



Winter's over, time to get cycling...

Spring rides list p.9

To ding or not? p.9

Ringing the bell can startle or offend pedestrians, but not ringing can too. So what's the best approach?

Bike Week p.5

This runs from 19 - 27 June, but the planning starts now and we'll need your help for events to be successful.

....and campaigning

Public meetings for cyclists p.3

The city council follows Push Bikes' initiative, but now the Cycling Advisory Group forum may be threatened

Local & national elections p.6

With the imminent elections followed by a public spending freeze it's more important than ever to raise issues with candidates so they realise that continuing to short change cycling will cost them votes.

Segregation in Cannon Hill Park or not? p.5

The city council is considering whether or not to replace the white lines segregating cyclists and pedestrians along the National Cycle Network route through Cannon Hill Park.

End of Route Signs p.6

What do these signs mean? To the cyclist? To other road users?



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

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View from the Chair

The Push Bikes' committee spends a considerable time staring at its collective navel. We wonder how effective we are in improving cycling in Birmingham. We wonder how we can better attract attention to the problems that cyclists face, and the apparent lack of progress in city facilities for cyclists. We worry about raising the number of members: to increase our clout. Could we do more? At least this questioning stops us being complacent.

However, I think that Push Bikes is making a difference and we are helping to increase the awareness and influence of cycling in Birmingham. Consider that in the last year Push Bikes has:

- Held a successful cyclists' meeting for members with council officers
- Had recruitment stands and activities at four council events during Bike Week
- Met regularly with council, Centro, and British Waterways to discuss improvements to their services
- Spread the Push Bikes name and message at city centre displays on 6 Saturdays
- Led members' leisure rides throughout the year
- Won a lottery grant to produce a guide to local urban cycling routes
- With South Birmingham PCT began arranging rides for 'healthy lifestyle' participants
- Published four newsletters: for members and influential partners
- Collaborated with Sustrans in planning new cycle paths
- Increased our membership numbers

Certainly it's a tribute to the time and effort that all the volunteers put in to make us (even partially) successful.

John Bennett
Chairman

Cycling and Health

In the last edition of Birmingham Cyclist we reported on a joint Push Bikes / South Birmingham Primary Care Trust (PCT) project to encourage cycling among PCT staff and residents of the Kings Norton area. Activities planned now are as follows:

South Birmingham PCT Staff

- w/c 19th April, 'Dr Bike' event at lunchtime for staff. Local led cycle ride at 4pm (8 miles max)
- w/c 26th April, Lunchtime display of commuter bikes / advice on commuting to work. Local led cycle ride at 4pm (8 miles max)
- w/c 3rd May, Cycle In To Work Day (to Triplex House), led ride from 3 meeting locations in south of Birmingham. Meet at 8am.

Help is needed leading and supporting the rides.

Kings Norton 3 Estates (based on Hawkesley Community Centre)

Two events are being planned on Thursday 8th and Sat 17th April at the Hawkesley Community Centre starting at 10am. Both these events are similar but the contents are not yet fixed, so any ideas and suggestions would be most welcome. Currently the following cycling-related activities are proposed:

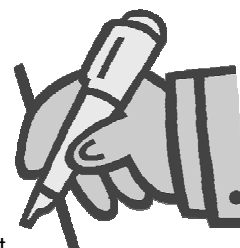
- Dr Bike (free examination and adjustment of bikes)
- road safety awareness session
- stands: bike shop, road safety team/cycle smoothy maker, Trikey Dink music bike etc.
- leisurely cycle ride on canal towpath/River Rea path to Cannon Hill Park/Northfield
fun cycling circuit on community parking area

The police have been approached to deliver the road safety session, plus local health / community workers in raising awareness of these events. The PCT will produce posters to promote. The city council may also support.

Help is needed here to staff the Push Bikes' stand, lead and support rides and to attend!

Any other suggestions, especially about who else should be involved or approached would be appreciated.

John Bennett



ACTION POINTS

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

Cyclists meeting with Birmingham City Council: The Cycling Advisory Group (CAG), which has been running for more than 15 years, is a quarterly meeting between council officers and cycling stakeholders. Graham Lennard (Cycling and Walking Team Leader), Mike Cooper (TravelWise Team Leader) and Councillor Dave Radcliffe (Chair) are joined by representatives from Push Bikes, Sustrans, British Cycling (the governing body for cycle sport in the UK) and other organisations. The city council has now proposed to replace the CAG with a twice-yearly public cycling forum to which all stakeholder groups and the public would be invited. One reason given for this was the time and work involved in holding quarterly CAG meetings, as there are now just two officers working on cycling. The public meeting would be aimed at the 'near-market' person. This is someone who would like to ride a bike but does not do so at the moment. The city council has a database of around 3,000 such 'near-market' e.g. those who have ordered the Cycling and Walking Map online.

