

# BIRMINGHAM Cyclist

The newsletter for *push*  bikes

**CycleBirmingham riders at the  
MAC (see page 16)**



**Push Bikes,  
the Birmingham  
Cycling Campaign  
wishes all cyclists  
*A Merry  
Christmas and a  
Happy New Year!***



**Two council Scrutiny Inquiries  
discuss cycling..**



**More Pinch Points; and what another  
town does...**



**Contraflow - now national backing..**



**and it's all different in Germany..**

## View from the Chair - Chris Lowe.

The excitement of this year has continued in Birmingham, with the Transport, Connectivity & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee continuing its inquiry into cycling in Birmingham, further plans for the Local Sustainable Transport Fund scheme for Bristol Road being released, and the vote by Birmingham City Council to develop a plan to introduce 20mph zones or limits on residential roads.

As ever, however, nothing is that simple. At the TCS Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 9th November, there was a presentation from the Highways Department which showed 4 'cycling facility of the month' disasters, which cynics might say suggests that cycling infrastructure is a waste of money. When Push Bikes met with BCC officers to discuss how to improve the Bristol Road and Priory Road junction, our suggestion of a separate lights phase for cyclists was met with a warning that Traffic Management in BCC might possibly be very reluctant to reduce motor traffic capacity on Bristol Road. Finally, while Birmingham City Council has voted in support of 20mph in residential areas, there needs to be a strategy drawn up for implementing it - by the same BCC Highways department that produced the cycle facilities on the Selly Oak New Road, is reluctant to reduce motor traffic capacity to increase cyclists' safety and thinks that cycle infrastructure can only be a joke.

To be clear, I suspect that BCC Highways department is an obstacle to improving the cycling conditions in Birmingham. Studies have suggested that professional culture can be a stronger influence on someone than their national culture, and the professional culture of highways engineers in the UK has traditionally been to design roads that have maximum capacity for motor traffic and are safe for motor traffic. Fitting the needs of bicycle traffic into the numerous models and planning theories used is a difficult task. This is not to say that the individual engineers in the Highways department are not nice people - the engineer who we walked along Bristol Road with was very interested in learning about the needs of cyclists and listened to all our suggestions - but they are working in a professional environment where the focus is on motor vehicles.

To successfully change cycling conditions in Birmingham, our councillors need to tackle the professional culture of the Highways department head-on, and force a change in focus. This will be one of Push Bikes' focuses in the coming year, and I hope that we can help our councillors to realise how this professional culture creates poor cycling conditions and that there needs to be a paradigm-shift - which won't be easy.

*Chris Lowe.*



# Oh those pesky 'Pinch Points'!



There's no shortage of examples to photograph. There really is no safe space for a cyclist if a driver is overtaking within the gap.

BCC knows of Push Bikes' concerns and at its November meeting the Scrutiny Committee heard very eloquently from the chair of Aston University Bicycle Users Group, yet there was no comment at the time from BCC.

The DfT Manual for Streets gives advice for local Authorities on how to make these safer for cyclists; its Traffic Advisory Leaflets also make recommendations, so why is BCC ignoring these options?

From DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet February 1997:

## Cycle Facilities

A cycle bypass should be the first option where a narrowing is introduced on a road subject to a speed limit of 30mph or more.

If adequate width for a cycle bypass cannot be found, a cycle lane will be the next best solution on a road subject to a speed limit of 30mph or more.

This photo is of a narrowing with advisory cycle lane in Musselburgh. The coloured surfacing reinforces the 'message' to cars that they must wait for cyclists. My thanks to the local Cyclenation campaign group for this photo.

View from the



All local councils have Scrutiny Committees to oversee and examine the work of the individual departments.

*With its new administration in place since May and a new Cabinet Member for Transport, Birmingham's Transport, Connectivity and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee invited local groups interested in cycling to submit evidence for its meeting on October 19<sup>th</sup>. Birmingham's Push Bikes submitted 21 pages of A4!*

From the off, the new Cabinet Member and committee chair Cllr Quinn 'laid into' the cycling officers present. Brandishing the Cycling Strategy, Cllr Quinn asked why the Strategy had NO meaningful targets and NO firm 'outcomes! The councillor stated that the city was way behind others in the promotion and use of cycling and asked why the council's web site carried very little information for any citizen who wanted to find out about cycling. Cllr Quinn certainly frightened me - and I was just an observer!

The meeting went on to hear presentations and statements of 'evidence' from council officers and cycle user groups. Here the agenda had listed some 'Key Questions'; one was "Who is currently cycling? What are the barriers and opportunities for uptake.....etc". There was no shortage of suggestions!

This was to be the first of a series of Scrutiny Inquiries looking at transport and cycling and certainly some serious and direct questions were asked; let's hope for even more 'firm and frank discussion' next time!



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# CYCLING ADVENTURE HOLIDAYS

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And that 'next time' was just three weeks later!

## *Scrutiny Inquiry, 9th November*

Again the agenda posed some 'Key Questions' and invited comments to circulate to the Members before the meeting. An agenda item was 'Canals and Cycling', with a KQ "How suitable are the towpaths for cycling" and what improvements are needed? I cannot believe that everyone doesn't already know the answers. But when they were put to the Canal and River Trust managers, 'no budget' or 'heritage' were the usual responses. Nevertheless, the managers have been sent a series of photos of the Grand Union!

As this was the second Scrutiny in a relatively short time (three weeks) we were beginning to know each other and the 'protocol' and the exchanges were becoming increasingly frank; there was clearly frustration in the room as to how much talking and how little actual progress there always seemed to be. The City Centre Plan (timescale 20 YEARS) mentioned more Contra-Flow cycling and Toucan crossings. Well just do them then?

