


# BIRMINGHAM Cyclist

The newsletter for *push*  *bikes*



## Twenty's plenty for Birmingham too

Portsmouth's experience in implementing a city-wide 20mph speed limit on residential streets with no additional traffic-calming measures.

What can Birmingham learn from this?

see page 4



## Bike Week events

Bike Week is a national promotion which this year aims to make 'everyday cycling for everyone'. From Saturday 19th to Sunday 27th June there are a host of events taking place in our area including organised rides for all ages and levels of fitness. On 22nd June there is a Cycling Forum: find out more about city cycling and give the city council feedback.

see pages 2-3

Birmingham  
Urban Explorer  
Cycle Route

1



## Urban Explorer leaflets

Push Bikes has now completed leaflets covering nine short cycle routes (all less than 10miles) within Birmingham. To launch the routes we will be leading a series of rides along each route over July and August.

see pages 6-7

## Sky Ride Birmingham

Organised by Sky and British Cycling, this is a free mass participation event on traffic-free streets. For the very first time Sky Ride is coming to Birmingham in September! For more information and to register.

see page 4

*sky ride*

I feel that Push Bikes is on the move and the Birmingham public are with us. We have had a good year: membership up, finances more secure.

*Why?*

- Partly there is a growing awareness that cycling is good: I'm sure I don't need to elaborate. Push Bikes must continue to tap into this 'goodwill'. We have also been more visible: focusing on events, display tables, public meetings.

- Most particularly actively recruiting members, what a salesman calls 'closing the sale'. Not just giving leaflets but looking people in the eye and making them realise that membership is good for them.

- City council contacts have always been important but this year we had a meeting with council leader Mike Whitby and Tim Huxtable (Cabinet Member for Transportation).

*What of the future?*

We must continue to raise our public profile by better publicity. We have some ready vehicles:

- Urban Explorer cycle routes (launch with led rides during Bike Week).
- Commuter Challenge and cyclists' breakfast.
- Regular meetings with the council to challenge / support their plans.
- Asking every councillor to cycle to work sometime during Bike Week and report on their response
- Sky Ride. Piggy backing on this high profile event on 12 Sept.
- More events/ tables
- Use our newsletter to recruit
- Offer cycle training
- Collaborate with like minded groups (FoE, Sustrans, cycling clubs)

All of this takes time and effort, so the more members who are willing to give even a small amount of time, the more can be achieved. My thanks to all those members whose contributions helped to make this a successful year. Let's hope (and expect?) more success in the coming year.

John Bennett

**Newsletter Team: Michael Groll, David Little**

If you would like to help make the newsletter happen, please contact any of the Newsletter team. Copyright 2010 Push Bikes, The Birmingham Area Cycling Campaign.

No part of this newsletter may be reproduced without express acknowledgement of the copyright.

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

Birmingham Cyclist has a readership of nearly 1000 cyclists. We offer competitive advertising rates. For more information on advertising please contact: [secretary@pushbikes.org.uk](mailto:secretary@pushbikes.org.uk)

## Push Bikes Commuter Challenge

**Cycle in for a free breakfast:** on Tuesday 22nd June Push Bikes has organised a Commuter Challenge and a cyclists' breakfast.

Four travellers one by bike, car, bus and train will start from Kings Norton Green at 8.15 and race to the finish at

**Baguette du Monde in New Street**, just up from Tesco.

The local media will be invited. *We would like as many Push Bike members as possible to give the competitors a rousing welcome and to give a message to the press that cycling in Birmingham is on the move.*

The winner will receive a prize presented by Councillor Timothy Huxtable, the new Cabinet Member for Transportation.

Baguette du Monde is offering free coffee (or tea) and a sandwich or cake to the first 30 cyclists arriving after 8.30am and Push Bikes will pay for free drinks for up to 30 more cyclists.

**It's your chance to raise your voice for cycling, to meet a few like minded souls, and have a bit of fun. Need any other reasons?**

## Free Consider Cycling Day

### Basic Bike Maintenance and Safer Riding.

A free afternoon & evening event to explain and demonstrate the simple repairs that bikes need from time to time. Plus advice on safer cycling.

**When** Thursday June 24th 1pm to 4pm, 7pm to 9pm

Each session will have a presentation covering choosing your first bike and basic adjustments. After a practical demonstration of mending a puncture the presentation continues with advice for safer road cycling.

Bring your bike along for a short 'Dr Bike' safety check.

Places on each session are limited so please use the email address below to book your preferred day and time!