Stakeholders at the January CAG meeting supported the city council running public meetings (following Push Bikes' organised events over the last two years) but were strongly opposed to the idea of the CAG being disbanded. As a result it was proposed that the city council would run a first public meeting possibly in April, with a CAG shortly afterwards to review; then another public meeting possibly September/October time followed by another a CAG. However at present all dates are absolutely provisional.

Harborne Walkway: This has now been resurfaced along its entire length.

Hagley Road parallel route: No progress at present, but still 'on the table'

Route Management Studies include Stratford Road and Warwick Road. Push Bikes attended early consultation meetings.

River Rea Route: Approval has been given to install solar-powered road studs to light part of the route. Cycle and pedestrian counters have been installed.

Library of Birmingham: Realignment of National Cycle Network route 5 is being pursued as a result of this major development in Centenary Square.

New Street Station re-development The city council is preparing a planning strategy which will include better cycling facilities, including weather-protected stands at all three entrances plus cycle lockers. There are plans for 120 cycle parking spaces, to demonstrate the desire that more passengers cycle to the station, but none on platforms (currently there are Sheffield stands providing parking spaces for only 24 cycles). Also planned is a study for a 'cycle centre' (secure storage, maintenance and other services) in the city centre, but New Street Station itself is not thought to be the best location for it.

On-line Cycle Journey Planner: All 7 West Midlands metropolitan areas will be covered on this journey planner available via the Transport Direct web site. Data collection has started and was to be completed by the end of March 2010, including a GPS survey of routes. Centro will update the mapping on a regular basis.

Cannon Hill Park: Shared use arrangements to be developed". See page 4 for more discussion on the issue of segregating cyclists and pedestrians on routes such as these.

Graham Hankins

Commuter Challenge for Bike Week 2010

Push Bikes is planning a 'Commuter Challenge' travelling from the suburbs to city centre by bus, car, train, and of course bike. Starting point is still to be decided, may be Kings Norton or West Bromwich. We would invite relevant council cabinet members and the media to be involved. Volunteers to participate (by all modes of transport) are needed, so step forward now and email: secretary@pushbikes.org.uk or leave a message at 0121 632 6909. Full details in the next newsletter.



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Segregation in Cannon Hill Park

Push Bikes recently met with staff from the City Council Transportation and Leisure Services departments outside the café in Cannon Hill Park. They discussed whether to re-paint the dividing white line which has been almost entirely lost in the re-surfacing of most of the Park's section of the Rea Valley Route.

If you don't know the area, you may not know that this lovely and highly popular park contains one of the most attractive sections of specially designated cycle route in Birmingham. About 6 metres wide, running under an avenue of mature trees, passing a palm house, a café, a bandstand, a genuine reconstructed mediaeval pub and no less than two lavatories, it provides a car-free route from Edgbaston Cricket Ground to the Toucan crossing over the Pershore Road by the Nature Centre.

But nothing's perfect.

The pub is permanently shut, as is one of the lavatories and the palm house (now a hole in the ground). The cycle route, which is not a Public Right of Way, can be closed when the Park is hosting an event. The route is dark and distinctly menacing at night, and the road surface is not very good.

But for me the most annoying problem is the unsuccessful sharing of the route between pedestrians and cyclists.



6m should be wide enough for mixed cycling and walking use, but a thermo-plastic white line (slightly raised to help blind people navigate with long canes) for many years separated, at least in theory, cyclists and pedestrians into two streams. A few vestiges of the line remain on the parts not yet re-surfaced.

Cyclists were allocated 1.5m to 2m of this, below the recommended minimum width for a 2-way cycle path, and too narrow for two cyclists to pass except by one of them crossing the line into the pedestrian space. However, it is not just the pedestrian bit which was heavily used by young people playing, learning to cycle, and by adults just about everywhere, with or without dogs. The cycling bit was treated as just another part of the road.

Separating it by a white line is not going to stop non-cyclists using the "cyclist" part of the road. And why shouldn't they? They are only doing what parks are for.

To use the route, especially at busy times, the cyclist has to take on a different mind-set. It is just no good being in a hurry, or even just having an intention to get somewhere.