The NEXT Scrutiny is scheduled for December 12? *Will there be 'blood on the carpet' this time? We shall see.....we came close at THIS one...!!!!.*



***"Gimme a little sign..." yes, AGAIN! Another one of THESE please!***

***This is where Skinner Lane junctions with Hurst Street. Traffic can only turn right so only looks left, but cyclists using the contra-flow are approaching from their RIGHT!***



***Last time we asked BCC for one of these, in Greet, it took THREE YEARS! So let's start the clock running on THIS one? Letters have been sent to Graham Lennard and Cllr. Quinn.....tick, tock, tick, tock.....***



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### Bristol Road consultation

With the financial help of Centro's Local Sustainable Transport Fund, Bristol Road footway is one of the 'cycling corridors' that the City Council hopes to improve between Northfield and the Middle Ring road junction. Representatives from Push Bikes and Sustrans along with BCC's Cycling officer and Highway Engineer took a walk over the length between Priory Road and the

Ring road to identify problems and how they should be overcome. Crossing minor roads and restrictions at bus stops and other 'street clutter' should not present many problems but crossing Priory Road and the Ring Road will require more detailed planning if solutions are to be found.

We stressed that 'path continuity' and 'surface quality' are essential requirements. See later in this newsletter for our report from Priory Road to Selly Oak.

## The City Council is considering proposals to improve the cycle route in Cannon Hill Park



***“We have formed a view that the current segregated path is ignored by the vast majority of pedestrians..” Push Bikes 2012.***

***. Three options have been proposed by BCC:***

- ***Option 1 comprises removal of the existing cycle lane markings and providing new imprinted signs to indicate the proposed shared use.***
- ***Option 2A comprises retaining the existing cycle lane with the provision of additional signing and local widening of the cycle lane.***
- ***Option 2B is almost the same as Option 2A except for the relocation of the cycle lane to the opposite side of the pathway, away from the children’s play area.***

### **PROPOSED CYCLE ROUTE UPGRADE IN CANNON HILL PARK - Push Bikes’ response:**

Push Bikes (the Birmingham Cycling Campaign) has been involved with the signing of the path through Cannon Hill Park since its inception. Many members regularly use it and observe how ‘the public’ has responded to the different signing treatments over the years. **We have formed a view that the current segregated path is ignored by the vast majority of pedestrians and by many cyclists and segregation should be discontinued.**

We assert that a line that restricts pedestrians (and especially children) from wandering freely in a recreational space such as a park is neither practical nor indeed justifiable. Whether there is a notional segregated path or not, cyclists will be required to give preference to pedestrians as they are the more vulnerable users of the overall path, and this would have to be made clear by signage and enforced where necessary. **Segregation would cause potential conflict and dispute when people disregard their designated space.**

**We are therefore strongly of the opinion that OPTION 1 is preferred.**

However it is imperative that there is sufficient signage to warn and re-enforce the shared nature of the path. Your proposed signs are satisfactory provided that they are clear and frequent enough to catch the public’s eye. A carefully chosen colour, size and positioning is needed.

Additionally, as this is the **National Cycle Network route 5**, signage should incorporate this fact to raise awareness.

**Finally can we please act now –this dispute over segregation has been wasting everyone’s time for far too long. (at least two years – Ed)**

John Bennett, on behalf of Push Bikes)



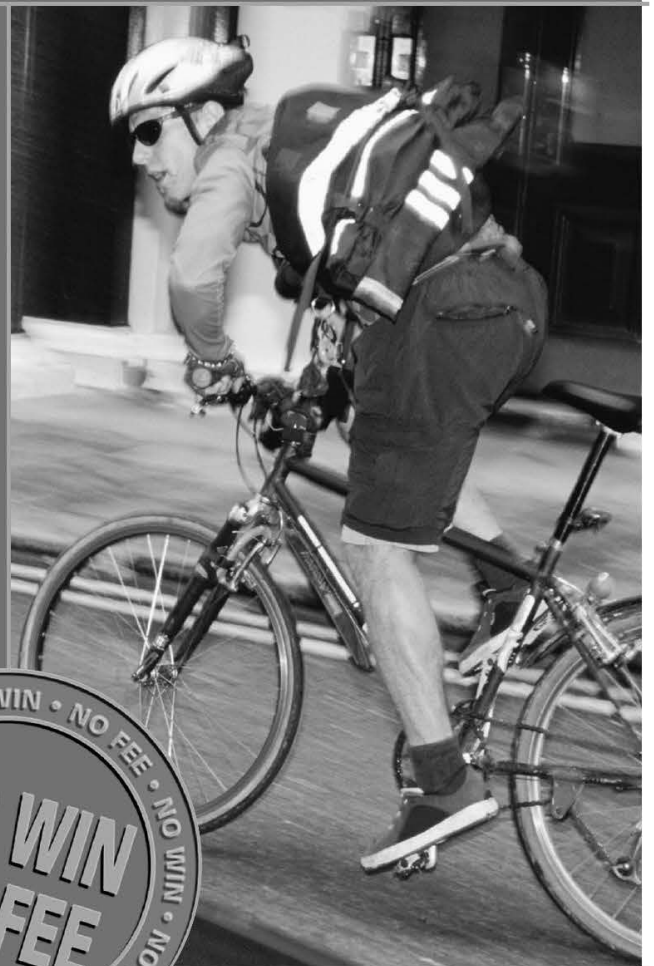
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SOLICITORS

Back in February 2012, using the Freedom of Information Act, member Alan Woodfield sent five questions to the council. One of these asked: “What action has been taken as a result of my various complaints about the cycle lane which joins the bus pull-in at Islington Row Edgbaston?”



