

# NEWSLETTER

## SUMMER 2011

Free to members



Lancaster and District Cycle  
Campaign

Website: [www.lancaster-dynamo.org.uk](http://www.lancaster-dynamo.org.uk)  
Blog: <http://lancasterdynamo.wordpress.com>

### CYCLING POST-CDT?

We have survived or are surviving, post-industrialism, post-modernism and post early for Christmas but will cycling progression in the district survive in the time of post-placental CDT? Dynamo feels the local activists' pulse.

#### Cycling Forum

A positive move has been the setting up a local **Cycling Forum** which will meet three times a year to promote cycling in the district. It has adopted the old Cycling England slogan; *'More people, cycling more safely, more often'*. The first meeting was chaired by Lancashire County Council and attended by about 25 individuals who represented groups such as the City Council, Cog Set, CTC, the universities of Lancaster and Cumbria, Sustrans, Bike It, the police and the Rough Stuffers. Some of the major issues that were discussed are represented below this space.

Rob Lowe who attended Cycling Forum for Dynamo said, *'It's fair to say that the County Council does not really inspire much confidence in their drive and determination for taking forward cycling in the area, although it is at least aware of cycling as being possibly valuable and something it should continue to support'*.

#### Bike It

Kathy Bashford, who continues to co-run the highly successful Bike It scheme, has mixed feelings about progress, *'I am optimistic that we may be able to do a lot to increase cycling to educational establishments such as schools, colleges, universities, and journeys by young people, if the Local Sustainable Transport Fund thematic bid is successful. Unfortunately the Department for Transport has just told us to reconsider the scope of the bid. In any case, a lot of this will not happen until summer 2012, and I am concerned that the opportunities for promoting cycling to and*

*improving infrastructure for the majority of adults in the district are a lot less and this could have a significant impact'.*

#### CTC

Matt Hodges, former chair of CTC Lancaster & South Lakes said he found it hard to comment on the future as the CDT has had only a marginal effect on his group rides since these are mostly well outside the urban area. He conceded that, *'Members do benefit from some of the cycle track improvements as ways out of town and probably some of our more recent members have had their enthusiasm for cycling awakened by the CDT. Individually many members use the new cycle tracks to avoid the city centre but few would be put off if they were not there. Matt offers a CDT legacy appraisal below.*

Come to the review of the old cycling year, help to plan the next and renew your subscriptions at the

### **DYNAMO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

followed by an illustrated talk on:

### **Cycling in Britain: historical roots, current state, future prospects**

by Dave Horton

**on Thursday 20 October 2011  
at 7.15 p.m.**

*doors open at 7 p.m.*  
**upstairs at the Gregson ,  
Moor Lane, Lancaster**

All welcome

## **Cog Set**

Paul Andrews, whose more detailed update of the highly successful Cog Set's progress you can read below, also nursed a few regrets.

*'Our financial independence from the City Council has meant little change in terms of our progress as an expanding club. However, we were disappointed by the closure of the CDT as it was instrumental in giving us funds to launch our very successful youth cycling club. Also, we did appreciate the CDT helping out financially for those small pockets of monies to assist cycle coach training.'*

## **City Council Engineer**

Gary Bowker, the City Council engineer chiefly responsible for implementing the district's CDT funded cycle infrastructure commented, *'Obviously it was sad to see the CDT/CT project come to an end - very short sighted by the new government in my opinion - the Cycling England Team and the CD Towns were actually starting to make a significant impact.'*

(See below for an at length interview with Gary on the prospects post-CDT.)

## **City Councillor**

Jon Barry, Green Councillor sounded quite upbeat about the current political drive. *'Clearly, loss of funding is a big blow to the Council and means that we cannot continue with the infrastructure improvements that we have constructed as a CDT. Having said that, the current cabinet seems to be more cycling-positive than was the case in previous years, and so I'm hoping that the Council will be able to grab hold of any funding opportunities that do arise.'*

He suggested that, *'Given the lack of money for new infrastructure, the Council should concentrate on promoting cycling - for example, trying to get a stage start/finish of the Tour of Britain. Cycling clubs such as Cog Set seem to be doing a very good job and so I'm hoping that their enthusiasm and energy will filter through to the wider public.'*

## **Dynamo**

While there is still a need for more infrastructure especially on major routes where traffic volumes and speeds deter cyclists, such as the A6 both south and northbound from the city centre, Dynamo is particularly concerned that such a highly successful scheme as Bike it is under threat,

as well as other softer measures such as promotion.

Having acted as a sort of CDT watchdog for six years, we need to learn some new tricks and we aim to start barking louder for the restraint of motor vehicles, by closing rat runs, reducing city centre car parking spaces and enforcing traffic regulations about vehicles parking in cycle lanes and on pavements.

Ed

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## **OPINION PAGES**

### **Two of Dynamo's most radical thinkers dissect and challenge conventional cycling 'wisdom'?**

#### **WHO IS CYCLING FOR?**

This might seem a strange question. Surely cycling is for everyone? Well, after three years of research as part of the *Understanding Walking and Cycling* project, which is now drawing rapidly to a close, my clear answer is that it's not, though our task is certainly to make it so. So, who then, has our research found cycling to be for?