**Where** Friends of the Earth, 54-57 Allison Street,  
Digbeth B5 5TH

**Website** <http://www.brumbycycle.info>

**Email** [secretary@pushbikes.org.uk](mailto:secretary@pushbikes.org.uk)

**Telephone** 0121 707 0420

## Further details and updates

See [www.pushbikes.org.uk](http://www.pushbikes.org.uk) for details of Push Bikes events.

The Bike Week website - [www.bikeweek.org.uk/](http://www.bikeweek.org.uk/) - has a search page to find events near you etc.

Sandwell are running several events - Bike in the Valley on Sat 26th - a copy of their leaflet is available at [www.pushbikes.org.uk/bikeweek/sandwell](http://www.pushbikes.org.uk/bikeweek/sandwell).



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



# 19th - 27th of June: Consider Challenges & Rides



## Push Bikes Rides

### Highgate Rambler: Saturday 19th of June

A half day ride around the Heartlands triangle for residents of Digbeth & Highgate, friends and others. Children accompanied by an adult welcome.

10 miles nearly all on canal towpaths to Aston & Star City then back to the Phoenix Hall Community centre for tea & cakes. Only one hill and a couple of cobbled canal bridges where we can walk if preferred. We could stop for a picnic at Salford Park - bring nibbles & a drink.

Meet at the Stanhope Community Centre, Keely Croft, B12 0XG for a 11:00 start or at Sprocket Cycles, Allison St at 11:20.

### Alcester: Sunday 20th June

To the Holly Bush in Alcester for folk music and refreshments.

Meet at Hare & Hounds pub in Rednal at 9.45 for a 10.00 start. A 40 mile round trip following the Arrow Valley, so mainly flat terrain. Led by Nick Wattison.

### Alvechurch: Wednesday 23rd June

To the Weighbridge pub in, next to railway station, so it will be possible to return on Cross City line if you are feeling lazy!

Meet at the MAC, near the main entrance, at 19:45 for a 20:00 departure.



### Digbeth ride: Tuesday 22nd of June

A short, easy, early evening ride along canal towpaths to a real ale pub & back before dark.

Meet at 17:30 at the Abacus on the corner of Bradford Street & Hurst Street, Digbeth - B12 0NZ - or bottom of Hurst Street where it becomes part of national Route 5.

Sunset 21:35, so if your return journey is longer than the 6 miles back to the city centre, please bring lights.

Email: [woodward.val@gmail.com](mailto:woodward.val@gmail.com)

Telephone: 0121 753 4848

### Morning Pootle: Saturday 26th of June

A relaxing off road / canal path route, circa 14 miles around the Heartlands triangle, with 12 miles OFF ROAD: hybrid or

mountain bike tyres are required - skinny road bike tyres will be a no no.

We're expecting some families with children to join the ride.

Meet at the Friends of the Earth, Allison Street, at 9:30 for a 9:45 start and we expect to finish here by 12:00.

For more details re parking etc,

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

## Centro: Walking & Cycling

Centro has produced a booklet outlining their plans to work with the councils to promote walking & cycling.

They've identified where signs need improving and want to improve cycle & walking routes in other ways. The LED lighting in Cannon Hill Park is an example of how well this can work: they were really helpful on a late Wednesday evening return from a Push Bikes' ride. Centro will provide some funds for these improvements, but no indication of how much.

**Cycle Storage:** An additional 100 cycle racks & lockers are planned this year, a significant increase on the current 500 spaces. Assen, population 65,000 has spaces for 2300 bikes! But it's a start & welcome. Cycle storage will be covered by CCTV where possible - constrained physically or by cost?

**Bikes on Public Transport:** "work with operators to ensure the needs of cyclists are best met."

**Cycle Hire:** "looking to work with its partners to introduce a cycle hire system at suitable public transport locations."

**Cycle Training:** "working with local organisations .... to provide & promote cycle training to adults and children."

The "Kings Norton Rail Station Travel Plan" pilot study, described in our previous newsletter, will be reported & be used to implement these aspirations.

Mmmmm: while the leaflet identifies the issues there is very little detail on where the resources to actually do anything will come from. Given the severe cuts in public spending, it doesn't look hopeful.