So pretending that the narrow cycle lane magically allows serious commuter travel, or riding off to the country is being unrealistic. You are still in someone else's territory.

Would it be better without the white line?

Yes, for several reasons.

There could more feeling that this is a road, with cyclists riding on the left, passing other cyclists on the right, and passing pedestrians wherever it is safe, ideally slowly, and with a warning.

Walkers or cyclists won't need to feel angry at being hindered by other users.

Pedestrians are going to be anywhere, so let's accept the fact and enjoy this wonderful place.

Howard Boyd

However!

Agreed, as the photo shows, the previous line was ineffective & served little purpose.

The park is used by pedestrians & recreational cyclists few of whom will have ridden on roads with cycle lanes. So, it wouldn't be immediately obvious to them that the white line defined a cycle lane and where they should be. Having only one cycle lane added to the lack of clarity?

But, the big problem remains: *how to promote safe and comfortable sharing of the pathways by cyclists and pedestrians?*

A Push Bikes member recently contacted us to say that when cycling on the path where the white line had been removed: *"I suffered from some violence from a young man after I waited patiently but pointedly for a group of people to move over out of the cycle path."*

Further, pedestrians tend to wander all over the pathways without looking for cyclists, runners etc coming up from behind.

It would help to have some prominent, easily understood, sign that the path was a shared facility and all users should exercise sensible care.

Full segregation to the Dutch standard is clearly not feasible and a line marking a narrow bike lane doesn't work.

Perhaps white bike outlines frequently along the path, preferably showing the direction of traffic ie on the left? Another possibility is a dashed white line down the centre of the path as on a road. This would be a well understood a visual signal and might help reduce wandering?

There might be a place for some of the blue shared path signs and possibly a brief 'code of practice' at the entrances? I'm not sure about the latter, but something brief along the lines of:

"Paths within the park are shared by cyclists and pedestrians. Please keep to the left and check behind when crossing. Cyclists: keep to a slow speed - 10mph max and use your bell as required."

At least it would establish the principle of shared use.

David Little

Follow-up of issues raised at Push Bikes Cyclists Meetings

More cycle lanes and cycle paths

This is an amazingly big issue...

On carriageway lanes going to popular places, would encourage new or inexperienced cyclists to make real journeys but are expensive, rarely continuous and unlikely to be so given the limitations of the existing roads.

Misconceptions about cycle lanes are common. Compulsory cycle lanes are marked with a continuous white line, cyclists are not obliged to use them, thankfully as the surface is often very poor. The compulsion is on motorists not to drive on or park in the cycle lane.

There is a strong argument for cyclists being part of the traffic flow, not separated from it by marks on the road.

On footway cycle paths take the cyclist out of the traffic flow but, to be effective, need a wide footway. Street furniture, particularly posts supporting signs are a problem. Cyclists may be at risk from cars emerging from driveways. Collisions are a problem where the cycle path rejoins the road at junctions - the cyclist often has a poor view over his shoulder & the motorist is not expecting cyclists.



A shared use facility on the wider left-hand footway over the bridge on Mary Vale Rd, shown above, would help cyclists avoid a difficult start at the traffic lights on the steep hill.

Junctions can be made safer for cyclists by providing a raised table in the bellmouth by slowing vehicles and indicating cycles may be crossing.

Pedestrians using shared paths in Birmingham often walk in the cycle path, probably because the low level of cycling

means they don't expect cyclists. The route through Cannon Hill Park is a good example of the problems, see my web site page <http://www.brumbycycle.info/roads2.htm>

Contra Flow provision

The feasibility of a contraflow lane depends on available widths and sight-lines etc, the latest DfT guidance says that contraflow should be the default option. Pity there are so few!

Junctions and crossings

An email raised concerns about Advanced Stop Lines: "I do like the advanced stop lines as I think they are a genuine improvement in terms of safety, but I wish they weren't connected to cycle lanes".

The paths feeding an ASL provide a gap in the approach stop line so cyclists can legally enter the ASL. As pointed out on the CTC forum, traffic conditions, eg wanting to turn right, often mean it is sensible to enter across the continuous stop line and it's unlikely that the police would object.

More Cyclists Crossing warning signs and for less Cyclists Dismount signs were suggested.

Poor road surfaces and potholes

Even worse after the freeze! Potholes can cause cyclists to take a tumble, to swerve into traffic or skid on the debris and are commoner at the side of the road used by cyclists.

Please report any serious potholes asap on the BCC special line 0121 303 6644 - save it in your mobile so it's handy!