Primarily, for a hardy bunch of inadvertent elitists. People like me, and perhaps like you, who ride despite generally atrocious conditions which very effectively discourage the vast majority of people from doing likewise. Often we don't notice conditions are so atrocious because we've got used to them, and/or our skill levels have improved in order to be able to deal with them. We cycle, we take cycling-for-granted, and we expect other people to be able to do it as easily, or almost as easily, as do we. Which is why we're elitist; we don't understand how difficult other people find it. Yet people who don't cycle and especially those who are thinking about it, or considering the possibility of their kids and/or other loved ones cycling, see current conditions for cycling very clearly to be atrocious, and by and large won't do it.

#### **Car fodder**

Conditions for cycling across England are generally so dire that we might draw an analogy, one which I know is of course too strong but which nonetheless will make the general appropriate point, between asking people to cycle and sending soldiers off to war. Maybe not canon fodder, but car fodder. Actually, these days, I tend to see it as almost immoral to be asking people to cycle when

conditions for cycling are generally so inhumane. In fact, I've become a bit sick and tired of people telling other people to cycle, rather than striving harder to transform conditions so fundamentally that people will not only want to cycle – they'll almost have no choice (a bit like most people today feel that they have very little choice other than to drive).

### **More humane conditions**

Of course many people like cycling and will cycle – but they go where conditions are more humane, which tends to be (in a local context) to Glasson Dock, or Morecambe, or the Crook o'Lune, on a sunny summer Sunday, when they can take their time, avoid the cars, and relax. And why? Because such cycling is relaxing, whereas urban utility cycling generally isn't. So people will make the occasional leisure journey by bike, whilst continuing – despite saying how much they enjoy cycling and wishing they could do it more – to make the great majority of their ordinary everyday journeys by car.

### **Lancaster is like everywhere else**

This can't be true of Lancaster and Morecambe, can it? After all, for six years we were a 'Cycling Demonstration Town', and saw all kinds of improvements to local cycling provision. Hasn't that made a difference? A bit, but hardly. During our research, we found a large majority of people in the district to be very similar to the large majority of people elsewhere – they like the idea of cycling, and will sometimes cycle, but most definitely *not* on urban roads, under conditions dominated by motorised traffic. (And by and large we're talking about generally confident and competent adults here – the situation is of course much worse if we extend the analysis to children, young adults, and people much beyond 'middle-age'.)

### **'Extra cyclists' can be found if you look hard enough**

We can "hmm" and "ahh" all we want about this, but these are *the facts* – what we have found incontrovertibly to be true. Lots of people who have a stake in promoting cycling (whether local authority officers, or staff from NGOs such as CTC and Sustrans, or cycle campaigners) will protest that it's not true – that more people *really are* cycling. But these well-meaning people are – for perfectly understandable and acceptable reasons – simply deluding themselves. Anyone can find 'extra cyclists' if they're really committed to

looking for them. But *loads of* extra cyclists, who are going to keep cycling *for ages*, despite discovering cycling conditions to be generally terrible? No way. And the worst thing is, that by talking up a growth in cycling – being optimistic rather than realistic – we conspire with the status quo, the provision of little changes here and there, which effectively change nothing; and so we are complicit in the continuous deferral of those very radical changes that are really required in order to make cycling normal, a form of transport which is – genuinely – for (almost) everyone.

### **Abnormalising driving**

We need to reach a point where people who drive for short urban journeys are instantly assumed to have a very good reason – in other words, *an excuse* – for doing so. Most obviously, they are probably physically unable to walk or cycle. Towards such people we can feel compassion rather than blame. If they could, they would, like the rest of us, make their local journeys on foot or by cycle. Because in this scenario, the one which we should be striving to create, it is not *driving* which is the default – as now – but *not driving*. At this point, we will have successfully produced the necessary inversions – from driving as normal to driving as abnormal; and from cycling as abnormal to cycling as normal.

### **How do we do this?**

There's a whole range of changes which need to be made which aren't currently being made. You probably already know most of them, so I won't revise them here. But the most contentious, if also perhaps the most important, is the provision of segregated cycling routes along the biggest and busiest urban roads. Only by providing such routes – high quality, continuous ones, which give cycling right-of-way and which wherever necessary boldly take space from parked and/or moving cars – can we assemble a 'bike system' which can compete with – and then through its very success start to dismantle – the 'car system' which has been so effectively built over the last half-century. Our research has found that driving very short distances, very often, has for almost everyone with access to a car become 'obvious' or 'common sense', instead of 'stupid' or 'daft', which is what we need to make it become.

Only then, when we ask "who is cycling for?", will we, I think, genuinely be able to answer, "almost everyone".

*Understanding Walking and Cycling* ends in September 2011. There's an end-of-project conference, at which full findings will be announced and explained, taking place at Lancaster House Hotel on Tuesday 13 September. Places are limited, but if you're desperate to attend contact me ([d.r.horton@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:d.r.horton@lancaster.ac.uk)) and I'll see what I can do. Otherwise, I'll elaborate some more detailed findings from the project at this year's Dynamo AGM on **Thursday 20 October**.