## SCOTT'S CYCLES

Official Suppliers of

Dawes, DiamondBack BMX  
Electric Powabike, Probike  
Custom builds available

Member of Association of Cycle Traders



wheel building service available

PICK A NUMBER

1 2 3 4

ANSWER IN SHOP



YOUR LOCAL CYCLE SPECIALISTS FOR SALES,  
REPAIRS & SERVICE OF ALL MAKES OF CYCLES

1345 STRATFORD RD HALL GREEN

(OPPOSITE WAITROSE SUPERMARKET)

0121 777 2532

COMPARE OUR PRICES!!

ALSO AT: 132 NEW RD, RUBERY, 0121 453 3148

Discount 10% on cash, 5% on credit card, (except bikes) on production of Push Bikes membership card

## Twenty's Plenty for Birmingham

Twenty's plenty in residential streets was the strong message being delivered at the Future Cycling Cities conference in Portsmouth in April. 20mph zones, where a lower speed limit must be accompanied by traffic calming features are now quite common, if not widespread. The first zone in Birmingham was introduced in 1993 in Small Heath, targeting a problem of child casualties. There are now a number scattered across the city. However what is different in Portsmouth is that a city-wide signed only 20mph limit without traffic calming was implemented, the first in Britain. 20mph became the default speed limit on almost all residential streets.

The implementation of 20mph limits over a larger number of roads was something that the Department for Transport (DfT) had previously advised against, but are now encouraging where the conditions are right. It was felt that Portsmouth had broken the logjam at the DfT on 20mph!

So what can other cities learn from Portsmouth? To begin with the city was helped by having a densely populated residential road system with extensive on-street parking. Some existing 20mph zones (with traffic calming) had already been introduced and had enjoyed public support in areas with particular safety problems. Prior to implementation 75-80% of roads already had average speeds equal to or less than 24mph: the maximum the DfT advise for a signed only 20mph limit. However other roads where speeds were in the 24-29mph range were also included in the scheme. Many main roads were excluded but not all. The 20mph limit was phased in over 18 months and cost £475,000 for 1,200 streets (£333 per street). It was felt that this 'macro' approach reduced costs, made it easier to educate/consult with the public and gave people a clearer understanding of which streets will be 20mph.



*Typical gateway at the entry to a 20mph street in Portsmouth*

The results? Across the city the average speed reduction was 1.3mph. While this may not seem to be of much significance it's important to remember that for each 1mph reduction in average speed, accident frequency is reduced by 5%. At sites where the average "Before" speed was greater than 24 mph though, the average speed reduced by 7mph. In terms of safety, analysis showed the total accident reduction was 13% and the number of casualties fell by 15%. However the reduction in accidents was not statistically significant when compared against national trends.

Default 20mph limits are more common in continental Europe and one case that has been studied in depth is Graz, Aus-

tria's second city with a population of 257,000. There a default 30 km/h (18.6mph) limit was implemented on residential roads in the 1990s. Similarly to Portsmouth, Graz did not deploy any physical traffic calming measures on its roads other than signage. Average speed on these roads reduced by 1.7kph (1.1mph) after the speed limit was lowered.

The impact on casualties in Graz was significant. Collisions involving casualties were reduced 13 per cent one year after implementation, while collisions involving fatal or serious casualties fell 24 per cent. Pedestrians (17%), cyclists (4%), motorcyclists (14%) and car occupants (14%) all experienced a decrease in casualties. Casualties were also reduced on the major roads where the speed limit had not been changed. Graz has increased journeys by bike from 11.7% in 1988 to 16.1% in 2008. In Birmingham as of 2001 cycling accounted for just 0.7% of all trips.

In terms of changes in cycling and walking levels, Portsmouth has not yet carried out any research. However evidence from London suggests that 20mph limits may make a positive contribution to encouraging walking and cycling, improving traffic flow and reducing emissions but insufficient research has been done on these potential wider effects.

Following Portsmouth's lead, Warrington, Oxford, Norwich, Leicester, Newcastle and the London Borough of Islington are all in the process of implementing similar signed-only 20mph limits on residential streets. Those who may believe that a city-wide 20mph limit for residential streets would never receive public support, might be interested to hear that a British Social Attitudes Survey found that 75% of drivers were in favour of 20 mph speed limits for residential roads.

Could such a scheme work in Birmingham? In 2009 an e-petition was raised on the city council's web site calling for a 20mph speed limit to be adopted for all residential roads. The official response however was that there were reservations about the value for money of the widespread introduction of 20 mph limits (i.e. without traffic calming measures) in residential areas and that the cost of a scheme to introduce a 20 mph speed limit on residential roads in Birmingham could be in excess of £3million. Perhaps now, based on the evidence from many other towns and cities and revised guidance from the DfT, it's time for Birmingham to think again?