Canal Towpaths

Many cyclists prefer off-road routes along canal towpaths, but many stretches are in poor condition. Towpaths are the responsibility of British Waterways which has significant financial constraints and may become a charity.

Push Bikes attends the Canal User Group meetings regularly and has pointed out problems such as poor surfaces between Golden Hillock Road to Woodcock Lane and the need for ramps at University Station etc.

Many **specific issues** have been followed up with Graham Lennard.

What about training? Let's not forget that better training can go a long way to making cyclists safer and more confident.

Graham Hankins

The END and END OF ROUTE signs

What do these signs mean? To the cyclist & other road users?

At best they remind the cyclist that there is no longer a special lane to cycle in but not what to do about it. Clearly you are not expected to dismount or find an alternative route. The hidden meaning seems to be that the cyclist is now no longer 'protected' and must assume to be in greater danger. Just the sort of negative message that would put anyone off cycling.



Do they change driver behaviour? Is it telling him that cyclists are about to start trespassing on his space?

So, no matter who sees, it the message is to the detriment of cyclists.

In the Cycle Infrastructure Design the DfT writes these signs are often provided unnecessarily, possibly because of an assumption that their use is mandatory – it is not.

In most cases, cycle lanes can simply stop. At short breaks, such as where a cycle lane is interrupted by a controlled crossing or a bus stop, indicating that the lane has ended is never appropriate. Indeed, it is likely that it is rarely required.

They might be useful where a route terminates at a hazardous location, but, if the end of the route is obvious, they're redundant. If the cycle route has to concede priority on ending, GIVE WAY signing is better.

So, let's have fewer of these misleading signs in future.

John Bennett

Lift Off in Cycling Towns

Cycling England (the body responsible for distributing government funds aimed at increasing cycling) has issued its interim report on the achievements of the six Cycling Demonstration Towns (CDTs) in their first three years. Full report at: www.dft.gov.uk/cyclingengland

It concludes that, for the first time in the UK outside London, 'lift off' has been achieved for cycling. The national trend of a gradual decline in cycling levels has been reversed. Averaged across all six towns, cycle counts increased by 27%.

How it was done: Each town was granted funding at the level of about £5 per head per year, matched locally, such that total investment was about £10 per head per year. This higher level of funding was comparable with the annual investment in cycling in towns in mainland Europe which had achieved continued growth in urban cycling over a sustained period. It contrasted with the average annual investment in cycling across England over the previous decade of about 70 pence per head, much of which was spent on poor infrastructure. The core hypothesis was that with investment at "European levels" and co-ordinated activity on both infrastructure improvements and "smarter choice" behavioural change measures, cycling could be shifted to year on year growth – provided that investment was maintained continuously and consistently.

What have we learnt?

There are three crucial ingredients to make cycling an every-day alternative:

1. Consistent political leadership and a determination to champion sustainable travel;
2. Sustained investment over time. In London, where high investment has been maintained for a decade, cycling has increased by over 90% and continues to grow;

3. A combination of investment in both infrastructure and smarter choice measures

Value of involving local cycling groups

In each CDT, the local authority with support from NGOs and volunteer cycling groups needed to deliver its own bespoke cycling programmes. They require senior leadership, efficient management of funding, and a skilled, motivated delivery team, supported by colleagues across the local authority.

Towns that had active 'stakeholder' steering groups for their project found them to be invaluable. It was clear that the advice of local cycling groups needs to be considered in context i.e. it represents the views of experienced cyclists and not necessarily 'maybe' cyclists. The best results were had when local cycle campaigners worked hand in hand with the local authority, but where both acknowledged that the target audience was 'maybe' cyclists and the needs of this latter group were actively and separately sought. Confidence and perceived safety are the two biggest barriers. There are many ways to tackle each, but by far the most cost effective starting point is training, when delivered as part of a comprehensive package.

Push Bikes' view

This report gives Push Bikes valuable ammunition in our quest to pressurise Birmingham City Council to take cycling seriously and to back it up with a greater share of resources. The Cycling England message is that both 'soft' and 'infrastructure' investment invariably has an impressively short 'pay back'. In the days of financial stringency this should be very appealing. There are individual lessons from each of the CDTs- better training, signing, parking, publicity, road maintenance etc. Above all it requires determined political will. Points that we can all put to our local and parliamentary candidates at the forthcoming elections.

