

BIRMINGHAM Cyclist

The newsletter for *push*  *bikes*



Local Transport Plan

Don't miss the chance to have your say and help shape transport policy in the West Midlands until 2025.

see page 9



Sky Ride Birmingham

An estimated 15,000 riders enjoyed glorious weather and traffic-free streets to ride a 10km circuit.

see page 3



Birmingham New Street Station

Is the main station in Britain's second city a barrier to cycling?

see page 7

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

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From the Chair

Campaigning rarely achieves giant leaps. We chip away, raising awareness here, arguing for changes there. Push Bikes has ongoing campaigns to remove hazards and bottlenecks affecting the safety and free movement of cyclists in many parts of the city. Specifically in 2010 we have:

- Met with the leader of Birmingham City Council to discuss how to raise the effort and resources available to cycling in the city.
- Forcefully argued our case at Cycling Advisory Group meetings and the Cycling Forum meeting with officials and similar pressure groups
- Recruited new members and displayed Push Bikes literature on several Saturdays in the City Centre High Street
- Lobbied for additional cycle parking at New Street Station
- Contributed to and participated in the highly successful Sky Ride in September
- Organised and led rides on behalf of South Birmingham PCT
- Launched our nine Urban Explorer Routes (funded by the lottery) across districts of the city
- Held a free cycle training session for adults
- Published 4 newsletters distributed to members and (other) influential people
- Expanded our use of the internet with Push Bikes web pages and email communication with members

What about 2011? Cycling is continuing to grow in popularity nationally and, rather belatedly, the city executive are realising that the current period of austerity provides a cost effective opportunity to encourage more cycling. Push Bikes will intensify its efforts to capitalise on this trend in 2011.

Finally can I thank all members for their support and, particularly, those members who have worked to drive (or rather, push) our campaigns, lead rides, recruit members, contribute to the newsletter, make donations, attend meetings, or serve on our committee. Every member is valuable in adding to our influence, but without our members we would achieve little. Thank you all.

John Bennett
Chairman

Cycling Practitioners' Meeting

On 15 November, 45 representatives from cycling interest groups in the city met at the Council House: NHS, British Cycling (BC), Sustrans, council departments, CTC clubs and of course, Push Bikes! Councillor Dave Radcliffe, chair of the currently 'suspended' Cycling Advisory Group, opened by admitting there had been "several false dawns" for promoting cycling in Birmingham; it was necessary to convince local politicians, to make cycling part of the everyday 'way of life' and that "no community must be left behind".

Other speakers followed. Remember the Birmingham Cycling Strategy? You could be forgiven if you didn't, because the latest version was expected in 2009, however now a launch in February 2011 is expected. Delegate Dr Lynne Jones asked if the city had an identifiable budget for cycling; the city's cycling officer Graham Lennard replied that as cycling was spread over a range of council departments, it was not possible to quote a precise figure.

BC is raising its profile in the city and was much in evidence here. It primarily promotes cycle sport i.e. racing plus leisure cycling in partnership with Birmingham City Council (BCC). BC felt it was vital that there was a Sports and Recreational Cycling Plan for Birmingham. Another speaker, the NHS Primary Care Trust, had a 'Be-Active' programme to introduce new people to cycling.

But the main 'meat' of the meeting came from the workshops: delegates breaking into small groups to discuss specific initiatives including leisure, sustainability, education (in schools) and sport. The Training and Cycle maintenance discussion, lead by Paul Robertshaw who looks after BCC's 'Bikeability' training programme. There were two main barriers preventing more people cycling: the fear of going on roads, and that many bikes were punctured anyway! We concluded that there must be far more training for adults, to instil the knowledge and confidence to ride on the existing road network and develop the skills needed. There were several paid means of offering training to adults, plus the 'voluntary' sector including Push Bikes. Both the paid and voluntary sectors can offer maintenance advice. BCC might use its web site and its database of past enquirers to publicise.

The Leisure workshop concluded that organisations in the city must build on the success of the Skyride(s) and the growing popularity of cycling. This can be done by co-ordinating and publicising existing ride programmes provided by different organisations. Members of the workshop will reconvene with BCC officers to flesh out details and launch a publicity campaign starting Spring 2011.

Graham Hankins / John Bennett



ACTION POINTS

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

Rea Valley Route Quagmire

Is this worthy of Birmingham's part of the National Cycling Network? Birmingham has few prestigious cycling and walking paths but one that is often selected for special praise is the Rea Valley Route. Below is a photo taken after a spell of DRY weather which doesn't exactly create a good impression for Birmingham's prime cycling route. Surely the Council, even in to-day's straightened circumstances, could improve on this!



Super Skyride!