Michael Groll

## Sky Ride

Sky have come together with British Cycling to help grow Britain's love of life on two wheels. A free mass-participation ride will take place on Sunday 12 September 2010 in Birmingham, though the route is yet to be announced. There are also small group rides led by ride leaders on 4 July (Sutton Coldfield and Sheldon Country Park) and 11 July (Alexander Stadium).

Expect to see a few familiar faces on their bikes enjoying a day cycling around the city, including some of your favourite personalities from the small screen as well as Great Britain's cycling greats.

To register in advance and for more information visit:

<http://www.goskyride.com/>



## Meeting with city council leader



In March Push Bikes was invited to meet Mike Whitby (seated above), Leader of Birmingham City Council.

In what became a nearly two-hour meeting over cups of Chinese tea, John Bennett, Howard Boyd and Graham Hankins highlighted some of the ways Birmingham could increase its currently very low number of journeys by bicycle; which compares very poorly with other European and even some other UK cities. Quantity and speed of traffic, few cycling facilities, and in general a very poor perception of cycling amongst the general population. Cllr Whitby was keen to make improvements and to have regular meetings with Push Bikes; a cycling magazine may be produced; Push Bikes to be informed of future changes to the road infrastructure. It was certainly seen as a very positive meeting and with the possibility of a new Cabinet Member for Transportation in post we await further developments. Push Bikes thanks member Gina Harris (pictured) for her help in setting up the meeting.

## Push Bikes AGM

Push Bikes annual general meeting took place on 18 May at the Warehouse. All of the current committee was re-elected and we welcome Richard Smith as our Press Relations Officer (PRO). We have not had a PRO before, but really needed one. Richard runs an events company and has considerable media experience. James Arrowsmith and Sara Hickie were willing to 'help out' with any ad-hoc committee work, so Push Bikes lives for another year! The committee is as follows:

Chair:	John Bennett
Secretary:	Graham Hankins
Campaigns Coordinator:	Howard Boyd
Treasurer:	James Le Gry
Rides Co-ordinator:	Nick Wattison
Membership Convenor:	Neeraj Malhotra
Webmaster:	David Little
Newsletter Editor:	Michael Groll
Membership Secretary:	Ann Griffiths
Press Relations Officer:	Richard Smith

## Cyclists 'squeezed' by traffic 'islands'

A new member who joined at last month's promo. table asked if anything could be done for cyclists along Lea

Ford Road and Packington Avenue, Lea Hall. Both these roads have pedestrian refuges at frequent intervals along their lengths and of course cars passing



through the refuges leave very little space for a cyclist. Visiting the roads to take a look myself, I saw this sign (below) at the beginning of Lea Ford Road: I have never seen one of these before. Who placed it? The Council? Why only one? Experienced cyclists advise taking a very firm 'primary position' in the centre of the gap in these situations, to prevent cars from overtaking but not all riders are prepared to do this. Some cities provide a 'by-pass' to allow cyclists to avoid the narrow sections altogether - so why doesn't Birmingham?



Graham Hankins

## Push Bikes Publicity Table

To raise the profile of both cycling and Push Bikes we'll continue to run our publicity table on the High Street in the city centre. Future dates (all Saturdays) are: 10th July, 14th August & 11th September. Please let us know if you'd be able to help even if just for a short time.



## Working for a Cyclenation

You've heard of Sustrans? And CTC? And British Cycling (not to be confused with Cycling England)? Here's another one: Cyclenation.

Both Graham Hankins and I are actively involved in the running of Cyclenation, the national umbrella organisation for local cycle campaign groups such as Push Bikes. Graham is treasurer and newsletter editor and I am board member with responsibility for policy. Cyclenation (which used to call itself the Cycle Campaign Network, or CCN for short) has about 100 groups, from East Kent to Scotland. Push Bikes is one of the oldest. Its support for Cyclenation / CCN goes back to 1980 when we hosted the first groups conference.

These are exciting times for the organisations, local and national, which encourage cycling as a healthy, non-polluting and economic means of transport. We have a Prime Minister who cycles to work (well, sometimes!) and health, economic and environmental problems which are crying out for the benefits which increased cycling could bring.