**The cycle path that runs from Broad Street underneath Edgbaston Five Ways island leads cyclists to the north side of Islington Row via this segregated cycle path. So far, so good.....**



**Until we get to street level. There is ‘clutter’ here and the marked path finishes a few metres after the phone box. Why cannot the footway continue as Shared Use?**



**To join Islington Row cyclists would have to use the dropped kerb here, which is at the beginning of the pullin to the bus stop.**

**There are also cars parked illegally; it is a ‘double red line’ prohibition ie NO STOPPING AT ANY TIME (as distinct from no WAITING)**



### Department for Transport – Links to Communities 12/13

***For a further year Sustrans is pleased to be delivering ‘Links to’ projects funded by the Department for Transport (DfT). This year the theme is Links to Communities.***

Birmingham City Council (BCC) bid for one project that will be located in the Cole Valley improving and providing new shared use cycleways from Stechford to the city’s boundary at Babb’s Mill. This new 4.5km route will provide a ‘Rea Valley’ style link through this part of Birmingham that is currently very poorly served for cycle routes. The new routes will link to many facilities in the local community including schools, employment, retail and leisure. This was an important part of the DfT’s criteria that the routes should link to all aspects of the community.

The route has been made possible by the replacement, last year, of the old Bailey bridge on Cole Hall Lane, which has been reconstructed and includes a Toucan crossing. The £1.5m bridge replacement scheme has provided the match funding for the Links to Communities bid by BCC, which was successful in gaining £350,000 from Sustrans/DfT to which it will add additional funds to complete the route. The new tarmac route will run through the Cole Valley, which is an attractive green corridor running adjacent to the river. Work should start on site in the late autumn with routes being fully open by spring next year.

The new route will become part of the National Cycle Network 53 and will be fully signed when complete. Sustrans would like to recruit new rangers for this section of the NCN and would be pleased to hear from any Push Bikes members who are interested. If you would like any more information of the detail of this route please contact: [edward.healey@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:edward.healey@sustrans.org.uk)

BCC and Sustrans are also developing proposals to extend and complete the link into the city centre in anticipation of additional funding becoming available in 2013/14.

**Forum****Tuesday 30th October at 6pm****Presentations on**

- **City Centre Cycling Strategy** – Have your say on the City Centre Cycle network.
- **Top Cycle Location**—Working in partnership with employers to encourage cycling to the workplace.
- **Smarter Network, Smarter Choices LSTF presentation** Update on substantial budget funding
- **Bikeability update**— Progress report on number of children trained in Birmingham.
- **Bike North Birmingham**—Progress report on the successes of the project.
- **Bristol Road Cycle Route plans**
- **Skyride**—Feedback on events
- **Cycling Trends**— Information regarding levels of cycling in Birmingham

This latest Cyclists' Forum was chaired with some gusto by new Cllr Lisa Trickett, who stated that the council was “committed to do something about cycling” and to give the bicycle “equal status to the car”. A canon of speakers gave presentations on the agenda topics and each generated plenty of comment from the 50 cyclists who came along. At one point Cllr Trickett cautioned that “this meeting is getting unruly” - perhaps some of us were hoping for that!

This was typified by the City Centre Cycling Strategy - how to make the central area more ‘cycle-friendly’. Well, how long have you got? Twenty years, it seems! Actions were to be divided into ‘Immediate’ (Quick Wins), ‘Strategic’ and ‘Nice to have’. We were told that “there are lots of streets where contra-flow could be achieved with just signage”. WELL JUST DO IT! And “Watery Lane Middleway cyclists crossing need to be a Toucan”. YES! DO IT!

We then left the main theatre to return to the refreshment area, now laid out with many maps of the city centre and invited to write our comments. **Now, didn't we do that same exercise at Push Bikes' Forums in 2008 and 09?** Many hands with many pens made many comments - but some of us cannot wait twenty years!

## ‘Freedom of Information Act’ - a member tries to get answers from BCC:

In February 2012 new member Alan Woodfield put five questions to BCC under the FoIA. Those relating to cycling were:

- *How much has BCC spent on cycle lanes in each of the past 10 years?*
- *How many miles of lane were there in 2002, and how many are there now?*
- *What action has been taken after my complaints RE: the cycle lane joining the bus pull-in at Islington Row?*

His letter was addressed to the then Lord Mayor; Alan is still waiting for answers from BCC. When he gets them, they will be put in this newsletter - maybe the Winter edition?

No. See below, received from Alan on December 2nd:

After sending a copy of my letter there was still no response. I therefore wrote to Sir Albert Bore again on 14th November and have not had any reply to that one either. It is now 10 months since my request and the City has ignored all of my subsequent letters. If you have seen a copy of the Times newspaper (yes), you will see there has been a significant move to increase funds up to £1 billion over the next decade. They have highlighted how London are going to revolutionise cycling in that City, there is information on other cities- Glasgow, Belfast, Salford, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Brighton, Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield, Leicester and Cambridge. There is no mention of Birmingham at all !

It seems to me that Birmingham has decided that cycling is not an issue for this city and it has no intention of doing anything. I have a copy of 'Bike Birmingham: A Sustainable City's Cycling Strategy 2011-2015'. Having read this document, it is full of waffle and no action.

Best wishes

Alan



## New National Campaign from Cyclenation, the Federation of Campaign Groups.

Simon Geller its secretary writes:

### Contra-flow cycling on One Way streets.

This is an idea, we think, whose time has come. The DfT document, [‘Signing the Way’](#) proposed a simplification of the procedure for doing this, based on widespread use on the Continent and a successful trial in London. The principle is that one-way streets should always allow for two-way cycling, just as they do for two-way walking, unless there is an over-riding reason why not.



The current status is this:

The “Signing the Way” paper was published by the DfT on October 2011. This stated “ English local authorities will be able to place the combined sign ‘No entry except cycles’ where they consider appropriate. “ This replaced the previous guidance that mandated traffic islands and other measures to “protect” cyclists on these lanes.