Judging by the comments in the media, abundance of smiling faces, happy organisers, and wonderful weather, the Skyride on 12th September was a resounding success. An estimated 15,000 riders turned out on a gloriously sunny day to complete a 10km circuit running south from the city centre. We all have some memorable images of the event: watching a 4-year old happily cycling round the middle ring road roundabout, without a care. Or winding through the indoor market accompanied by a live band. Watching thousands partying and being entertained in Cannon Hill Park, and everyone on bikes! Brilliant! Let's hope for similar weather and a repeat performance in 2011.



Skyride cyclists on the normally busy Pershore Road crossing Belgrave Middleway

Calls for cycling to be part of driving test

I'm sure lots of us who are cyclists have wished that car drivers could see things from our perspective now and again. Well, the good news is that there is now a campaign to have cycling awareness included in the UK car driving test. It's being run by Bike Aware and there's a petition you can sign online at:

<http://bikeaware.org.uk/>

If you agree with this idea, please sign and share with your contacts.



Half Marathon by Bike?

This year's Birmingham EDF half marathon was a resounding success. Thousands of people ranging from the elite, world class Ethiopians, to club athletes, and fun runners participated, raising vast sums for charities and cheered on by crowds of well wishers. All the affected roads were closed from Saturday night and only re-opened once the last runner had passed by. Each side road was marshalled, and diversions ensured a traffic free event. A great day, and one planned to continue and expand into 'The Great Midland Run' to rival the Great North Run? Maybe!

Where does cycling fit in? It doesn't. But it could. Wolverhampton City Marathon (full and half marathon running events) includes a 15km cycle ride that takes place on closed roads before the running events and is especially popular with families. A Birmingham cycling half marathon would be different from the current Skyride which allows unorganised fun cycling over shorter distances. A ride round the 13½ mile course wouldn't be a race or an amble, but simply a chance for any cyclist to enjoy a steady ride with the novel experience of completely traffic free roads. It would be great for encouraging more cycling in Birmingham: just what the Council is promoting. Let's go for it! As you can see in the photo below, this year's Wolverhampton race was lead by a solitary cyclist who rode the complete course just ahead of the leading runners.



Graham Hankins
John Bennett

Birmingham Campaigning - Highway Issues

In October 2010 Push Bikes wrote to Graham Lennard, Project Leader for Cycling and Walking at Birmingham City Council (BCC) regarding a number of site specific highway issues and requesting a detailed response. Many of the issues had first been raised by people attending the public cycling meetings which took place in 2008, 2009 and 2010 and then passed on to BCC for action. Graham Lennard's responses are appended below in italics.

Hagley Road parallel route:

After our meeting, Push Bikes accepted that additional facilities along the Hagley Road itself were impractical and suggested developing instead the parallel Harborne and Augustus Roads. These are not just one-way, but have traffic flows in opposite directions. Unfortunately, BCC also considered that on-carriageway contra-flow lanes were impractical but accepted, with some reservations, that an alternative may be the provision of 'shared use' paths along the north footways. Push Bikes understands that this suggestion is still 'on the table' so would appreciate an update on this, as it is known, from correspondence and conversations, that many would be prepared to cycle into the city from the west if there was an acceptable alternative to the Hagley Road.

RESPONSE: The initial investigations into proposals for a parallel route to the Hagley Road via Harborne Road and Augustus Road highlighted some technical difficulties. Notably the footway width for contra-flow shared use on Harborne Road between Five Ways and Highfield Road and safely crossing the junction with Chad Road. Current workload has prevented us from furthering investigations into this scheme. During November we will reconsider how we can best take this scheme forward and inform you of any actions we propose to take.

Belgrave Middleway crossing:

Push Bikes understands that outbound cyclists encounter a problem after crossing this junction. To access the Longmore Street cycle path along the opposite footway needs a right-turn manoeuvre very shortly after leaving the junction, but cyclists frequently find this manoeuvre hampered or even endangered by motorists who have illegally driven across the junction. Push Bikes, Sustrans and Birmingham Friends of the Earth have called for traffic cameras for enforcement and / or moving the start (outbound) of the cycle path further from the junction. Push Bikes knows that a 'stakeholders' meeting was recently held to discuss this, but we have not been informed of any outcome, other than the new Government opposing further cameras.

RESPONSE: Investigations into dealing with the problem of illegal car movements across this bus and cycle only junction are underway. I met with the local police team on site this week. Subject to confirmation from senior officers they indicated that that they would be able to have a presence at the junction ideally one evening a week, and failing that at least once a fortnight. Following attention from signals engineers, the signals do now appear to be working correctly, i.e. only showing a green signal when a bus is approaching the junction. We will monitor the impact of these measures on the level of illegal car movements. We will be giving further consideration to some of the highway engineering suggestions that arose at the site visit. Camera enforcement is not an option as the Safety Camera Partnership budget is fully allocated. Additionally, fines generated by cameras cannot be used as an argument to finance new cameras as the fines go directly to the treasury.