**Dave Horton**

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## **ARE YOU A CYCLING SINNER?**

### **Which sort of cyclist are you?**

Are you the lentil-eating, sandal-wearing, holier-than-thou, smug sort, or the suicidal, reckless, arrogant, granny-jostling kamikaze sort? Or perhaps you're neither? I certainly don't identify with either of these, and neither do any of the cyclists I know; yet as stereotypes of cyclists, they are rapidly gaining ground, entering into the popular conscience.

### **Negative cycling stereotypes**

In previous generations, cyclists were culturally marginalised with the implication that they were either poor – at least, too poor to afford a car – or by the suggestion that they were something of a freak, a socially awkward and childish creature that hadn't really grown up. These stereotypes continue to exist, but as arguments for the merits for cycling gain ground, the process of delegitimising cycling has shifted focus. Most worryingly, however, the stereotype of the reckless cyclist – on which I want to focus – is not only becoming increasingly popular, it has also taken root in what should have been the one safe place where such misrepresentations were incapable of residing – the cycling community itself.

### **The argument**

All too often, I hear cyclists bemoaning the behaviour of other cyclists, arguing that their reckless and lawless behaviour is giving cycling a bad name. The argument goes like this: it's no wonder car drivers hate cyclists and treat them with contempt; it's no surprise that governments won't listen to our demands; it's no wonder that society at large has no time for us – by cycling recklessly and breaking the law, by showing our contempt for road traffic legislation and other road users, we bring this on ourselves. Why should car

drivers, and indeed the rest of society, respect us, when we don't respect them?

### **Undoing the argument**

This topic clearly raises passions, and I understand and respect people who desperately want to see cycling increase and believe that a minority of dangerous cyclists are making that task a more difficult one; the problem is, this argument is not only unsound, its perpetuation is doing precisely the sort of damage to cycling that reckless cycling is supposed to be causing. So I'd ask people to stop and reflect on this issue, and consider the debate from some different angles.

### **Kamikaze cyclists?**

First, we should ask; just where, and who, are these kamikaze cyclists? The image of the reckless cyclist is now repeated endlessly by a wide spectrum of the press, and has been accepted as fact by wider society – but where is the evidence for these creatures' existence? I don't know about you, but when I cycle, I don't think too much about the law, or polite society – but I think a great deal about getting home alive, and that means that my cycling is necessarily mindful, of my own vulnerability, and of the presence and actions of others around me. And I think the same can be said for the vast majority of cyclists. So we might want to ask to what extent this stereotype, like all stereotypes, isn't primarily a cultural tool used to delegitimise cyclists, and which, again like many stereotypes, has taken root in the popular conscience, despite not actually being based on much.

### **Three cardinal cycling sins**

Now, some of you will have noticed I said I don't pay too much attention to the law; so the second point to consider is the distinction between breaking road traffic law, and cycling recklessly or selfishly. Think about this: what are the big three cycling sins? Cycling on the pavement; jumping red lights; and riding the wrong way down one-way streets. Yet all of these activities are slowly being in some way legalised or reconfigured, and they're often undertaken because they present a safer or less stressful option: we see more and more 'shared-use paths' which are, in most instances, little more than the legalisation of cycling on the pavement, and many people cycle on the pavement because roads are simply too dangerous or stressful. More and more contra-flows – ditto for one-way streets. And advanced stop boxes, and growing talk of allowing cyclists to turn left at red lights, are

legitimation of the argument that suggests cyclists are placed in unnecessary danger at ordinary traffic lights – one good reason why many cyclists prefer to ignore them.

### **Breaking the law can make sense**

So what is often simplistically characterised as dangerous and arrogant is often perfectly safe and civilised – it just happens to be illegal. People may think that's as good a reason as any not to cycle in this way, and I'll come back to this, but even if you disagree with breaking the law, there is still the case for challenging this stereotype in its cruder form; if you want to criticise cyclists who break the law, you ought to also acknowledge that their behaviour often makes sense, that there is no reason to believe that the cyclist is in any way selfish or reckless, and that what they are doing may well in fact be safer than adhering to the law; you might also consider that therefore asking that they obey the law for the sake of the good name of cycling is often to ask them to place themselves in life-threatening situations because politicians haven't been bothered to change the law and because society's respect for 'the cyclist' is more important than their life. If that sounds like hyperbole, presumably you don't know some one who's been needlessly killed whilst cycling.



*Legal contra-flow cycling on Penny Street*

### **Dark motives**

Thirdly, we should then ask why the behaviour of a minority of cyclists should be seen as having such a negative effect on cyclists generally; clearly, the same isn't true of car drivers. Stereotypes are well recognised tools by which majority groups undermine and control minorities; and we have seen that before the kamikaze cyclist, there was the

poor or freak biker through which society stigmatised cyclists; if every cyclist obeyed the law 100% of the time, another stereotype would come along, because – and this is the real point – the anger directed at cyclists is not really about their specific behaviour, but about their transport choice generally; some people just don't like cyclists (because they remind them they're trapped in a car, or that they're a fat, ageing journalist, or because they feel that their dominance on the road is threatened, or because cyclists get in the way when people are driving round at extremely dangerous – but perfectly legal – speeds).