Have we now made a final breakthrough in convincing the press, Government, MPs and other opinion leaders of the important role cycling will play in a healthy, low carbon future? Will the rest of the country follow the lead of London and the Cycling Demonstration Towns in achieving positive changes in travel behaviour? Will the new Government ministers, particularly Norman Baker, the Liberal Democrat junior minister dealing with walking and cycling, turn out to be as supportive as the Labour ministers Andrew Adonis, Sadiq Khan and Jim Fitzpatrick were, or the Conservatives' George Young and Steve Norris, back in the 1990s? I hope so.

In matters of common policy interest, Cyclenation works in partnership with the other main cycling organisations, through the UK Cycling Alliance (UKCA). UKCA employs a parliamentary officer, Adam Coffman, to support the All-Party Parliamentary Cycling Group in holding briefings and events for MPs and peers. During 2009, I met regularly with colleagues in Sustrans, CTC and the London Cycling Campaign as the UKCA Policy Group. These provided the opportunity to discuss policy issues and co-ordinate our responses to consultations. Through our meeting minutes we also brief the bicycle industry, the Association of Cycle Traders and Cycling England. We have also held informal meetings with key civil servants.

Issues we have discussed included the DfT Signing Review, developing the cycling component of the web tool Transport Direct, cycle mapping, promoting "Cycle Infrastructure Design", the DfT Cycle Safety Study, the Active Travel Strategy and cycle parking at rail stations.

Another regular meeting I attend on behalf of cycling organisations is the National Road Safety Committee of RoSPA (the Royal Society for the Prevention of Acci-

dents). With its members mostly representing local authority and motoring organisations, this can generate a wide range of views. However, our views on Safety in Numbers, 20 mph limits and casualty rates are becoming more accepted. However, helmets can still be an issue.

Howard Boyd

## Urban Explorer Leaflets

Push Bikes has now completed these nine leaflets covering cycling routes within Birmingham. The short routes (all less than 10 miles) have been chosen to cover different parts of the city on quiet roads and paths in order to encourage hesitant cyclists, and families. They are available at the Push Bikes' web site: [www.pushbikes.org.uk](http://www.pushbikes.org.uk). After a trial period, and any necessary corrections, A4 printed sheets will be available and distributed to city libraries and other outlets.

In order to launch the routes Push Bikes will be leading a series of rides along them throughout the Summer. The city's cycling officers have agreed to publicise them to interested cyclists. Every Push Bikes' member would, of course, be particularly welcome, as would any comments you may have for improvements or corrections. The lead rides taking place this summer are as follows:

Route Number	Date
1 Harborne-City Centre Circular	Sat 17th July
2 Cannon Hill Park City Centre Circular	Sun 18th July
3 Northfield and Bournville Circular	Sat 24th July
4 Billesley- Sarehole Mill and Shire Country Park	Sat 31st July
5 Marston Green - Yardley Circular	Sun 1st Aug
6 City Centre Canals Circular	Sat 7th Aug
7 Woodgate Valley -Bartley Reservoir	Sun 8th Aug
8 Castle Vale -Pype Hayes Circular	Sat 14th Aug
9 Brookvale Park to Sutton Park	Sun 15th Aug

All rides start at 11am, will take less than 2 hours and include a refreshment stop. Start at venue given on the route sheet. Car parking is available (if necessary).

The front cover of the Urban Explorer Cycle Route Number 1 leaflet is shown on the opposite page.



John Bennett

### Birmingham Urban Explorer Cycle Route

# 1



**Harborne to City Centre Circular  
via the Harborne Walkway, Edgbaston  
Reservoir and Worcester & Birmingham  
Canal (9 miles)**

*Explore your City with this self-guided cycle ride*

### The Considerate Cyclist Quiz

We all know that being a cyclist sets you above ordinary mortals. We care about our health, the environment, and all manner of other worthwhile causes. Halos for cyclists are plentiful. But are we considerate to others on an individual basis? Would we pass the 'good Samaritan' test? Here's your chance to test yourself and see if your halo might be just a little bit tarnished.

Score yourself:

1= never through 5=always for each question.

Not too serious a quiz, but maybe provoking a little introspection.

1. Do you wear visible clothing?
2. Do you use a bell or other gentle but effective warning?
3. Do you use lights after dusk? Front and back?
4. Do you signal your intended manoeuvre?
5. Do you behave provocatively to any other road users?
6. Do you stop at all red lights (including pedestrian lights)?
7. Do you cycle on the pavement? (5 for never 1 for always)
8. Do you slow down when passing pedestrians?
9. Do you give way to motorists pulling out?
10. Do you slow down to allow motorists to filter in?
11. Do you report potholes?
12. Do you obey road signs (Cyclists dismount/no cycling/no entry)?
13. Is your bike entirely safe (tyres? brakes? luggage?)
14. Are you familiar with the cycling requirements in the latest Highway Code?
15. Do you use cycle paths where provided?
16. Do you single file to enable following vehicles to pass?
17. Do you stop to enquire and help cyclists in need?
18. Do you carry a pump and puncture repair kit?