John Bennett

On the Hustings

By the time you read this the date of the General Election may have been announced. 40 of the 120 councillors on Birmingham City Council will be retiring or are up for election on Thursday 6 May, with equivalent numbers in the other local boroughs. Perhaps this will also be the day for filling the 29 West Midlands parliamentary seats, 9 of them in Birmingham. All the candidates, whether for Council or Parliamentary seats, will hope you will vote for them, so now could be the opportunity to ask them what they promise to do, if elected, to make life better for cyclists like us. Some wards invite the candidates to come along to a hustings meeting, a beauty contest where the candidates have a chance to answer your questions. In others, candidates should be prepared to answer letters from voters in their areas about particular issues. If you get the chance to question candidates, here are some suggestions for things to ask for.

Health: Is the candidate aware of the huge savings to NHS budgets which would be achieved by encouraging more cycling among the whole population? What is the candidate's Party's plan for getting people to take more exercise? Does it encourage cycling? Does the candidate or her/his family cycle, or would do if conditions for cycling were better?

Cycling to School: With children's health and exercise (or lack of) so much in the news, will the candidate support more funding for highly successful initiatives in schools like Sus-trans's Bike-It? Will the candidate's party encourage head teachers and school governors to provide safe parking and lockers for staff and pupils' bikes and clothing?

Reducing energy consumption: Does the candidate's party encourage replacing car trips with cycling as a contribution to

the City's target to reduce carbon emissions by 10% in 2010?

The Road Environment: The most successful traffic schemes which would encourage cycling and reduce road danger are not segregated cycle paths and shared pavements, but schemes which reduce car volumes and speeds or which permit cyclists to avoid detours, for example well-designed contra-flow lanes or road closures. Is the candidate's party prepared to support measures which are unpopular in some sections of the public, but which are supported by a significant number of people, including 20 mph speed limits in all residential areas (such as in Portsmouth) congestion charging (as in London) or taxing workplace parking (as in Nottingham)? Will the candidate support the re-introduction of bus lanes on Tyburn Road?

Bad behaviour: While the cycling organisations deplore bad behaviour by cyclists, such as running traffic lights and riding on pavements, will the candidate's party press for better enforcement of traffic law, particularly drivers breaking speed limits, going through red lights and No Entry signs and harassing cyclists?

Traffic nuisance: Is the candidate prepared to support the concerns of many residents who endure heavy traffic, noise and fumes where they live, shop or go to school? Is the candidate's party committed to School and Workplace Travel Plans and other government-sponsored Smarter Choices programmes?



Howard Boyd

Kings Norton Station Travel Plan

Billboard advertising had taken place at Kings Norton Fire Station, opposite the rail station, for a five week period spanning the end of November 2009 to early January 2010. This promoted the Station Travel Plan strapline 'Bus it, bike it, walk it, share it'. Graham Lennard enquired as to whether similar promotion could be followed up in warmer months where people will be more inclined to travel via such sustainable modes.

Cycle storage

London Midland has replaced existing storage of two uncovered hoops on entrance to Platform 4 with six hoops and a shelter. Cycle storage of hoops and shelter for station front is still going through Network Rail process to gain landlord's consent.

The meeting discussing the need for a third cycle storage location. Two locations had previously been discussed – at the bottom of rear footbridge and along Platform 1. The Steering Group was informed that Centro's Crime Reduction Team and British Transport Police had undertaken a site visit with respect to a location on Platform 1, and this was deemed to be a high security risk as it is behind an existing wooden fence.

It was suggested replacing the existing wooden fence on Platform 1 with a mesh fence to aide visibility of the facility from the opposite side of the station and ultimately help reduce security risk. This would be considered.

Soft measures: promotional drive to increase cycling to the station

There was a need to understand what were the 'barriers' to cycling - what would encourage commuters to cycle. The usual reasons of time and convenience were well – known; Centro plans to have a 'cycling promotional day' at the station in Spring, handing out leaflets with options for commuters to have cycling support. Centro staff would then be at the station in the evening, for those interested in cycling support and more information. Further plans are then to follow this up with a group cycle ride/event in the summer, engaging people to cycle before linking this to cycling to the station.

John Bennett advised that Pushbikes/PCT/Three Estates work will take place on Thursday 8th and Saturday 17th April, engaging PCT staff and residents of The Three Estates. JB noted that Centro can get involved with this and assist in linking with the work of the Station Travel Plan.

NOTICE OF AGM

Push Bikes Annual General Meeting
2010
will be held at
the Friends of the Earth Warehouse, Allison Street, Digbeth
on Tuesday 18 May 2010 at 19.30
any proposals to the secretary no later than a fortnight before the meeting please

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Push Bikes Publicity Stall

Starting in Bike Week, Push Bikes mounted its publicity table and gazebo in the High Street in the city centre opposite M&S. This raised the profile of cycling and of Push Bikes and many new members and enquiries resulted.