Mary Vale Road bridge:

As this is a 'blind' hump-back bridge over the canal and railway line, opposing vehicles cannot see each other. Therefore, quite rightly, traffic light control has been installed to prevent vehicles meeting at the apex. Mary Vale Road rises anyway for west-bound traffic, so if cyclists are stopped at the lights they have to restart both on a rise and a steep bridge. Therefore, Push Bikes' members have asked if the wider of the two footways could be designated for shared use to allow cyclists to maintain momentum and bypass the bridge. Again, a site meeting has happened but Push Bikes has not been advised of any outcome. Shared use seems, to us, physically simple to provide; are there legal issues or other objections, or is this suggestion likely to be carried out?

RESPONSE: Due to the narrowness of the footway at the approach to the bridge parapet and the location of the signal pole, shared use of this footway is not feasible. Widening the footway would be costly due to the presence of the signals and cannot be justified. With the appropriate use of gears, the hill start is not considered a problem for cyclists.

Harborne Walkway:

Thankfully, this path has now been completed to a high standard and just needs a few more signs to direct people on to it! Push Bikes has approached Mike Whitby about this, as he has offered £5,000 to improve cycling facilities in his constituency. However, having cycled the length of the path, I agree with one of our members who writes: "A dropped kerb is needed where the walkway crosses Barford Road, also a dropped kerb at the canal where you take the steps down to the canal path. Is this asking too much?" I don't know – is it? I do know, personally, that a domestic dropped kerb costs around £600 - £900 depending on who (a sub-contractor or BCC) installs it. A friend of mine has ordered one and I am about to apply for one.

RESPONSE: We will pursue the £5,000 offer from Cllr Whitby with a view to utilise some of it for Harborne Walkway signage.

Segregation line, Cannon Hill Park:

Another seemingly physically simple issue (it's a white line, with maybe some signing) which is still not either replaced or removed, so confusion continues. The general opinion amongst experienced cyclists remains that the line should be removed: pedestrians do not even notice where the segregation exists now and certainly do not understand its implications, casual cyclists ignore or are oblivious to it anyway. Experienced and 'Highway Code aware' cyclists who try to remain legal and therefore within the segregation constantly find their way blocked by pedestrians, which of course does not help the general perception of cyclists and cycling. Is a decision now imminent? If not, what are the issues under consideration?

RESPONSE: Due to staffing changes within the Parks Service, action on this matter has been delayed. I will be pursuing the matter with colleagues dealing with the local scheme programme. My view now is that a more clearly marked (and wider) cycle lane would be the preferred option. This would give both cyclists and pedestrians at least the chance of their own space (which I'd be confident would be both user groups preference if asked). Clearer markings would hopefully keep pedestrians out of the lane more than previously. I would advocate the use of bells on bikes as a polite way of cyclists making their presence known to pedestrians who are in the lane. The matter of the location of the lane needs consideration. It is problematical that pedestrian intensive activities exist on both sides of the broad drive. This may require the lane to switch

Birmingham Campaigning - Highway Issues

sides - keeping on the opposite side from the tea room and the children's play area.

'Caution Cyclists Crossing' warning sign needed at Battery Way /Weston Lane 'Give Way' junction, Greet:

Cars coming out of Battery Way and turning right into Weston Lane come straight out as they expect all Weston Lane traffic to turn left up Battery Way, because 'straight on' is a 'No Through Road' to cars. But cyclists can and do go straight ahead to access the Toucan crossing on Warwick Road

RESPONSE: Recent funding arising from Section 106 planning agreements with developers to improve the Cole Valley Route between the Warwick Road and the Stratford Road will be able to improve directional and safety signage in this location. Anticipated action will be in early 2011.

'Cycle Lane – Look Right' warning sign needed at Hinckley Street/Hill Street junction, city centre:

Hinckley Street joins Hill Street just north of the Smallbrook Queensway lights. In 2009 a member wrote to Push Bikes: "I have seen a few cyclists come close to getting knocked off by drivers not looking as they pull out of Hinckley St. Perhaps signage could be improved at the end of the road where it joins the cycle path to warn cars emerging from Hinckley Street onto Hill Street in the city centre". From Smallbrook Queensway, Hill Street is one-way into the city so drivers emerging from Hinckley Street only look to their left and do not realise they also need to look for cyclists who may be coming from their right, in the contra-flow cycle lane towards the lights.

RESPONSE: There is a cycle lane sign in place in advance of the junction. The location will be reconsidered for additional signing.