At the moment, councils outside London still have to ask permission from the DfT to use the simplified version of the contraflow. **From 2014 they will be able to do this without permission. Pilots in London have been very successful, with no noticeable increase in casualties and definite benefits for cyclists.**

So what should local groups be doing about this?

Here are Cyclenation’s suggestions:

- **Identify the streets in your area that are suitable for contra-flow cycling.** (Cyclescape could be useful for this).
- **Make sure your local council officers are aware of the changes in DfT guidelines.** We often find that campaigners are more aware of DfT changes than local officers.
- **Get that list in to your local council and ask them to let your have their timescale for making these changes.**
- **Keep on at them until they do it!**

Once we’ve seen a critical mass of these new opportunities we’ll start looking at some of the other issues on our list and how we can campaign on them. We’re not suggesting that you should drop all your other campaign priorities of course - but we view this as a ‘low-hanging fruit’ and suggest that if you focus on this you should have some major successes to report in a year or so’s time. Good luck and let us know how you get on!

**Push Bikes urges all its members to take action on this.**



**Bristol Road survey - part 2. BCC officers (1st, 2nd and 3rd from left) and Push Bikes gather at Priory Road to discuss this busy junction.**



**It MAY be possible to sacrifice some of this hatching to continue a cycle path across the junction BUT left-turning cars are always going to be a problem.**



**The survey team pause at the Pebble Mill Road junction. This is another busy place without light control. Maybe a Toucan crossing a few metres away from the kerbline? Because cars also wait in the middle of Bristol Road to turn right. The rest of this survey continued in much the same way.**

## Bristol Road surveys: part 2.

Converting the footways each side of the Bristol Road to permit Shared Use cycling is considered by Push Bikes to be, by Birmingham standards, a relatively easy project. There are few driveways or junctions, for much of its length there seems to be adequate width and even pedestrian use is light. To a degree the council is in broad agreement and on a first 'survey' with BCC engineers, Push Bikes members and Graham Lennard 'walked the walk' from the Priory Road junction to the middle ring road. A few weeks later, we spent over 4 hours 'talking and walking' from the same junction south west to Selly Oak.

We spent over half an hour standing and discussing the out-of-city direction of the busy Bristol Road/Priory Road traffic light junction. There is no 'all red' phase here – we were told this would have adverse effect on junction capacity – all 'arms' are very heavily trafficked. Therefore, if a shared use path was extended across Priory Road – which was possible if, Graham Lennard suggested, part of the 'box junction' marking was converted to a shared use path.

But Graham had concerns about cyclists' conflicts with vehicles turning left from Bristol Road into Priory Road. This concern about left turning vehicles arose time and time again at later junctions. If the Shared Use path is following the kerbline (as cyclists wish it to do – they do not want to divert) then cars giving way to crossing cyclists will not have space to adequately clear the major road, hence the possibility of 'rear end' shunts said Graham L. And in reality that is a legitimate consideration.

The next 'problem junction' was at Pebble Mill Road. This is a dual-carriageway and even with the BBC long gone (shame), many cars turn into the south west bound side either to avoid the Bristol Road lights (as I do!) or to access Cannon Hill Park. Push Bikes conceded here that a Toucan crossing a few metres away from the kerbline was the only safe solution. However, we considered that the path could revert to the Bristol Road kerbline to cross the other carriageway as cars were joining the Bristol Road here, not crossing or leaving it.

So, each junction or driveway bellmouth, both sides of the Bristol Road from Priory Road to Selly Oak New Road was looked at in some detail, seeking the best way to take cyclists SAFELY across with as few diversions, stops or dismounts as was deemed practicable and to keep within the law. .

Of course, as all cyclists and cycling campaigners know, the 'ideal' cycle path is one that is continuous from end to end and does not require cyclists to stop or dismount. We will see how close to that 'ideal' we can achieve along the Bristol Road. There is funding for the project; Push Bikes is pressing for a 'High Quality Route' that all cyclists will want to use. And of course, the more cyclists, the fewer cars and less pressure on 'junction capacity'. So everyone wins.

As we departed – it was getting dark and cold – I asked Graham "Work starts Monday?" "Work starts Monday" he replied, both of us smiling. I've started that clock again...tick, tock, tick, tock.....:)

More comment on this project can be found on our Forum, <http://pushbikes.org.uk/forum>

GH.



# **CycleBirmingham – Push Bikes**

(Formerly known as *pushbikes rides*)

We are a friendly and welcoming social and leisure cycling group. We organise weekly Wednesday evening rides and a monthly Sunday ride, plus some additional rides from time to time.

## **Weekly Wednesday Evening Rides:**

The rides vary in distance to the destination from 3 to 12 miles (They tend to be shorter in winter). There is often food available at many of the destinations we go to if you don't have time to eat after work. We try and pair you up with other members of the group for your return journey home where possible, so that as much as possible of your journey home is undertaken with fellow cyclists - for example a number of the women riders cycle home together. On the 14th November we had 15 people on the ride with 3 more joining us at the destination in Northfield.



*Most of the rides start from the Midland Arts Centre (MAC) (see photos - above and cover) in Cannon Hill Park, meeting from 7:15 pm and setting off at 7:30 pm.*

## **Monthly Sunday Rides:**

The rides vary in length, for example July's ride was a 35 mile round trip and November's ride was a 15 mile round trip. The rides usually return to the area they start from after a leisurely lunch at the destination. On 18th November we had 15 people on the ride with two more joining us at the destination in Earlswood. The ride on 16th December meets at Kings Norton Rail Station Car Park, from 10:45 am and sets off at 11:00am. Make yourself and your bike "Christmassy"!