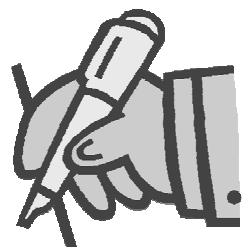
We have permission to do this on one Saturday a month for most of this year! The dates are: 13th March, 10th April, 8th May, 12th June, 10th July, 14th August & 11th Sept. Some will be in Edgbaston St. We need help to staff the stall:

- 9am to 10am, two or three people on site to erect the gazebo.
- 10am to 5pm at least two onsite to handle the enquiries etc and help dismantle the gazebo at the end of the day.

So please, check your diaries, if you can help out please

let us know.

Full details on the website at "members/what can I do". It's vital to have two people to help setting up and taking down the gazebo. In between having more helpers allows flexibility to get off a coffee or lunch etc, so coming for a couple of hours is really useful. There will always be an experienced Push Biker present, so you don't need a PhD in cycling!



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To ring your bell or not?

Riding on the Rea River Heritage Trail, I often find myself in two minds about whether to ring my bell or not when approaching pedestrians.

If you do ring your bell, they often jump: so you feel that if it's not required it would be good to not to.

Bikes are usually silent so, if you don't ring, pedestrians are often startled as you pass, even when there's a good clearance. While out in the lanes recently, a woman walking directly towards me in the middle of the wrong side of the road, ie my lane, didn't 'see' me till she heard me slowing down to avoid going through the puddle and soaking her. So, it's not just when approaching from behind.

Pedestrians also have the habit of suddenly deviating into your path at the last minute.

Those who show no reaction to the bell are just as worrying: are they using an iPod and can't hear you or they are inattentive, so are they likely to do something unpredictable?

When to ring? If you do it too late they're startled, too early and you end up doing a ding, ding, ding..... which could be misinterpreted as aggressive.

So I've asked some experienced cyclists what they do.

John

One of the good things about bikes is that they are quiet, but this can be a problem in shared spaces.

Cyclists have a duty to warn of their approach in order to avoid a collision or (nearly as bad) scaring someone on foot who will thereby become anti-cyclist. Saying 'Excuse me' is only effective if you are close and going very slowly, and if there is no other distracting noise. Used carefully a bell is the best way of alerting pedestrians.

I have a very simple bell that gives a single sound that needn't be loud, so I don't think it either startles or irritates. Sounding it from a distance gives adequate warning and if there is no response, there should be time for a louder ring, but always bear in mind that ultimately cyclists in a shared space should give way to pedestrians so be prepared to slow down.

Ann

This is a subject about which I've had several thoughts. I don't like using my bell, because it sounds imperious ("Get out of my way, you!") but on the other hand it is a very effective way of warning people of my presence.

If I'm fairly close, I try to call out, as loudly as I can, something like "Good Morning" or "Hello", but I don't have a very loud voice and if there's any cars around or dogs barking my greeting can be drowned.

Also, bells vary in loudness and in quality: the one on my shopping bike, that I bought separately, is good, the one on my folding bike, that came with the goods, is feeble. Usually, I do both, i.e. call out a greeting and follow it with ringing my bell.

Helping Push Bikes push cycling up the political agenda

The reasons given for ending the CAG - see p3 - were:

- the CAG had no role in the planning process and when CAG advice was tendered at the planning meetings that count it was usually ignored.
- the CAG was poor at reaching any decisions (which would be ignored anyway?)
- apparently there have always been a number of councillors eligible to attend the CAG but in its entire history NONE, except for the chairman, have ever come!

Kind of sums up what the people with power think of the CAG and cycling?

There's a rumour that disbanding the CAG is being reconsidered: if it is revived let's hope they deal with the shortcomings they've identified. In the interim, Push Bikes is working directly with the relevant BCC staff etc.

This sad story emphasises the importance of raising the profile of cycling in Birmingham politics.

Howard's "On the Hustings" article is a good starting point. The **CTC's Vote Bike project** is another good way to engage with parliamentary candidates: see

<http://www.ctc.org.uk/desktopdefault.aspx?tabid=5371>

The Take action! link allows you to send an email to your local candidates. You can enter personal comments into the standard text which might reduce the chance of a wave of similar emails being blocked by the spam filter. Doing your own email might be more effective though finding out who all the local candidates are might be tedious?