### **The most damnable sin of all**

Which brings us to the fourth – and real – cycling sin: we're not as fast as cars and therefore we sometimes slow them down. What's more, we don't always cycle in the gutter, we even sometimes take the lane entirely; we don't automatically give way to cars, and we don't pull over to let them overtake the moment we hear them approaching us from behind. Isn't this in fact the arrogant, selfish behaviour that winds car drivers up?

### **Feeding a rampant scapegoat**

The routes I take in Lancaster mean I rarely break the law, but I encounter dangerous and aggressive and clearly resentful driving pretty much every day I ride my bike, because I refuse to ride in the gutter, because I take the lane when necessary, and so forth. This is the real situation of cycling in Britain, and when cyclists blame other cyclists for creating this attitude, they are effectively helping feed a rampant scapegoat, helping legitimise the delegitimation of cycling. They are also ignoring or undermining the reasons why cyclists break the law, and failing to acknowledge the real reason car drivers get irritated by cyclists, rather than helping create a culture in which car-dominance is actively challenged. When cyclists ride on the pavement, we shouldn't attack them, but ask why they feel the need to do so in the first place. When the day comes when all car drivers drive at below 20 miles per hour and respect cyclists' rights and needs, then maybe I'll think about criticising pedestrian cyclists; until then, I'll defend the right of cyclists to ride as they see fit – which, to repeat, is overwhelmingly in ways that are perfectly safe and respectful.

Read previous issues of the Dynamo newsletter at [http://www.lancaster-dynamo.org.uk/index\\_Newsletters.htm](http://www.lancaster-dynamo.org.uk/index_Newsletters.htm)

## The real impediment to cycling progress

I occasionally teach children to cycle in schools, but I'm becoming more and more uncomfortable with teaching children to cycle a metre away from the curb, or to ride into the middle of the road when approaching a junction, because our culture is one in which car drivers see this behaviour as selfish and dangerous. We desperately need to challenge this, but we'll only succeed if we stop stigmatising other cyclists, and unite against the genuinely anti-social behaviour that we witness on our streets every day – that of car driving. In their attempts to defend the good name of cycling, those who condemn lawless or reckless cyclists in fact do nothing other than bolster the good name of driving. Ironically, then, it is not anti-social cyclists that are an additional impediment to us making the case for increased cycling, but those cyclists who sing to the tune of a society that demands the right to drive, and to drive unhindered by annoying obstacles like impoverished kamikaze vegans on bikes.

**Matt Wilson**

Check out the Dynamo blog and add your comments at

<http://lancasterdynamo.wordpress.com>

## SUMMARY OF THE FIRST LANCASTER CYCLE FORUM MEETING

### Appraisal of 6 years of CDT status.

Alasdair Simpson, from the County Council's sustainable travel department, claimed that the CDT project had been very successful and mentioned successes such as a district wide increase in cycling levels, allowing cycling on Morecambe Prom', improved access to and movement around Lancaster city centre. The achievements of the training scheme, Bike It was singled out for especial praise. Rachel Scott, ex-CDT team, wanted to know therefore, why County was not supporting Bike It in other areas of the county but persisting with its less than useless off-road Passport to Cycling scheme.

Gary Bowker, a City Council engineer is to circulate the Council's evaluation of the CDT project for Cycling England (CE), but he doesn't expect an appraisal response from CE, as the funding body was consumed in the Coalition's 'Bonfire of Quangos'. (See p.72 onwards at <http://committeeadmin.lancaster.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=5600&T=10>).

## Infrastructure repairs

Denny Beck bridge repairs should be finished by end of July. (Indeed they have been.) A temporary solution in the form of a floating deck at the currently Crook o' Lune bridge, should be ready in three months' time. The completed repair may take 3-4 years.

## Local Transport Plan

County has published its three-year plan implementation plan for transport in the region and you can read it at <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/?siteid=5489&pageid=29612> and forward any comments to [LTP3.forum@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:LTP3.forum@lancashire.gov.uk) by 12 September.

Of the £381m budget almost one third will be squandered on the Heysham M6 link, should it go ahead. Slim pickings indeed for Lancaster cycling. The existing contra-flow cycle lane on the west side of Chapel St will be moved to the east side because 10 cyclists and 5 peds have been attacked by motor cars over the last five years. Secondly, improvements to the Pointer roundabout are to be made, which if I'm not mistaken have already been made. Finally, a transport study of the A6 corridor between Lancaster Uni' and Lancaster city centre is to be made. The sane solution - dedicated cycle lanes on the A6 - has already been ruled out by County.

## Operation Chainguard

Sergeant Tristan Heaward from Lancaster police is piloting an anti-bike theft scheme, which he expects shortly to be, 'rolled out nationwide'. His enthusiastic talk included plenty of techie jargon, such as, 'retrofitted asset marking', which roughly translated means, the plods trousering £5 of your hard earned cash in return for 'indelibly stamping your bike', so that it can, at least when they've got the funding for the IT sorted, be tracked electronically.

Sergeant Heaward is disturbed by the stat' that 60% of **victims of bike crime** never return to cycling. By some glaring omission his, and the force's definition of '**victims of bike crime**' does not include traffic incident victims, only theft victims.

