.

OR **E-mail: secretary@pushbikes.org.uk**

(Future accommodation and telephone arrangements are still under review)

We hold meetings at FoE on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 19:30 : 16 Sept, 21 Oct, 16th Dec. These are **OPEN TO ALL CYCLISTS!**

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE FUTURE NEWS-LETTERS BY EMAIL *INSTEAD OF BY POST?*

Sending your newsletter as a Portable Data Format (PDF) attachment would save us considerable postage and printing costs. You could still 'take it with you' by printing out and future issues **MAY NOT** be this big!

Reducing our postage and printing costs will **REALLY** help our finances—so if you would be happy with an enewsletter **INSTEAD OF** a posted copy please **TELL US** by emailing

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

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 £

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 your councillor's job to respond to you as a resident. If you don't tell them, they won't know. Please send a copy of any email to Push Bikes via: secretary@pushbikes.org.uk

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS...

Centro has now suggested continuing the 'Cycle and Ride' promo. presentations with Push Bikes in various districts around the city.

The 'Consider Cycling' presentations will be a regular monthly event at FoE, every 1st Tuesday, starting September.

Oh! Have we mentioned our

CYCLISTS' MEETING, THURSDAY OCTOBER 9TH,

BMI Margaret Street????

Members' Discounts From:

Bike Shop	Location	Exceptions
Scott's Cycles (see advert p.11)	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.5)	City Centre	none