Another strategy is to have more people involved in visible

cycling events. The PCT project - see page 2 - not only encourages people to cycle, it is visible to the NHS senior management and on the roads.

The BCC is doing the Family Cycle Day in Handsworth this year. Last year some Push Bikes dads did a ride out to the Family Cycle Day in Sutton Park from the city centre along route 535 to meet families. Could we, with help, ramp this up into a Push Bikes Cycle Day? If we could get 50 riders riding from Cannon Hill Park to meet families in the Park it would be a start.

The Warminster Wobble is very similar event :

<http://www.warminsterwobble.co.uk/>

Bike Week is in June and we'd need to raise some money and be confident we had enough people helping. Or we could do the run to Sutton Park again. Big challenge!

As a first step, how about setting up a list of Push Bikes members who would consider helping with events such as this, Get Cycling and with the stall etc? As the details of events firm up, we can email potential helpers who can let us

know if they're interested. How about an occasional Helpers ride where we can meet and exchange ideas?

Anyone who could be interested in helping, please email tell_us@pushbikes.org.uk and we'll keep you informed.

Dopey Dave



redspokes

AFFORDABLE CYCLING HOLIDAYS

If you dream of riding through the snow-capped Himalayas or the tropical jungles of Asia but thought it was out of your price range then think again. Red Spokes offers affordable cycle tours to the more remote areas of the World. With prices that are considerably cheaper than our well-known competitors, there has never been a better time to ride off and broaden your horizons.



We offer a wide variety of trips to entice adventure seekers. Many cyclists start in Laos, the south-east Asian gem which is Red Spokes most popular destination. Highlights of the tour include:

- Witnessing an enchanting country taking its first steps in the modern world
- Breathtaking scenery and a rich, diverse culture
- A spectacular boat ride down the mighty Mekong River
- Discovering Luang Prabang, a World Heritage Site crammed with exquisite temples

LAOS ADVENTURE TOUR



CYCLING WITH EXTREME ALTITUDE



The most extreme challenge offered by Red Spokes is an epic 1,000-kilometre journey across the roof of the world. Cyclists traverse the backbone of the Himalayas, from Lhasa in Tibet to Kathmandu in Nepal. This is one of the world's great rides and a must for adventure cyclists. The main attractions of the tour include:

- Exploring Lhasa, the mystical capital of Tibet, home to world-famous Potala Palace
- Cycling to Base Camp Everest via 50 (yes 50!) hairpin bends
- Completing the world's longest downhill ride
- Conquering five high-altitude mountain passes over 5,000 metres

Red Spokes has a reputation for developing trailblazing rides in parts of the world untouched by tourism. Our tours of remote Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan provide a fascinating insight into ex-Soviet Central Asia.

As well as giving cyclists a life-changing experience, we are committed to "putting something back" into the communities we visit. In Laos Red Spokes has funded two new schools and provided safe drinking water in the village that is home to our guide Khen. The same ethical cycling concept has been extended to projects in Tibet and Peru.



CHARITY

WORK

WEEKEND & DAY RIDES



Why not try a short UK tour or one of our day rides? Our ever popular London to Brighton route is a great starting point. For a modest £15 (including lunch) you can join a great mix of people, both those considering their first Red Spokes trip and others who've been on many of our tours.

www.redspokes.co.uk

Visit our website www.redspokes.co.uk to see more of the countries we visit including Peru, Chile/Argentina, Kerala, Vietnam and India

The end of February half term saw Perry Common Junior hold their second cycle to school day, which formed part of their Health Week. An amazing 58 bike trundled into school on a cold and icy morning eager to find out more about the activities planned for the day.

One of the activities which seemed to inspire most children, parents and staff was the Watt Bike challenge delivered by British Cycling coach, Louise Day. 4 Watt bikes were set up in the hall for the day and children from Years 4-6, parents and staff took part in the 200m sprint challenge. The Watt Bike challenge not only got the children thinking about how much fun cycling can be, but also got them to realise the importance of cycling in helping them to keep fit and healthy. 72 children embraced the 15-20 second challenge, together



with 7 parents and staff. "It was great to see so many people getting involved, even those children who were unsure, only needed to watch for 5 minutes, by which time they were desperate to take on the challenge themselves", said Alan Beale, Deputy Head Teacher at Perry Common.

"Cycle to school days are an extremely popular way of encouraging children and parents to have a go at cycling to school", said Rachel Hallett, Sustrans Bike it Officer for Birmingham. "I loved the expressions on everyone's faces who took part in the Watt Bike challenge. From sheer determination & exhaustion to laughter and smiles, they really were priceless pictures!"