He conceded that Lancashire Constabulary is mainly concerned about vehicle collisions involving fatalities, especially born-again death-wish motor cyclists. In other words they don't give a dust cap about reducing road

danger for cyclists. Protect their property, but not their lives.

A second prong of the operation includes a much welcome offender rehabilitation scheme. Details are to follow, but the reintroduction of the stocks in Market Square are out of the frame.

The third prong focuses on the victims of theft, which introduces a scheme whereby young, 11-16 year-old victims of bike crime are offered the opportunity of training alongside a mechanic at Pedal Power. They may also graduate with the bike replacement they have been working on bike. It would seem like a good idea to extend this to offenders as well, who may feel less need to nick your bike once they have their own.

### **The Universities**

Philip Longton, Lancaster University, noted the many pro-cycling schemes that they are running, and singled out as particularly successful the Lancaster Green Bike project, which refurbishes and then sells bikes to staff and students. He claimed that cycling journeys to the university especially by female cyclists continues to rise.

Of course, we all know that what happens up at the knowledge college is a trillion light years away from what happens down in Skerton. Are there any transferrable lessons?

As it is on Mars, so it is at the University of Cumbria where there seemed to be no evidence of a cycling pulse at all. It was noted that they had lots of bikes sitting in sheds gathering dust and rust, but there appears to be little take up.

### **Cog Set**

Thriving, thriving, thriving, yes, but slight concerns by Paul Andrews that it might get too big and impersonal. He's proposing for next year a 'Lancaster Week' of celebrating cycling and suggested a meeting specifically for that purpose, to which of course Dynamo signed up. The whole group was reminded that Lancaster had been the venue for Cyclefest, an internationally attended week of cycling, held throughout the 90's, and that some of its organisers still lived locally.

### **Dynamo's input**

Following a brief discussion beforehand with Patricia in the back garden and Rob just

before the start, it was decided that Dynamo's position in a post-CDT climate would be two-fold: continued support for 20mph speed limits, and the restraint of motor vehicles. While there was no hostility towards either aim, neither was there any support.

### **General conclusion.**

All these various groups are happy to continue being effective, to a degree, in their own little pods: cycle training youngsters, organising rides, recycling bikes, securing bikes, offering free breakfasts to cyclists, accepting the odd bit of planning gain etc. And these are all very worthwhile activities, but it's what they don't do, or don't want to get involved in that is our concern: reclaim space for cyclists at the expense of motorists, or take seriously reduction of road danger, still the greatest barrier to new cyclists.

Anyway, it was agreed that the Forum should meet at least three times per year, and the exchange of group member email addresses should be useful. Dynamo is also concerned that County currently has the final say in setting the agenda. We will definitely support the next meeting but with a better worked out strategy.

### **Footnotes**

- *Coolest self-introduction:* Breezing in, ten minutes late, pint in left hand, twenty something woman, 'I'm from the university of Cumbria and I've come because my travel co-coordinator told me to'.
- *Most detached stat':* 'Over the year there has been a 35% increase in women cycling to the Uni'.  
'Yeah, if you started with three cyclists that means there are now four and a bit.'
- *Strangest stat:* 'Three and a half bikes are stolen every day in the Lancaster/Morecambe area.'

Editor

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## **LANCASHIRE CYCLE LIAISON MEETING IN JULY – A ROUGH SKETCH**

After a decade or more of visiting Dinosaur Park on the second floor of City Hall Preston for cycling liaison meetings, I noted at the last meeting that the prehistoric beasts appear to have suffered mass extinction. At least let us hope it is both final and total, and that not a trace of county council highway engineer

DNA is still lurking somewhere, like in the central heating ducts.

## **20mph speed limits**

Cllr Ashton assured us, both off and on the record, that £9.2 million has been funded for 20 mph speed limits in residential areas, which will be in place by 2014, countywide. He even said, and I quote verbatim, *'The motor car has stolen residential streets from people and it's time to give it back to peds and cyclists'*. Do I detect some Ivan Illich ventriloquism here?

In fact, as I write, 18/8/11, Lancaster East has just been formally approved by Cllr Ashton as a 20 mph area, together with West Lancaster and Greaves.

Of course the signage only scheme, without humps or bumps, will not be self-enforcing and will need some police intervention. So it was more good news when the councillor for transport announced the 'community road watch scheme' to enforce 20 mph limits.

It's a voluntary scheme but will give communities the power to enlist a PC with a speed gun to target offenders. Training in using such guns will be given. Those requiring Kalashnikov or other firearms training will need to apply directly, and in writing, to the chief constable.

Repeat offenders, will be blacklisted, visited and warned by a police officer. A 'top ten list' - or bottom of the barrel batch - of offenders will receive repeated visits from the police. It was even mooted that they - the offenders - may be made to undergo a cycle training course, whatever that may entail. 'This is a bicycle, duh'.

Resources will be put into educating local communities that are unable to perceive for themselves the safer, calmer environment that materialises in 20 mph areas.

Communities concerned that the scheme is not working can attend PACT meetings to compare notes on successes and failures. Humps and bumps will only be used as a last resort

Schools situated on non-residential roads will only get 20 mph limits in the immediate vicinity of the school, which is a woeful omission. Interactive speed technology may be deployed on approaches to schools. All round a bad fudge on schools but better than nothing, just

## **Road safety, or the preferred term 'road danger reduction'.**

Speed camera revenue will be invested in road measures to make roads less dangerous.