## **Routes:**

We usually use cycle-paths, parks, towpaths, quiet side roads and country lanes for our rides and will advise on the route type for each ride.

## **Weekly Rides Email:**

Email: [pbrides@pushbikes.org.uk](mailto:pbrides@pushbikes.org.uk) to receive our weekly rides email with full details of the week's ride.

**The most up to date information on *CycleBirmingham* rides can be found on:**

**Facebook:** *CycleBirmingham* [www.facebook.com/groups/cyclebirmingham/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/cyclebirmingham/)

**Twitter:** @cyclebirmingham <https://twitter.com/cyclebirmingham>

## **Provisional December Rides:**

Wed 5th - MAC to Christmas Market for food followed by another destination near the city centre.

Wed 12th - MAC to either Great Stone in Northfield (5 miles) or Weighbridge in Alverchurch (10 miles)

Sun 16th - Tinsel Ride - Kings Norton Station Car Park to Weatheroak (Coach & Horses)

Wed 19th - Christmas/Winter Solstice Ride - MAC to Hockley (Black Eagle)

Wed 26th - Possible Boxing Day Ride - See CycleBirmingham Facebook group and Twitter.

***CycleBirmingham*** is run by volunteers and is an autonomous part of **Push Bikes – The Birmingham Area Cycling Campaign**. The rides are open to both members and non-members of Push Bikes.

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

Some of our volunteers are also members of other cycling groups and if you would like to do longer distance/quicker pace rides than those run by *CycleBirmingham* we can put you in touch with these other groups.

We try to keep the rides fun and enjoyable, hopefully we will see you on a ride soon.

Happy Cycling!

Simon – ***CycleBirmingham*** – Push Bikes  
Email: [pbrides@pushbikes.org.uk](mailto:pbrides@pushbikes.org.uk)

***‘Cycling in Germany’ pages:  
a personal statement from the editor.***

The following five pages were submitted by member Robert Latham, who spends several weeks a year in Germany and his pages show how its cycling infrastructure and provision differ markedly from our own.

As editor, I have considered the inclusion of these pages very carefully. Way back, members used to submit accounts of their continental cycling experiences into this newsletter, until other members considered that these were inappropriate for a local campaigning group newsletter called ‘Birmingham Cyclist’. I agree with that view – the clue is in the title.

Robert’s original request was for the pages to be published two per issue, but this would occupy newsletter space for most of next year, which I did not want to do.

So, as a **‘one-off’ decision as current editor** I am publishing all five in this edition. I have not held back any local issues, so this newsletter is thicker than usual. But please folks, **no more articles for the newsletter about cycling in Germany, or France, or Holland....**perhaps use instead the Push Bikes on-line forum and web site?

Complimentary copies of this newsletter are sent to some council Members (ie councillors) and to council officers who have cycling within their portfolios. The Members include Cllrs Quinn (Cabinet Member for Transport, Connectivity and Sustainability) and Cllr. McKay (Cab Mem for A Green, Safe and Smart City) the officers include Graham Lennard (Project Leader, Transport Policy) and Mike Cooper (Smarter Choices Manager) plus Peter Blakemore the Chief Highway Engineer. **So, many of those who have the power, budget and/or responsibility for making local changes for Birmingham cyclists get to see this newsletter.**

# Cycling Infrastructure in Germany

Cycling infrastructure in Britain has gained something of a bad reputation thanks to poor design, poor yet sometimes expensive implementation, and a total lack of connectivity. Cycle routes in this country tend to be along rough, narrow paths that make cycling slow and risky and which don't actually go anywhere. This has influenced some cyclists in the UK who believe that this is the inevitable nature of the beast, and consequently they are reluctant to have cycle-friendly infrastructure here. The reality is that cycling infrastructure in places like Holland, Germany, and more recently in Scandinavia and the US bears little resemblance to what we see in this country.

In Germany cycling is now a way of life. For most Germans using a bike to do a bit of shopping, to go to work, or to visit a friend, is as ordinary as using a fork to eat one's dinner. Germany has created an infrastructure that is cycle-friendly. This article is a personal survey by the author of the techniques used in a number of German towns and cities.

## Cycling-Specific Infrastructure



*A segregated cycle path in Kiel.*

Segregated paths are far more common than in Britain but they are not ubiquitous. On the whole they are distinctive, wide, and well-paved, but sometimes they fall short of this ideal. One city that is worthy of mention is Kiel in North Germany, as the city authority has implemented many such paths. The path shown in the photo left has a spurious pedestrian (the footway is to the right of the trees), but at least she gives a sense of scale. One might think from the width that this is a two-way path, but there is a similar path on the opposite side of the road for cyclists heading in the opposite direction. Note also the clear marking, the special paving, and the rumble-strip on the left which provides space for handlebars and discourages cyclists from getting too close to the carriageway.

Shown right is a segregated path in the nearby market town of Preetz, which is laid in the red block paving quite commonly used for cycle paths in Germany.

These cyclists and pedestrians are waiting at a toucan crossing, but they won't face an interminable wait like they would at a similar crossing in Britain. Note that the crossing is not littered with pointless signage as is so often the case in Birmingham.



*Cycle paths are highly usable even out in the country, but their use is not mandatory.*

When the existing footway is too narrow for a segregated path, and the carriageway cannot be narrowed to provide space, then on busy roads the footway will be made shared use with nothing more complicated than a standard, pan-European *Shared Use* sign. A little way beyond the trees in this photo that's exactly what happens to this path. These shared use paths extend way out into the countryside (photos left and below), linking towns together and allowing long journeys to be made by bicycle almost entirely off the carriageway. The vast majority of these have an excellent surface and they are generally reasonably wide. However, as you can see from the first photograph there is no obligation to use them.