Rachel works with 12 schools (secondary and primary) each year across Birmingham and helps to develop a cycling culture within each school by providing the necessary skills, training and enthusiasm to have a go at cycling. The Sustrans' Bike it project is in its second year and has already seen cycling levels double in most schools across Birmingham.

Rachel will soon be looking for 6 new schools across the City. If your school is interested in applying to become a Sustrans Bike it school please contact Rachel or visit the Sustrans website for further information on

www.sustrans.org.uk/bikeit.

Contact Rachel on:

0121 633 5510

07920 865079

Email: rachel.hallett@sustrans.org.uk



Solihull council are currently implementing three cycling schemes in the borough:

- New cycling entrance and signage at Brueton Park
- Cycle route extension on Stratford Road and Monkspath Hall Road
- Cycle lane and crossing into Solihull town centre from Church Hill.

The major extension to roadway and cycle lanes to the east and north of Birmingham Airport on Bickenhill Lane are nearing completion.

Consultation on the revised Cycling Strategy has closed and is being considered by the council members. When approved the 'action plan' supporting the strategy will be fully discussed at the Solihull Cycling Steering Group before publication.

The updated cycling map is currently with the publishers and should be available in draft before the end of March.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE FUTURE NEWSLETTERS 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' on the train or the beach by printing it out. Reducing postage and printing costs would really help our finances - so if you would be happy with an e-newsletter instead of a printed copy please tell us by emailing:

secretary@pushbikes.org.uk

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 (date dd/mm) _/ _/ _ until you receive further notice from me/us* in writing
quoting reference _____ and debit my/our* account accordingly:
Name of account to be debited _____
Sort code _____
Account number _____
Name _____
Signature _____ Date _____
Please cancel any previous standing order in favour of Push Bikes under the reference given above.
Send to: Push Bikes, 54-57 Allison Street, BIRMINGHAM, B5 5TH
*Delete as applicable. www.pushbikes.org.uk

We are based In the Friends of the Earth building:

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

Telephone: 0121 632 6909

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: 20 April, 18 May and 15 June.

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 Cyclists' Club	Denis Feasey	0121 747 6420

Membership Application Form

I/we* wish to join Push Bikes March 2010

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

() Leading rides () Assisting with Newsletter () Newsletter/leaflets distribution

() Newsletter stuffing () Other _____

*Delete as applicable. P.T.O.

Push Bikes' Rides

Sunday Rides

Sunday April 18th, Dodford: meet at Kings Norton Railway Station car park at 10.15am for a 10.30am start. Total round trip of about 25 miles. Lunch will be taken at the beautifully located Dodford Inn. Your ride leader will be Nick Wattison.

Sunday May 9th, a short Family Ride: meet at Cannon Hill Park at 10.15am for a 10.30am start. The route and destination will depend on who's coming. If we have children then we'll probably go down the Rea Trail. If it's adults only, perhaps the Rea trail to Waseley Hills Country Park for beans on toast?

Sunday May 30th, Open Ride: the destination for this ride is yet to be decided. But it will probably go to a place of interest, i.e. a historic house, museum or other such place. It will be led by Nick Wattison. Meet at Kings Norton Railway Station car park at 10.15am for a 10.30am start. Total round trip should be no more than 35 miles.

Wednesday Evening Rides

Weekly rides, meet at the MAC usually at 7:30 for a 7:45 start.

April 28th: Northfield Pub.

May 5th: The Bell, Old Church Road, Harborne.

May 12th - Peacock, Forhill.

May 19th - Earlswood Pub.

May 26th - Coach & Horses, Weatheroak.

Please see the website for the full list and updates: and <http://www.pushbikes.org.uk/bb/> click on [rides forum].

Proper lighting is essential for the evening rides many of which are via unit country lanes.

Rides are open to all cyclists. Riders are responsible for their own safety, should ensure that their bike is roadworthy and are responsible for the security of their bike & personal belongings.

Rides average 10-12mph but we won't leave anyone behind.

Members' Discounts From:

Bike Shop	Location	Exceptions
Scott's Cycles	Hall Green	bikes
(see advert p.3)	Rubery	bikes
Action Bikes	Northfield	bikes
CBC	Bearwood	none
Bike Pro	King's Heath	none
Fletchers Auto Store	City Centre	none
Harborne Cycle Surgery	Harborne	none
Red Kite Cycles	Shirley	bikes
Sprocket Cycles	City Centre	none