## **New, Sustainable Travel Sector presentation.**

Nice lady, nice frock, lots of nice carrots but when it came down to using the carrots to beat the motorists with e.g. reducing on-street parking, closing rat runs, stopping pavement parking she fell silent apart from:

*'We encourage developers to limit parking to a minimum'*. And that was it! Essentially all existing road infrastructure is off limits for reclaiming.

Having received zero support for reclaiming road space from the motorist at the recent Lancaster Cycling Forum, it was encouraging that one of the twenty plus 'delegates' supported it here. There again I suspect many of my fellow, perma-mottled, old buffers have attended far too many Liaison meetings and have finally morphed into highway engineers.

## **Preston Guild Wheel**

I can't remember a liaison meeting when Peter Ward hasn't kindly pinned back ear'oles for a good half hour or more about the progress of the Guild Wheel and the 'tragedy' that would ensue for mankind should it not be completed by 2012 in time for an anniversary. Last night he did not disappoint us, and for good measure threw in, what he called 'an intuitive solution in financially strained times': using prisoners as a source of free labour to build and complete schemes such as the Guild Wheel and the Lune Path to Hornby. So, watch out for the chain gangs when you next pedal off up the Lune.

## **Maintenance**

Apparently there has been a minor revolution in pot-holing repair methodology. Recent repairs have been cracking up almost before the pothole gang has got back to the depot.

Why? Well, tar has not been heated sufficiently to maximise its bonding potential. All that is set to change big style.

Ditto abandoning the use of larger chippings when road laying, which don't bond as tightly as your smaller chipping, or chiplet. This

causes a vibration gap and can cause passing bicycles to suffer a sort of epileptic fit. First FC Barcelona now the chiplet, 2011 is set to be the year when 'small is beautiful' really takes off.

Transport Direct's cycle journey planner is now available for all the main built up areas of Lancashire:

<http://www.transportdirect.info/Web2/JourneyPlanning/FindCycleInput.aspx> although there may be a few teething problems with the routes that it selects. There is also a cycle route planner offered by <http://www.cyclestreets.net/>

### Factoid of the night

The moment you dig a hole in the road you reduce the life of the surrounding tarmac by 30%. Utility companies making repair usually guarantee to make good for one year. Clearly a pothole loophole ready for the filling.

**R I P** to the dinosaurs, reptiles in purgatory.

Ed



*This is what the Mayor of Vilnius does to cars parked in cycle lanes. Come on, Mayor Woody, get your tank out of the garage!*

### DONE WITH YOUR NEWSLETTER?

Don't just put it in the recycling bin. Leave it somewhere for others to read it - waiting rooms, your staff room at work.

## INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL ACTIVISTS

### COG SET INTERVIEW WITH PAUL ANDREWS

#### ***So how has Cog Set been post CDT?***

'Well, I guess we haven't really noticed that much difference to date. Our financial independence from the City Council has meant little change in terms of our progress as an expanding club.

'We are disappointed by the closure of the CDT as it was instrumental in giving us funds to launch our very successful youth cycling club. However, we feel we have been free-running financially during the past 12 months and now feel in a much more secure position.'

#### ***How do you continue to fund Cog Set?***

'We continue to apply for grants from different funding sources and have a really proactive parents group raising funds through our successful catering events at local cycle events. It's great to see such willingness from parents and helpers getting stuck into cake-making and serving endless cups of tea and coffee at some of our sporting events.'

#### ***Are membership numbers healthy?***

'As one of the fastest growing youth cycling clubs, not only in the North West but nationally, we have a membership of 135 for this year. Given we only started 4 years ago it is wonderful to see such progress and interest in our club.'

#### ***What activities do you offer?***

'We continue to extend the range of cycling opportunities we give youngsters. We run our weekly coaching sessions on Saturday mornings from March to October each year, besides this we put on plenty of other cycling events during the closed season, such as visiting and riding on the Manchester Velodrome as well as family mountain bike weekends. Also, more recently we opened our doors to young people with physical and learning disabilities. This has been done in conjunction with the Loyne Specialist School, which has gone down very well for both our club and the youngsters from the Loyne.'



*Cogsetters storm Café d'Lune*

### **Any concerns?**

'Yes, we continue to struggle with the number of coaches on the ground to be able to provide the correct type of help for some of our up and coming athletic youngsters as they progress through the ranks. We did appreciate the CDT helping out financially for these small pockets of monies to assist coach training.'

'We hope we can continue to progress with the number of riding hours many of our youngsters are now undertaking and with such **enthusiasm** and **enjoyment**. Well, at least some of the time when they are free-wheeling down hill!.'

### **INTERVIEW WITH GARY BOWKER, CITY COUNCIL ENGINEER**

#### ***How do you feel about the loss of CDT status?***

'Obviously it was sad to see the CDT/CT project come to an end - very short sighted by the new government in my opinion - the Cycling England Team and Towns were actually starting to make a significant impact.'