Scoring:

If your total is greater than 60 your halo is truly golden  
50 maybe it's a silver variety  
40 buy some Brasso  
less than 30 don't cycle with me!

### 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](mailto:info@purrfectpedalling.co.uk) or call **07896 885726** or **01564 779235** for further information or to book a lesson.

[www.purrfectpedalling.co.uk](http://www.purrfectpedalling.co.uk)

  
**Purr-fectPedalling**  
*friendly and helpful cycle training for everyone*



# www.cycleinjury.co.uk

Specialist lawyers to advise and represent cyclists with all types of accident claims

## Have you been injured?

Speak to Tim Beasley, Pushbikes member and head of our Birmingham Cycle Injuries Department

- Specialists in Cycle Injury Claims
- Home and hospital visits arranged
- Receive your compensation in full
- No deductions for lawyers or insurance



call us free on

# 0800 118899

Offices in Birmingham, London and Cardiff  
Email: [cycle@levenes.co.uk](mailto:cycle@levenes.co.uk)

**Levenes**  
SOLICITORS



# Highway Design and Views

## Speed bumps are a pain in the arse!

And not just for that reason. I find that drivers swerve to negotiate the gaps in the middle of the road, or even worse they swerve towards the gap at the kerb. Either way it can be a scary business. Have you noticed the number of potholes that form at the edges of built up bumps? And the grit that accumulates? The 'tabletop' type that raises the level across road junctions can be dangerous as they provide another hazard to cyclists at an already difficult spot.

What's the point, anyway? With modern suspension even ordinary cars, not-to-mention 4x4s, and, above all the 'it's not my vehicle' white van man, don't slow down, so they are ineffective. The 'two side by side' bumps (speed cushions - ed.) mean that vehicles can avoid the bumps and get an added buzz of negotiating a chicane with all the extra danger that creates.

Many streets are now so congested with parked vehicles that traffic has to slow if wing mirrors are to survive.

For the urban cyclist this is all bad news and with highway maintenance under further threat from cuts, and the increased effort needed to keep bumps repaired, a combination of potholes and speed bumps will add even more problems on our residential streets – just where many of us want (and are encouraged) to cycle.

## Advanced Stop Lines

Did you know that there is only one Advanced Stop Line (ASL) in Solihull? In Birmingham they are common, and the policy is to include them on all redesigned signalised junctions. Well done Birmingham! (not often we can say that). ASLs provide several advantages to the cyclist. They give a head start on motorists which is both a practical and a psychological recognition of priority. They protect the cyclist from turning vehicles and provide a space to move across to different lanes if needed. They keep you ahead of fumes from waiting vehicles. The main danger that they introduce is when cyclists use the feeder lane to pass waiting vehicles on the inside and are trapped when one of them turns left. These incidents have led to several fatalities, with a disproportionate number of female victims. So whilst they are a positive help to cyclists, they need to be treated with the same extreme level of vigilance that is essential when cycling in traffic.

The Dept. for Transport's Cycling Infrastructure Design states: "Cyclists can feel intimidated by motor vehicles waiting behind them when the signals are red. Therefore cycle reservoirs must be at least 4metres (and not more than 5 metres) deep. This allows cyclists to wait a safe distance ahead of other traffic. The reservoir extends across all the lanes and includes a cycle symbol that is an integral part of the marking. Providing a coloured surface can help in discouraging encroachment by other vehicles. The installation at a large junction can be complemented with minor changes to the signal timings to help make the junction more cycle friendly, such as additional time for cyclists to clear the junction. In most cases, however, ASLs do not require signal timing changes. The main function of a lead-in lane is to allow cyclists to get past stationary vehicles waiting at the lights. As such a minimum width of 1.2 metres is acceptable though a wider lane is preferred."

John Bennett

## First impressions from the other side of the street

My name is Alex and I recently moved from Karlsruhe in Germany, (where Karl Drais, inventor of the bicycle was born) to Birmingham.