Pedestrian refuges, various locations:

These can be hazardous to cyclists when cars overtake them within the gap. Experienced or confident cyclists adopt the 'primary position' and cycle in the centre of the gap, but most cyclists are reluctant or in many cases absolutely resistant to doing this, and hence will not cycle their desired route. Some other cities provide measures to aid the cyclist at a 'pinch point' by narrowing the gap still further with a buildout from the kerb, then providing a cycle gap through the buildout; another measure can be to provide a short cycle path on the footway to allow cyclists to bypass the narrowing completely. As far as Push Bikes is aware, BCC provides neither of these measures and a previous response has been simply for cyclists to ride "assertively". Push Bikes has received a specific complaint about refuges along Lea Ford Road and Packington Avenue.

RESPONSE: We recognise that at some road narrowings, some cyclists' comfort can be compromised and that a hazard can possibly arise in some circumstances due to the dimensions and geometry of the location and/or the behaviour of drivers and/or cyclists. Whilst we accept that some narrowings can be more difficult to negotiate than others, I am not aware of any evidence that says cyclists do not cycle their desired route due to the presence of chicanes that perhaps encourage overtaking. Whilst bypasses of narrowings may be appropriate in some situations, we are not convinced that alternatives to simply allowing cyclists to cycle through the narrowing are always effective. Footway bypasses will result in cyclists leaving drivers lines of sight and then rejoining the carriageway introducing further possible conflict points. Significant highway width is needed for an easily maintained and safely wide cycle

lane through a build out. This may require the loss of footway. In two instances I am aware of, signage has been erected to indicate that drivers should not overtake cyclists at refuges. I advise the use of appropriate narrowing widths where opportunities arise.

Wider topics where Push Bikes continues to seek progress are:

Cycling Strategy: We now understand from Tim Huxtable that definite progress has recently been made on this and it is expected to be finalised very soon.

RESPONSE: The strategy is now being taken through to Councillor Huxtable for approval.

Cyclists' Forum: Again, our latest information from Mike Cooper, to whom we spoke at Brindley Place recently, is that he is trying to set up the second of these, during October.

RESPONSE: 23rd November has been fixed as a date for this public forum. Cllr Huxtable will be attending and set out his vision for cycling. You will be aware we are having a wide ranging cycle 'practitioners' group on the 15th November, to which Push Bikes has been invited.

Cycle to Work Scheme: The media has suggested that HMRC has added to the complexity of this; is this scheme yet available to BCC employees?

RESPONSE: The Cycle to Work salary sacrifice scheme forms part of a wider employee benefits package the personnel division of the City Council is looking to introduce. Setting this package up has taken longer than anticipated.

Edgbaston Tunnel, canal towpath & lighting in poor condition:

RESPONSE: As you will be aware British Waterways are extremely low on funds and will be moving to a trust status. The City Council is aware of the matter and considers this when making decisions about canal related S106 funding. To date no appropriate funding sources have become available.

Worcs & Birmingham Canal, access steps up to University Station needed

RESPONSE: Funds are available to install a flight of less steep steps. This work could start in 2011. A ramped arrangement would be considerably more costly and further funding is not available.

New Street Station, cycle parking improvements needed

RESPONSE: The City Council, in its role as planning authority, has placed a duty on the developer to provide a revised cycling strategy for the new New St Station development by February 2011. This requires monitoring of cycle demand and provision of cycle parking capacity to meet future growth. It has been suggested that 160 spaces split between the three entrances of the station is an appropriate starting level. Centro, Sustrans and the City Council were invited by Network Rail many months ago to view proposals for expanding the current level of provision prior to the redevelopment. It is clear that they have taken no action to date. We are jointly pursuing this with Network Rail.

Graham Hankins

Sustrans Connect2 in Birmingham

The Plants Brook Valley is a wonderful area of green open space, running through north east Birmingham. The Connect2 scheme provides a continuous cycling and walking path between Sutton Coldfield town centre (and Sutton Park) and the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal Towpath (with access to Birmingham City Centre). Much of the route is now open and provides an excellent, relaxing ride. When completed it will link the nearby communities to the valley, providing access for schools and hospitals.

From the canal at Castle Vale, routes will link up with new crossings of Tyburn and Chester roads to a new cycle / walking route through Pye Hayes Park. This will be the start of the main route that will run along the Plant's Brook all the way to Sutton Coldfield. The entire route will become National Cycle Network route 534.



Cyclists enjoying a section of the new route

Sections of the route have been opened in Sutton's Rectory Park linking the existing path in New Hall Valley over the Coleshill Road with a new dedicated toucan crossing and on through Rectory Park to Good Hope Hospital. This is the first section of works for Rectory Park and is already well used giving people the opportunity to enjoy the park and ride to the hospital where there were only playing fields previously. It provides a much safer alternative and avoids the narrow road section to the hospital under the bridge on Rectory Road.