'Yes, perhaps it had been slow going but we were getting results and we all know that continued investment at an adequate level is the only way we are going to achieve a modal shift.'

'It was particularly sad to lose two hard working and talented individuals in Matt Moran and Rachel Scott - I wish them both luck in whatever they do next. It is the loss of talent and experience that perhaps saddens me most, not just locally but throughout the whole of the CDT project.'

'However, life goes on - on to the next challenge, which for me is the Lancaster Square Routes Project and continuing wherever possible with cycling infrastructure improvements.'

#### ***What is the biggest problem that loss of CDT status has created?***

'The problem I/we face now is where do we get funding from?. Sadly, annoyingly and frustratingly, we were unable to bid for the new DfT funded Local Sustainable Transport Fund, not being a highway authority. That pleasure rests with Lancashire County Council who have submitted a bid to the fund for 2012 and beyond. We have obviously offered to work with them if they are successful and also to share our knowledge.'

'The City Council has also supported Sustrans in a thematic 'Education' based bid to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, being led by Devon County Council. Though I learnt only very recently that they have been asked by the DfT to reconsider the scope of the bid. So it is a case of watch this space to see if we remain part of the team.'

'We have been successful in an application to the Sustrans Links to Schools Project and have combined this with planning gain from the Globe Arena development to produce a project on Westgate converting footways to shared use, and upgrading the path to the rear of Heysham High School Sports College to shared use. Plus some other bits and pieces, including signing a route on road from Morecambe Town Centre/Greenway to the School and beyond. This is due to start some time in October.'

'The final piece of news in respect of funding is that the City Council Cabinet has approved a small amount of funding to support Sustrans in maintaining the Bike It project until July 2012 - a very worthy cause.'

'Oh yes, and the Lune Aqueduct ramp linking the canal towpath and the River Lune path is due to be constructed by British Waterways this winter.'

#### ***What constraints has this shortage of funding imposed?***

'The biggest constraint is that we don't have a bottomless pit of money any more and yet we still have a wish list of cycling infrastructure projects we need to deliver to expand/complete the network.'

'Secondly, we don't have anyone in post, or even funding to deliver the soft measures i.e. marketing, promotion, training in workplaces and the public domain, so this has come to an abrupt end. We may consider another 'breakfast on the bridge day' and continue to supply maps and guides at least until we run out. We will also be continuing with installation of Sheffield stands wherever requested and appropriate. Bikeability training continues for another year but now is being delivered by the Health and Wellbeing team with DfT funding.'

**Are you personally optimistic about the prospects for increasing cycle usage in the district?**

'Yes, generally, though I haven't done much in the way of monitoring. This year seems to be busier than ever, particularly on the Promenade and Greenway in respect of cycling numbers. The City will continue to do what it can, but to a certain extent it is over to the County Council now. In this respect, the newly created Lancaster Cycle Forum is encouraging and hopefully we will see some schemes delivered through the LTP 3 package of capital works. I will of course be on the look out for potential future funding streams.'

**Gary Bowker**

**THE CDT LEGACY FROM A CTC PERSPECTIVE**

'As the former chair of CTC Lancaster & South Lakes I was asked to write a few words on the effect of the CDT on our club. I found this hard as it has had only a marginal effect on our group.

'So I feel it is better to look back and give my views on the CDT legacy.

'On a purely personal note I find the improved cycle lanes on the gyratory and the Penny Street contraflow are the greatest benefit. It is so much easier riding up from Sainsbury's or the Market to Greaves and beyond. Together with the Advanced Stop Lines they also keep drivers alert to the presence of cyclists.

'As for more general achievements, the various Toucans and contraflows help all cyclists, but especially the less confident, avoid or negotiate the heavy traffic. Unfortunately the pedestrian zone remains 'No Go' discouraging shopping and cross town trips. The opening of Church Street is a useful start but the pavé on Castle Hill is a great

deterrent to using it for accessing the station and the Dallas Road area.

'It's so disappointing that the route through New Street and the top end of Market Street to the traffic lights was not also opened giving easy access to Meeting House Lane.

'The opening of Morecambe Promenade to cycling must be one of the best encouragements to return to cycling and together with the improved canal links provides an excellent facility for families. Don't overlook the Green Ayre BMX Ramp (though I am not sure it was part of the CDT). It keeps our youngsters bike focussed, learning bike handling skills I can't aspire to, and all this without being labelled hooligans for pulling wheelies. Isn't there a place by the promenade they could have a similar facility?

'This brings me to the greatest areas of success - Bikeability and Cog Set. It is this work with the cyclists of tomorrow that give me most hope and confidence in the future of cycling in Lancaster and Morecambe.'

**Matt Hodges**

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**LOCAL CYCLING SECTION**

**CYCLING TO WORK**

I recently started work at Lancaster University and, after years of walking to work, have begun to enjoy cycle commuting again.

All the blurb about why you should cycle to work concentrates on the pragmatic advantages: cheap, healthy, good for the environment. All very true . . . but what about the *pleasure* of cycling to work?