As cycling is for sure one of the most pleasant ways to explore a country and get to know people, I decided to buy a bike and join Push Bikes, a small and very welcoming cycling group,

doing small tours to pubs around Birmingham each week. I am very happy not to be cycling alone on the roads, not only for the benefit of company but also because some things work quite differently on English streets.

The fact that you drive on the left-hand side of the road in England (as in 28% of the world) was expected but isn't, in practice, too much of a change. I was more surprised to find the brakes on different sides. As that is not as obvious as having the steering wheel of a car on the right side, it may be more troublesome, if you are not prepared. Especially in an emergency situation, grabbing the right/front brake lever instead of the left/rear one, may lead to an unintended dismount. So if you ever travel in a foreign country with a rented bike, be sure to check which side is the front brake and possibly have them brakes swapped.

Once I got my bike I had to find a way to meet up with Push Bikes. So I consulted Google Maps and realised, that Birmingham basically consists of small streets that require a lot of dippy-doodle to get from one point to another or big streets with several lanes, that might bring you where you want to be very fast or not at all because you land yourself in hospital.

How come there are pavements big enough to drive on by car, but no bicycle paths? At this point I realise that I had it very good in Germany, with cycle paths along nearly every road, most of them separated from the road by a small strip of lawn. Being a cyclist in Karlsruhe, you are even allowed to go in both directions on all the one-way streets. Doing that in Birmingham, I've been nearly killed and afterwards shouted at, even though it was the only way to cross the area without cycling on the 3 lane street with a huge roundabout.

It seems that in comparison to Germany, car drivers in England tend to dislike cyclists and aren't used to them on the road.

Often I am followed by a huge queue of cars, because one driver is afraid to overtake. When that one finally passes, the others rush by within touching distance to my elbow, often forcing me to halt or to go onto the pavement to save my life.

Sometimes there are cycling lanes on some streets, but if you finally find one, it is bound to reach a dead end soon or it is occupied by parked vehicles.

This makes cyclists wear helmets, 'hi-vis' clothing and use several lights. In Germany many people refuse to wear helmets or use lights although it is forbidden by law to cycle without a dynamo light and insurance companies won't pay out in an accident if the cyclist didn't wear a helmet. But still on kilometres cycled, the risk of being badly injured in England is twice as high as in Germany. And talking about numbers, bicycles are used around five times as much as in England.

But there are also positive surprises. I was amazed by the fact, that bringing your bike into the train is not only allowed, but also free of charge. But you shouldn't try that on buses.

So you might find it easy to leave the city and go cycling in a more rural area. The English countryside is lovely and it seems to be true, that England has the greenest grass in the world. I also really enjoyed the Birmingham canals and crossing a few parks.

Realising that the all over all cycling situation on the street is by far not as good as in other countries, I was even more pleased with the cyclists I met here. It appears that the bad situation on the streets leads to a strong solidarity, so I often get a friendly wave from other cyclists. It's important for people keep cycling and not give up. The more cyclists there are, the more it will be accepted and recognized as important for urban planners and city architects. As England as a country has lots of impressive nature and not too many hills, it is predestined as a cycling paradise.

Alex Wolf

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.



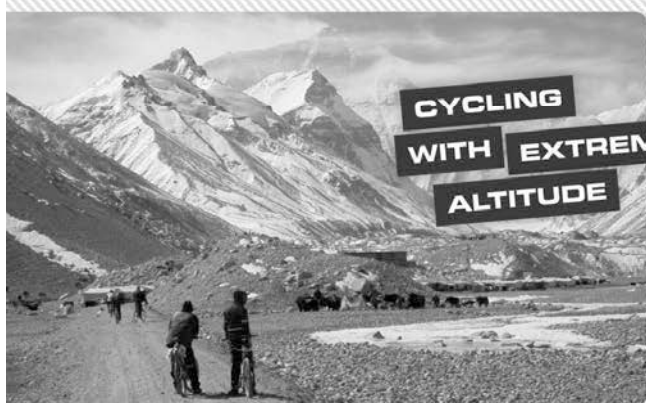
We offer a wide variety of trips to entice adventure seekers. Many cyclists start in Laos, the south-east Asian gem which is Red Spokes most popular destination. Highlights of the tour include:

- 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](http://www.redspokes.co.uk)

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



You'll probably remember from previous Newsletters that Push Bikes has been co-operating with South Birmingham PCT to hold two cycling activity days in Kings Norton. They were held on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April at the Hawkesley Community Centre. Activities included skills testing round a coned area, 'smoothy' making and music making by pedal power, police advice and Dr Bike safety checks followed by a led ride along a traffic free route to Northfield and back (shown in picture below).