New path construction is complete in the New Hall Valley up to Penn's Lane, where a new toucan crossing has been installed. This means that a continuous route (nearly 4km) is rideable all the way from Good Hope Hospital to Penn's Lane. The new section was launched on May Day Bank Holiday with an open day and well over 1000 people came along to ride and walk the fabulous new route. A new link has also recently been opened to link Coles Lane to Ebrook Road, which provides a safe route from the residential area to the school gate where only a muddy track existed before. An opening event was held where the children were challenged to decorate their bikes in a Diwali (the festival of light) theme. There was a parade of the bikes along the Plantsbrook Path with prizes for the most decorative bikes.

The next section to start work is from Penn's Lane along the Plant's Brook to finish the main spine all the way to Eachelhurst Road linking into the newly upgraded paths in Pye Hayes Park that give access through the park to a toucan crossing of Chester Road and link into Pye Hayes estate.

The network of routes in North East Birmingham is rapidly expanding thanks to Connect2, gradually linking up all the existing networks and new routes to give excellent coverage and permeability to this part of the world. The next big phase of construction will see the crossing of Sutton Centre achieved and the essential link from the New Hall Valley to Sutton Park. This will happen in 2012 but design and feasibility work is already underway to which the Connect2 Steering Group of local residents are fundamental.

Further information about Birmingham Connect2 is available at: <http://www.connect2birmingham.org/> and latest news on the blog at: <http://blog.connect2birmingham.org/>

Further information about Sustrans, including other news releases, is available through our website: www.sustrans.org.uk

Edward Healey, Sustrans

Cycle Training

"You get on a bike and ride it don't you?" - broadcaster Sir Edward Stourton, when introducing a piece on cycle training, several years ago, for the 'Today' programme. It would be a reasonably safe bet that the majority of people cycling have gone into a cycle shop, chosen a bike, set the saddle at the right height, and rode away. Without any 'training', nor mention of training at the point of sale and critically no perception in the mind of the rider of any need to be 'trained' to ride a bike anyway!

A few days ago I was sat in my car, facing down the road, waiting and watching for a safe moment to pull away. An adult cyclist rode past me, going down the Shirley Road towards Acocks Green village. Perfectly steady on his bike, not rushing, but a bit closer to the kerb than I would have advised and ahead of him was a parked car. He was then about 30 metres from the obstruction but had not yet looked behind or moved his kerb position. He continued to cycle steadily towards the vehicle. Then, by now just a few metres from its rear end, he veered out, still without a shoulder check on what can be a busy road, then passed the car with much less than the space of an 'opening door'.

He had probably never seen any advice to keep away from the kerb, to check for overtaking vehicles and to leave space when passing a car. No such advice is readily available to cyclists, most of whom just buy bikes and ride them. Yet the road system has rules to be obeyed, there is the behaviour of other users to be anticipated and accounted for. There are constantly changing situations to be observed, decisions to be taken and judgements to be made all the time, whether you are driving a car or riding a bike. Yet we instil none of this into the cyclist. OK, 'Bikeability' gives some training to children, but are children aged 9 to 11 really able to make the decisions, take adequate (the Driving Standards Agency's term is 'effective') observations and judgements needed for unaccompanied individual road journeys?

It is, therefore, helpful when training an adult to ride a bike to determine if they drive a car. If so, they know (or should know) the Highway Code, road procedures and, be aware that some road users do not always 'play by the rules'. The car that 'cuts across' Give Way junction markings when turning right, comes immediately to mind - an unpleasant surprise for the cyclist. There was a very pertinent quote in a recent 'London Cyclist' magazine: "We have concentrated on infrastructure but, vital though it is, infrastructure can never solve all the problems and dangers. The role of training is also very significant. Just as we underestimate the need for cycling facilities, so we also underestimate the skills needed for cycling. In contrast to driving a car, cycling is often portrayed as a simple pursuit: you can simply 'jump on and go'. Experienced cyclists realise how false this is; there is a huge amount of skill involved in cycling safely in an environment dominated by motor vehicles".

No matter how hard we call for it, we are not going to achieve an environment not "dominated by motor vehicles" overnight - or even in anything other than a lengthy timescale. But an adult cyclist (it is the adults who are driving the cars we are trying to reduce) could be trained to ride confidently and safely on any urban road here in Birmingham and in any traffic density i.e. to ride real A to B journeys around our city, in existing conditions - in about a week, or even less. So why don't we then?