Signage is generally good, with frequent, detailed finger-post signs specifically for cyclists showing several useful destinations (such as local towns), not vague indicators such as "Birmingham Canals", nor with obscure locations like "Burbury Brickworks". Distances are given in kilometres to the nearest 100m. Metric ensures signs, satnavs, odometers, and maps all speak the same language (British roads are designed in metric, and Ordnance Survey maps have been metric for decades). This makes it very much easier to select the correct turning when there is more than one that might be taken, and since cycle routes are more varied and dense than those for motorised traffic it is all too easy to pick the wrong turning whilst trying to guess the relative difference between  $\frac{2}{3}$  mile and 400 yards, for example.



*A segregated cycle path and toucan crossing in Preetz.*



*A finger-post sign for cyclists near the village of Postfeld.*





Cyclists have priority crossing side roads, as if they were on the carriageway.

Whether shared or not, there will be no interruptions on the path. Cyclists have priority when crossing side roads, and in my experience drivers *will* stop and wait for cyclists. Posts are never positioned on a cycle path. As is normal practice in

Germany the busy junction in Schleswig shown in the photograph right was designed with an integral cycle path. Located on the traffic island is an electric clock, traffic lights, a rubbish bin, a bus shelter, several signs, a lamp post, and a sculpture. Some of these clearly require services (something that Birmingham City Council cited<sup>1</sup> as the cause of themany posts



centrally mounted on the brand new cycle path alongside the new bypass in Selly Oak). *unobstructed cycle path.*

However, nothing blocks the cycle path. This is normal in Germany. I have seen things that unavoidably intrude a little, narrowing the cycleway, but I've never seen anything located in the middle. Note also that cyclists are not ordered to dismount by the bus stop; the cycle path runs behind the shelter to minimise conflict, but cyclists and pedestrians are trusted to interact safely where they encounter one and other.



A footpath running between roads in Preetz made shared use using a standard pan-European sign.

Almost all footpaths between roads are shared use, creating permeability for cyclists that is not available to motorists. These tend to be just as narrow as they are in this country, but it does not result in endless conflict with pedestrians because despite the greater number of cyclists than in Britain they are spread out over a larger number of paths. This permeability makes cycle journeys direct and therefore very quick, even though, obviously, one cannot cycle on such a path as fast as on the road. A dropped kerb will be at either end of the path.

Permeability is further enhanced by permitting contraflow cycling on many one-way streets (which of course may have been created with the intention of making it easier to cycle a journey than to drive it). If the road is quiet the technique used will be highly minimalist, helping to make the infrastructure cycle-friendly for very little cost. This minimalist approach is common to all German cycling infrastructure, but if something is necessary it will be included. On busier streets than the one shown there will be additional road markings, for example.



Contraflow cycling in Lübeck.



A street where cycles are given priority over all other traffic.

*Fahrradstraßen*<sup>2</sup> (pronounced *far:rad:strar:sen* and literally meaning *bicycle streets*) are roads that are essentially for cyclists, though additional plates may grant privileges to other road users, such as residents. However, cyclists have absolute priority, and are free to block the path of any motorist using the street (for example by riding two abreast). The person who made the street in the photograph left a *Fahrradstraße* seems to have missed the point somewhat as he has allowed cars and motorcyclists (though in one direction only). Since the street is short and intrinsically quiet it all seems a bit pointless, but at least cyclists have priority and clearly the concept should be encouraged. The fact that the only Wikipedia articles on *Fahrradstraßen* are in German and Dutch (as *fietsstraten*) should tell you a lot. These roads simply do not exist in Britain because a cyclist is never allowed to block the progress of a car other than as a result of conforming to rules that apply to all road users, and of course it is quite common for a cyclist doing just that to find themselves on the receiving end of abuse.

A feature that does exist in Britain but which has proved to be controversial is Shared Space<sup>3</sup>. Although not a cycling-specific feature, one of the purposes of it is to give equal rights to all. Preetz town centre (right) is a classic Shared Space, and it works very well<sup>4</sup>. It has a speed limit of 20km/h, which is highly compatible with cycling speeds, and whilst it is used by motorised vehicles that have business in the area (including cars, buses, and delivery trucks), it is designed to be useless as a through-route. However, for cyclists it is a through-route, and one which is non-threatening and dramatically shorter than the through-route for cars. Down each side are cycle stands and trees, providing a refuge for pedestrians on either side that allows them to enter and exit the shops



*Preetz market place is a classic Shared Space.*

safely, though of course pedestrians can and do walk freely over the entire area. There is also a water feature running the entire length of the right-hand side that acts as a further barrier to vehicles of all kinds, including mounted cyclists, and brings pedestrians out of their reverie as they enter the section that vehicles will naturally favour. Note the other classic features of a Shared Space: the special paving, the group of café tables just beyond the red car, the flag pole, seating, planters, stone cubes that act as bollards, and a clock. Everything about the design forces one to turn off the autopilot and concentrate, yet it makes the shopping centre attractive and pleasant.



*An effective and unobtrusive method of helping cyclists to keep up a steady pace.*

One particular feature of the Preetz Shared Space worthy of note is the arrangement at one end. The through-route for motorised vehicles takes them around a bend on a junction controlled by traffic lights. The special paving of the Shared Space continues to the right of this junction back towards the town church behind the viewpoint for this photo. However, it is partially separated from the salient carriageway surface by bollards about 1.5m from the carriageway edge, whilst just by the trees in the middle ground there are more bollards and some stone cubes. Between the start of the bollards and the trees the special paving is level with the carriageway. This allows cyclists to bypass the traffic lights when entering and leaving the area beyond the traffic lights, a one-way street with contraflow cycling. The arrangements are left vague, which causes the cyclist to slow to an appropriate speed but doesn't force the cyclist to stop or dismount.