We were supported by teams from the health services with literature and advice on activity and eating choices for healthy living.

Push Bikes was well represented in organising and running the event but, in spite of the publicity: 500 leaflets dropped to households, posters in schools, health centres; we were disappointed in the number of adults and children who turned up. Over the two days about 15 participated: we had been hoping for 40.

What would we do differently?

If we are able to contribute to activities in the future Push Bikes believes that we (and the PCT) should focus on arranging to work with a school or sports club that is already active and use their connections to promote the event. Regular and repetitive events may lead to growth in participation over time. With this in mind the PCT will be organising local rides led by Bikeability trained officers throughout the summer holidays to build on this experiment.

John Bennett



### 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](mailto:secretary@pushbikes.org.uk)

Founder member of Push Bikes, John Pitcock, responds to issues raised in the March 2010 issue of Birmingham Cyclist:

### Cannon Hill path segregation

I don't know if I'd prefer a line or not (this April there were stretches with a faded line and others without - this is unsatisfactory and confusing to all concerned). Since the route opened I have had a problem with this stretch. Pedestrians seem to ignore the white line and cycle markings (they have faded over the years). If there is going to be a cyclists' part then there needs to be signs and many more markings. I reckon that if I keep to the cyclists' side of a segregated path I have some priority over pedestrians (as I would on the road) but they rarely acknowledge this. If they are blocking the cycle path then they expect me to go onto the other side - where I'm not entitled to ride. I once approached a family across the path, a toddler wasn't looking where it was going, I came to a halt and it took one step further into my front wheel and fell over - I was shouted at by one of the adults. The Dutch are used to cycle lanes so pedestrians instinctively know where to keep clear. (I have been with a group of British tourists in Amsterdam who were neither bike-aware nor familiar with the subtleties of the demarcation: many times I witnessed annoyed cyclists and near misses).

### Cycle paths

I tend to avoid footway paths for the reasons described in the newsletter. I am annoyed when pedestrians block my progress on the cycle side (it would be illegal to go on the pavement side to avoid them). When you come to a side road you have to look over your shoulder for overtaking traffic turning left, to the right for approaching traffic turning to their right, and give way to traffic leaving the side road - as well as avoiding pedestrians, trees, bus-stops, glass etc.

In The Netherlands (where my sister lives), there are different patterns of give-way markings for giving way to and by pedestrians, cyclists and motorists - there's a lot more paint on the road than here. Motorists there turning into or exiting a side road have to give way to cyclists riding across it from a cycle path.

## 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. <a href="http://www.pushbikes.org.uk">www.pushbikes.org.uk</a>



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](mailto:secretary@pushbikes.org.uk)

As 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 July, 17 August and 21 September.

## Sprocket Cycles

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

**10% discount for Push Bikes' members**

**Now open 10-4 Wed - Sat.**

**54 Allison St. Birmingham B5 5TH  
Tel. 0121 633 0730**

## Membership Application Form

I/we \* wish to join Push Bikes June 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

**Saturday 26th June, Morning Pootle:** A relaxing off road canal path route, circa 14 miles around the Heartlands Triangle, with 12 miles off-road: hybrid or mountain bike tyres are required - skinny road bike tyres will be a no no. We're expecting some families with children to join the ride. Meet at the Friends of the Earth, The Warehouse, Allison Street, at 9:30 for a 9:45am start returning by 12:00.

### Sunday Rides

**Sunday 20th June, Hollybush in Alcester:** meet at Hare & Hounds pub in Rednal at 9.45 for a 10.00 start. 40 mile round trip following the Arrow Valley, so mainly flat terrain. Led by Nick Wattison.

**Sunday 27th June 2010**

Open to suggestions

**Sunday 1st August 2010, Bromsgrove:** A ride to a pub in the Bromsgrove area. Meet at the Hare & Hounds pub in Rednal at 9.45 for a 10.00 start. Total round trip of about 30 miles with a few hills. Led by Nick Wattison.

### Wednesday Evening Rides

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

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 road-worthy 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 (see advert p.3)	Hall Green	bikes
Action Bikes	Rubery	bikes
CBC	Northfield	bikes
Bike Pro	Bearwood	none
Fletchers Auto Store	King's Heath	none
iCycle	City Centre	none
Red Kite Cycles	Harborne	none
Sprocket Cycles	Shirley	bikes
	City Centre	none