Graham Hankins

New Street Station shambles

Cycle parking at New Street Station is an absolute disgrace and Network Rail is dragging its feet over any improvements. At present there are 14 Sheffield stands: capacity for 28 bikes. Many of the spaces are taken by abandoned wrecks



(Network Rail say they regularly remove them but, if they do, whenever Push Bikes checks they are soon replaced by others). To supplement the meagre capacity cyclists secured bikes against adjacent railings but now Network Rail have forbidden this (see photo to left).

The previous Government's 'Better Rail Stations' review commissioned by the DfT (Lord Adonis Report) recommends 'Cycle access should be targeted to double at individual stations over the next five years with a national target of 5% cycling to stations. A few stations meet this target'. London's Euston station has double decker cycle parking to make the most of available space.

Birmingham would need hundreds of additional stands to get anywhere near. Not only is the current capacity ludicrously inadequate but the stands almost invite thieves by being squeezed in dingy unlit spaces between pillars in the 'drop-off' car park area. Birmingham City Council has a newly updated Parking Policy. What it says about cycle parking is:

"Cycle parking should be located in convenient, secure locations, taking account of lighting levels, general visibility and surveillance and should be well signed."

It also states that the Council will:

"Encourage transport operators, Centro/ITA and Network Rail to provide cycle parking facilities at transport hubs and rail stations"

Push Bikes as well as Council officials and Sustrans have raised these issues with Network Rail who say that they are 'examining suitable additional locations'. Just recently 2 more stands were added among pillars (hidden from security) which completely fail to solve the problem. Our campaign continues! The council is more concerned with getting the new station construction on course (with improved cycle parking) to press for improvements now.

But it will be 2015 before the new station is ready: we can't and shouldn't wait that long. Bike stands are simple, cheap, and take up little space. They are urgently needed. It's time for action!

Where else in the city centre can I park a cycle securely?

Plan 'B' Where can you park as an alternative to the station - that is (in the BCC policy) 'convenient, secure and lit'? Push Bikes has raised this with NCP car parks and BCC parking bosses without response. Most city centre car parks are open to the elements, or have no places for locking bikes, and with poor supervision. The only suitable locations we could find are Brindley Place. At the base of the multi-storey car park there are 5 Sheffield stands (capacity 10 bikes) and adjacent rails. It is within range of CCTV cameras and overlooked by the controller's office. There is no charge. The Mailbox: 10 stands on the ground floor (capacity 20 bikes) as well as rails to accommodate several more; CCTV surveillance; no charge. Both these places are well, but not over used.

John Bennett

Crackdown on Cycle Theft at Stations

Throughout the autumn, Centro has been working closely with the British Transport Police (BTP) to identify cycle crime hot-spots across the public transport network. The list is being used to inform a CCTV installation programme to cover cycle storage, and a joint programme of measures between Centro and the BTP to tackle cycle crime and improve passenger perception on safety and security. It is important to remind everyone about locking your bike up safely at the station. For more information visit:

www.networkwestmidlands.com/bikesafe/bikesafe.aspx

Emma Crowton

Centro Sustainable Travel Officer (Cycling and Walking)

Push Bikes' response: It's disappointing that CCTV is seen too often in this country as the panacea to any crime problem. Perhaps at some of the stations where thefts have taken place it's worth looking at the location of cycle parking i.e. whether in a well-lit place with good natural surveillance. Could lockers be installed?

We have read reports in the cycling press in recent years, where in Oxford and London cyclists have had their bikes stolen in view of CCTV (managed by local police force) but staff would not check footage to seek the thief (no time to do so). In once case the cyclist made an official complaint but by the time it was dealt with the relevant CCTV tapes had been overwritten! We feel that CCTV as a solution to cycle theft esp. as a deterrent is very limited and resources could be better employed elsewhere e.g. improving cycle parking itself.

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:

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Local Transport Plan

Local Transport Plans (LTPs) are public documents that set out a highway authority's policies, strategies, objectives and targets for improving transport in their communities. The new Local Transport Plan (LTP3) is produced jointly by the 7 West Midlands metropolitan authorities and has been published as a draft for public consultation until end of January 2011:

<http://www.westmidlandsltp.gov.uk/formalconsultation>

It will then be finalised, incorporating agreed comments, and issued in April 2011. It covers the 15 year period up to 2025 with a separate implementation plan with a first phase for the five years to 2016. It is a large document: the summary for public consultation is 39 pages. The entire Draft Strategy document is 95 pages and appendices add a further 245 pages.

Assuming that most responses to the consultation will be made by people reading the summary I have extracted a few key passages that have some relevance to cyclists from the summary document and appendices.