Not all cycle routes are metalled. Some of these unmetalled paths require an off-road capable bike, but at least every opportunity has been taken to both expand the cycle network and make it closer meshed. These routes are typically shared with pedestrians, horses, and utility vehicles, cycles being explicitly added to the signage as the only other permitted traffic.



*A wide, well-maintained fine gravel path shared with pedestrians. It has a slight camber, aiding drainage.*



*A forestry track for use by forestry vehicles and cyclists only. These tend to be quite rough.*



*Roads like this link wind turbines, farms, and hamlets. They are quiet and often have traffic restrictions, making them good cycle routes.*

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shared\\_space](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shared_space)

<sup>4</sup> A video of shared space in use may be found here: <https://vimeo.com/46957992>



Something you are unlikely to see in Germany is a *Cyclists Dismount* sign. I've only ever seen three. Two were temporary, and were the result of some works that involved digging up the segregated cycleway in Neumünster. In both cases the cyclist could either get off and push their bike along the footway for a few metres, or they could rejoin the carriageway briefly. The third, permanent sign is optional, saying "Warning! Cyclists please dismount. Danger of injury", referring to a steep and rather rough off-road path.

*End of Route* signs do not exist, for the simple reason that cycle routes don't end in Germany (except for impassable geographical features, such as the sea).



*A train at Kiel waiting to depart for Lübeck.*

There is a good synergy between bicycles and trains, so it won't be a surprise that in Germany the two are well linked. Stations have extensive cycle parking, which in the small market town of Preetz takes the form of large, covered cycle parking areas on each of the two platforms. Preetz is on the line between Kiel and Lübeck, and as such is served by RE (Regional Express) and RB (Regional Bahn) trains. As can be seen from the photo left bicycles are welcome on these trains (the arrangements are similar to those on Birmingham's Cross City trains), but at €5 (albeit for a day card) it is rather expensive, as will be the ticket for its owner. On long distance trains (IC, EC, City Night Line, DE, D, CNL) the price rises to €10. Bicycles are not permitted on ICE trains unless wheels and handlebars have been removed and they are fully enclosed in a bike bag (no surcharge is payable).



*A rare "Cyclists Dismount" sign*



*Half of the cycle parking at Preetz station.*

The S-Bahn (surface rail) trains in Hamburg bear a closer resemblance to those serving the Birmingham area, but additionally Hamburg has a U-Bahn (underground) and a Hoch Bahn (elevated rail). Bicycles may be carried on all three for no charge, but only during off-peak hours.

Tram and bus stops may be provided with a surprising number of cycle stands.



*A tram stop in Hannover with a segregated cycle path behind it and cycle parking opposite.*



*A remote bus stop just south of Erlangen, with a few cycle stands opposite.*



*Cyclists on the U-Bahn in Hamburg.*

## **Traffic Calming Measures**



*A 30km/h zone in Preetz.*

Extensive use is made of 30km/h zones (photo left). These are typically delineated with nothing more than a standard sign on all the entrances to the zone. Speed humps and other similar extreme traffic calming methods are simply not used, though in larger zones there may be repeaters painted very clearly in the road. However, the Germans don't stop with 30km/h. In home zones (photo right) pedestrians have absolute priority and the maximum speed is just 7km/h, allowing children to play in the street in complete safety. Like on shared paths cyclists must give way to other users, but in practice there are sufficiently few that home zones can be negotiated at a reasonable speed, and together with the lack of fast moving cars that makes them useful, quiet, and safe cycle routes, creating yet more of the all-important permeability that cuts down journey times on a bike.



*The blue sign on the far right indicates this is a home zone, where there is a severe speed limit of 7km/h.*



A cobbled central reservation in Preetz used to discourage overtaking.

Rough cobbled surfaces are used to discourage passing. That shown in the photo left is near a toucan crossing. Whilst overtaking at speed would be unpleasant, the left-turning car is able to drive across the cobbles slowly. Note the older-style but still highly usable cycle path in the foreground.

The monstrous roundabouts common in Britain are rare in Germany. The photograph right shows a typical example of a German roundabout. It is essentially a single lane, but with a rough cobbled section around the centre to allow large vehicles to negotiate the roundabout.



A roundabout in Preetz.

Negotiating a roundabout like this is trivial on a bicycle, but of course the Germans remember that not all cyclists have the same skill levels; that red pavement may be used by cyclists, and a crossing is provided (the short-dashed line shows one of the pair of lines defining the crossing). Incidentally, this path in a suburb of Preetz leads right back to the town centre in the direction from

which the car is coming (shown on the extreme left-hand side of the photo left), and disappears off in to the countryside in the opposite direction. Cycle paths are of a length that is unseen in Britain.



A chicane in Preetz used to slow traffic.

At or close to the point where a road heads into a town or village and by law the speed limit drops to no more than 50km/h, there will be a chicane of some kind. The road doesn't narrow, but the need to steer around something encourages motorists to slow down. It is not unknown for British motorists to pass to the right of pedestrian refuges used to create pinch points, but I suspect most motorists would feel uncomfortable swerving around the wrong side of a traffic island of the size used in these chicanes.

## Conclusion

Erlangen in Bavaria is a cycling showcase city, and to quote Erlangen city employee Marlene Wüstner, "The essential thing of a good cycle traffic planning is a close-meshed net!"<sup>5</sup>. In Birmingham we have completely failed to create *any* kind of network. Some of the few cycle routes we have are separated from each other by just a few metres of metalled path protected with *Cyclist Dismount/End of Route* signs. Whilst not all the cycling infrastructure in Germany is as good as one would like it to be, there is far more of it than in Britain and it all connects together. Where cyclists are expected to use the carriageway simple techniques have been used to make the carriageway easier and safer to use. The net result is a huge network of cycle-friendly routes that makes journeys by bicycle simple, quick, and safe.