Our Five Key Objectives

Economy - to underpin private sector led growth and economic regeneration in the Metropolitan Area, including support for housing development and population growth, increased employment and low carbon technologies

Climate change - to contribute towards tackling climate change through achieving a reduction in the emission of greenhouse gas emissions and ensure the resilience of the transport system to any changes to the Metropolitan Area's climate

Health, personal security and safety - to improve the health, personal security and safety of people travelling in the Metropolitan Area

Equality of opportunity - to tackle deprivation and worklessness, so enhancing equality of opportunity and social inclusion, by improved access to services and other desired destinations within and adjacent to the Metropolitan Area

Quality of life and local environment - to enhance wellbeing and the quality of life for people in the Metropolitan Area and the quality of the local environment

These key objectives are further developed under a number of Themes which form the hub around which an Integrated Transport Strategy can be delivered.

10 Long Term Themes:

- Regeneration, thriving centres and national / international gateways
- Rail and rapid transit network as a backbone for development
- Improved local accessibility and connectivity
- Sustainable and efficient freight transport
- Efficient and reliable transport integration
- Reduced carbon through green technologies
- Improved safety and security
- Modal transfer and the creation of sustainable travel patterns
- Making best use of the highway network
- Transport asset management as a foundation for growth

Funding:

[The Comprehensive Spending Review placed severe limits on transport funding. There is, however, a glimmer of light under a new Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF)].

The LSTF, amounting to £560m between 2011/12 and 2014/15, is available to transport authorities outside London to

bid for funding for sustainable travel, reduced congestion and improving our quality of life. Further details of the fund are expected to be available in December 2010. Centro had submitted a Low Carbon Bid to DfT in July which was based on similar principles of economic growth and reducing congestion through changing travel behaviour. The LTP has also developed the concept of a Sustainable Smart Package and it is considered that this smart package will fit well within a potential bid under this new fund.

West Midland Sustainable/ Smart Package: In order to make best use of existing assets and to improve journey times, reduce congestion, encourage modal shift and tackle congestion, the Metropolitan Area developed the Sustainable Smart Package building on the principles outlined by the Low Carbon Corridors concept. Through a combination of Smart Routes, Smarter Choices, quick wins and traffic management; the Metropolitan Area has established a programme of priority routes/corridors which can be delivered subject to funding in the first Implementation Plan period.

Extract from Appendix

[It is not until the Appendices are scanned does reference to cycling feature. Here there is section on 'smarter travel' that expands on the benefits of cycling (and walking).]

The Importance of Local Schemes for Maintenance, Safety, Walking and Cycling

Across the Metropolitan Area there are many local circumstances where small scale improvements are required which address issues of local street condition, road safety, walking and cycling. If seen in isolation these schemes are limited in impact. However, when considered in aggregate, such local measures support Metropolitan Area level objectives and can offer high value for money.

Role of Smarter Choices (Including Active Travel – walking and cycling)

As part of the TIF work and the West Midlands Sustainable Travel Cities bid, a package of Smarter Choice measures was researched and developed. This consists of a range of initiatives to change individuals' travel behaviour in favour of the more sustainable mode and also to question the need to travel in the first place. It is one of the three Strategic Principles of LTP3.

In July 2004, DfT published a major research report, 'Smarter Choices – Changing the Way We Travel' based on 24 UK case studies and a worldwide literature review into the effects of such measures. It suggested that a combination of behavioural measures alone could reduce peak period urban traffic by up to 21%.

Recent results from the DfT initiative, 'Sustainable Travel Towns' Projects (Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester) indicate reductions in traffic of over 10% and similar increases in public transport, walking and cycling over 2 years.

The work conducted as part of 'Gridlock or Growth – Choices and Challenges for the Future' estimated that widespread use of such initiatives here in the metropolitan area could reduce daily car trips by 4% and increase public transport use and cycling by 10%.

Please make the most of the opportunity to do more for cycling and respond to the consultation at the web site address above.

John Bennett



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.



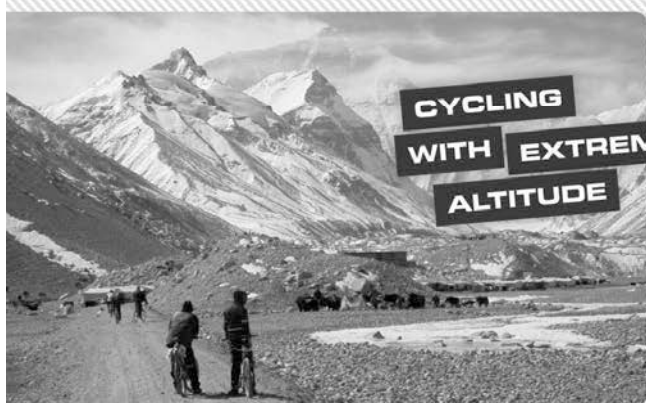
We offer a wide variety of trips to entice adventure seekers. Many cyclists start in Laos, the south-east Asian gem which is Red Spokes most popular destination. Highlights of the tour include:

- 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

Cycle Maintenance: The Fast Way

How often do you have to repair your bike? Hopefully, and usually only occasionally. Wheels rarely buckle, brakes only wear gradually and this is taken up by adjustments to the cables. The derailleur gear change mechanism occasionally needs adjustment and over a year or so, the chain will stretch until it jumps on the rear sprockets. Most of these are a matter of a few minutes to sort out or to explain in my *Consider Cycling* presentations. Replacing the chain will take a little longer and replacing the rear block needs a couple of tools. The most frequent repair is a puncture which is perhaps the only fiddly and time-consuming repair of the lot.

I went along to the one-day intermediate cycle maintenance course organised by British Cycling and led by Peter 'Spike' Taylor in Manchester's Velodrome. There are also half-day and multi-day courses, depending on whether you want to keep your bike on the road, run a repair business, or to build a bespoke machine from individual parts. If you're the head mechanic for the GB team, repairs have to be done quickly, so speed was emphasised. What did we cover? The Bikeability cycle training course begins with the 'M' check which looks at a bike's major components in an M shaped sequence to check if it's safe to be ridden. Spike did this in 30 seconds. During the other 7 hours and 59½ minutes we adjusted the height of the headset, replaced blocks and aligned brakes, stripped down and reassembled a rear block, aligned the derailleur changer, named and labelled all the component parts and repaired a snapped chain. In the final hour, Spike showed how to clean and lubricate a bike. Finally, we discussed the day and asked about accreditation schemes.

The design and build of bikes changes over time: brake

callipers can now be released with a small cam, wear indicators incorporated into the tyre and wheel rim, the *Golden Link* enables a chain to be repaired in a few seconds. Two of Spike's speed tricks really impressed: how to clean a rear gear inner cable without removing it and the quick way to take a wheel out of the frame. But his speed puncture repair was something to behold. He didn't actually repair a puncture, a racing cyclist is out of the competition until the tyre is re-inflated. Spike could remove the tyre from the rim, remove the tube, insert a new tube and replace the tyre in about 30 seconds without tyre levers! A student on the beginners' course the previous day had managed 40 seconds. I did mine in about three minutes. I learnt lots, especially the tips for doing repairs more easily and what's new in cycle design.

Graham Hankins

Push Bikes' Rides

As detailed overleaf, we're planning a series of Explorer rides. The timing & format of these rides will develop as we gain experience and with the need to work with other community groups & events. The Centro Sustainable Transport project on Pershore Rd is starting in March and we'd like to participate in the cycling activities.

We are also hoping to organise a short ride for people who want to try the Explorer rides and might consider helping out. Explorer route 2 has been suggested starting from the MAC along a route suitable for families i.e. off road or quiet roads. Date: probably a Sunday in late February, the exact date & time will depend on feedback from members see:

www.pushbikes.org.uk/explorer for details and contact forms etc. So, it's been difficult to know when to schedule the regular Sunday rides. The simplest solution is to make decisions as soon as we can and post the details on the website. The Wednesday evening rides won't be directly affected and will be on the rides page.

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 |

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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 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: 15 February, 15 March and 19 April.

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Membership Application Form

I/we * wish to join Push Bikes January 2011

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 _____

Push Bikes' Explorer Rides

We're planning a series of Sunday rides along the Explorer routes once the weather improves. The aim is to get more people out on bikes so we're hoping to work with other community groups.

The first ride will be on March 27th in association with the community capacity builders at Sparkbrook. It will be along the city canals route of 5 to 8 miles. The route details can be downloaded from:

http://www.pushbikes.org.uk/explorer/city_canals.pdf

There are also 18 bikes we can loan! We will publish full details on the website in February and email members a fortnight before.

Planning is the key to success and we'd appreciate:

- 3 or 4 Push Bikers or more to marshal the ride.
- local info/reconnaissance to plan a start point with good access, parking, etc for those coming by car.
- to find out about local community groups & events which would welcome an Explorer ride.
- debriefing after the ride.

So we need members to volunteer & to pass us the local information.

The best way is to email:

tell_us@pushbikes.org.uk

We'd like to meet you perhaps at the 15 February monthly meeting or on a Sunday pootle down Explorer route 2?



Help! We need you.

Members' Discounts From:

| Bike Shop | Location | Exceptions |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Scott's Cycles (see advert p.11) | Hall Green | bikes |
| CBC | Rubery | 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 |

You will need your Push Bikes' membership card to claim the discount