Whilst some infrastructure has been created during remodelling, most of it has been retrofitted to urban centres ancient and modern. The Germans have avoided over-engineering. Bicycles are not cars; they do not need complex infrastructure solutions. Cyclists are best thought of as mechanised pedestrians. In Britain we are still largely failing to implement cycling infrastructure when the opportunity arises and still largely failing to retrofit it, and when we do either the result tends to be useless and/or ludicrously over-engineered. Cyclists are always viewed as an inconvenience to cars and therefore treated as second-class citizens, but the reality is that every journey made by bike instead of by car reduces congestion and therefore makes necessary car usage *more* convenient. We could put in place a policy of making all residential roads 20mph zones today, and have the work completed in five years for minimal cost, but Birmingham politicians believe widespread 20mph zones are unworkable<sup>6</sup>. We could start erecting useful cycling direction signs today at minimal cost, but we don't. We could implement widespread contraflow cycling to improve permeability, but we don't. We could remove *Cycling Prohibited* signs and erect *Shared Use* signs, but we don't. Germany has done all these things and created useful cycling infrastructure. Germany is one of our neighbours, not on Mars, and Germans are just like the British. That which can be applied in Germany can be applied here. Birmingham and indeed Britain really, badly needs to learn from those who have already successfully created cycling infrastructure elsewhere, or we will carry on wasting millions of pounds on useless schemes and achieve nothing. The city of Erlangen has achieved a cycling rate of 30%. Birmingham could do the same.

**Robert Latham**

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.asmvenezia.it/scaricabili/pist\\_cicl\\_sl\\_marlene.pdf](http://www.asmvenezia.it/scaricabili/pist_cicl_sl_marlene.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pushbikes.org.uk/manresponses.shtml>





In the local Press, the 20mph vote has been widely reported as the introduction of a city-wide 20mph limit. This is not accurate. The vote was to set-up a review of 20mph zones and limits, to produce recommendations as to how to proceed.



(NOTE: The '20' sign is used to sign individual roads; the '20 Zone' indicates an area-wide limit eg selected roads around schools etc).

**Cllr David Willis, who proposed the Motion, told Push Bikes:**

"Many constituents over a number of years have contacted me with complaints of vehicles going at excessive speeds in built up areas, in my ward we have a lot of terraced roads with parking on both sides, many schools in the city have problems with parking and vehicles speeding putting the safety of children at risk, we have schools with 20mph zones this has proved a success endorsed by the local police officers"

Cllr Willis continued: "In the last three years in my ward we have had two fatalities caused by speeding cars". *(How do you know that, Cllr Willis? Only an eye witness would be in a position to know the cause of an accident. Have you seen police reports of the fatalities? Ed.)*

Cllr Willis adds: "My ideal measure would be for a 20mph limit, but would agree 20mph zones in the short term around schools and identified roads; 20mph limits would also reduce energy costs and vehicle repairs. I will be campaigning for all roads in the city centre to have a 20mph limit; if 30mph is enforceable so is 20mph, drivers would know the limit and so obey the law - any limit on roads or motorways would be self enforceable".

Regards  
David Willis

**Cllr James McKay, Cabinet Member for a Green, Safe and Smart City, explains exactly what was voted:**

The motion calls for the development of a policy on the implementation of 20mph zones & limits, leading to a phased programme of introducing them. The development of the policy is being taken forward by an inter-departmental working group comprising transportation strategy, development control, leisure, planning and highways. The work is being led by Ann Osola, Head of Sustainability, Transportation & Partnership within the Development Directorate. It is envisaged that the Policy will be developed and available for consultation in early Spring 2013.

The development of the policy will assess the case for the introduction of 20mph zones & limits across the city; this will assess all land-uses, including retail centres where there is a mix of uses and as you rightly point out an increase in activity and modal conflict.

In taking forward policy development we will be reviewing the approach adopted elsewhere and building on best practice. Clearly building on a route hierarchy approach and the function of the road in question would clearly have some merit.

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact Richard Leonard, Transportation Policy Manager (Tel: 464 5997; e-mail: [richard.leonard@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:richard.leonard@birmingham.gov.uk)).

Cllr James McKay  
Harborne ward

We are based in the Friends of the Earth building:

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

Telephone: 0121 632 6909 and leave a message with FoE Reception or email: [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 email.

We hold meetings on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 19:30. Next meeting January 2013.

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I/we\* wish to join Push Bikes, the Birmingham Cycling Campaign

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address (inc. Post Code) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Work Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

I/we\* enclose one year's subscription:

Individual, waged (£12, e-newsletter, £15 posted NL).....

Individual, unwaged (£6 or 7.50).....

Joint/Family (£15.00 or £18.00).....

Voluntary donation (optional) .....

TOTAL .....£.....

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## CycleBirmingham Rides

See 'CycleBirmingham' page.

### Wednesday Evening Rides:

See web site.

To join the emailing list, please email:  
[pbrides@pushbikes.org.uk](mailto:pbrides@pushbikes.org.uk)

When a ride isn't listed on a Wednesday, we arrange this closer to the day and put details on the website and email those on the rides mailing list.

All Wednesday rides meet at the Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park, near the boating lake, at 7.30, for a 7.45pm start. Occasionally we start from the Hippodrome if we're heading north.

## Push Bikes committee:

**Chair:** Chris Lowe

**Secretary:** Graham Hankins

**Campaigns:** Howard Boyd / John Bennett

**Treasurer:** Sharon Baker

**Membership Sec:** Ann Griffiths

**Rides Co-ordinators:** Simon Harrison, Nick Wattison ,

James Le Gry

**Assessability Advisor:** Sue Webb

**Committee members:** David Gaussen, Michael Groll, Kate Fox, Esther Boyd.

**Webmaster:** David Little

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