Take my route. I cycle from the centre of Lancaster to Aldcliffe Road using the new cycle infrastructure in the city centre, along the canal, briefly on Ashton Road, then up to the Boot and Shoe and through Hala to the University cycle path. It's my favourite route; I've tried the shorter Bowerham route, but it's boring and suburban, and the direct and flat route along the A6 is just too busy to be enjoyable. I leave home at 8.15 a.m. and get to work half an hour later, cycling slowly and freewheeling as much as possible in order to stay cool. (Everybody overtakes me, of course.) A few minutes with a wet wipe, a hairbrush and a change of blouse and I'm ready for work. Wardrobe choices are straightforward: the blue trousers or the black

trousers. I work part-time so I cycle home in the early afternoon and never in the dark.

That's the practical stuff. But, best of all, I arrive at work feeling invigorated and positive. *That's* what cycling to work can do for you.



*Hello clouds, hello sky . . . the canal between Aldcliffe Road and Ashton Road*

My favourite part of the ride is the canal, where I come over all fotherington-Tomas as I pass sheep in the fields and disturb herons beside the water. (Last year I was swapping cycle-commuting notes with a South African: *I* see moorhens on my way to work, *she* sees whales. I could tell she was envious.)

Springtime brings anxious daily checks on the number of surviving ducklings in each brood. Last month I saw a hedgehog ambling along beside the cemetery on Ashford Road. (No, I didn't see a squashed hedgehog the next day.) I compare the allotments with our own garden and invariably feel a failure.



*NOT a commuter train*

On Wednesday mornings in summer I catch whiffs and puffs of the steam from the special excursion train that I am always too late to actually see. All very small things, but

through noticing them and enjoying their presence my journey becomes a joy.

Not that cycling is the only way of making the most of a journey, of course. Driving home from his night shifts, my father used to enjoy coming across deer and rabbits in the fields by the side of the road. And there's nothing quite as satisfying as getting the front seat upstairs on the bus and viewing familiar sights from an unfamiliar angle. But one particular pleasure of cycling to work is the sense of physical activity – of the body working within its limits to propel you to your destination. With low gears and a certain (lowish) level of fitness, I can approach the regular hills with confidence and some satisfaction as I feel my legs working a bit harder to get me and the bike up them. It's almost as good as freewheeling on false flats.

If it's a nice day and I feel like it, I cycle home via Hazelrigg or Condor Green to complete the nature cure

And if it's raining in the morning, I catch the bus. Simple!

**Patricia Clarke**

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## **LOCAL, DOOR TO DOOR RIDES**

This 29 km loop along the Lune estuary is predominantly flat and invariably windy. Most of it can be enjoyed off-road by starting by the White Cross Pub on the Preston to the just-short-of Kendal canal towpath.

### **Pubs**

If you like to kick off with 'one for the road', this is obviously an ideal place to start, and for those who enjoy, or even need 'two for the road' the Waterwitch is just a little further up the path. There used to be a third pub on the opposite bank, the Navigation, from where you could hire a punt next to the scotch pines but it was demolished to make way for Aalborg flats.

### **Hazards**

The towpath in Bulk, thanks largely to Green Party activists, is low hazard cycling and so ideal for novice cyclists. Greenies descend in numbers to keep the towpath clear of human detritus and animal excreta, which have been reaching almost pandemic levels ever since the City Council and the British Waterways Authority, following a petty funding squabble, abnegated responsibility for litter collection

and removal. Can you put a price on a cholera outbreak? Not as long as the Big Green Society in wellies and waterproofs continues to step in with gloves, mechanical grabs and bin bags.

### **Vermin**

I suppose in the further interests of health and safety of our members I also ought to mention another hazard on this stretch: the aerial threat from the roosting pigeons, who ever since the City Council's downgrading of their status to 'vermin' enjoy nothing better than dumping guano bombs on unsuspecting cyclists who stray into their fly zone below the girders of Penny Street bridge.

An anonymous source, Miss Siân Kleep, close to the city council's centre of power, has it on good authority that if the guano bombs lab' tests prove to be 'germ positive' then of course we are into WMD territory and the council will not be slow to get boots on the ground. We can expect regime change, with budgies in sealed cages swinging from the girders by Christmas. Remember you heard it here first.

Having run the gauntlet of this opening stretch the rest is almost plain cycling. I say almost, because by the entrance to the Lancaster Royal Infirmary you switch canal banks over the humpback bridge, at whose foot you need to carry out a steep 270° (roughly, I forgot my protractor) turn. You are strongly advised to dismount before doing this tricky water edge manoeuvre.

### **Trees and birds**

Leave the towpath at the blue 'Sustrans Route 6' sign, by cautiously crossing over Aldcliffe Road into the lane that starts by the old lodge cottage. The short climb that takes you under a tall green canopy is a good place to stop and admire some mature beeches and horse chestnuts.

Follow the route 6 signs down the slope to where it joins the Lancashire Coastal Way. This runs south alongside the Lune estuary all the way to Glasson Dock. The riverside is always of interest for bird watchers and even on the bleakest of days you can be sure of an oyster catcher or two for chatty company.

### **Matters scatological**

The landside is not without interest either, and for those of you whose appetite for matters scatological have been whetted by previous

mentions of guano and excreta then you probably need to know that behind the hedge you are passing is Stodday sewage farm. At long last its product's potential as a regular stream of clean, green, lean burn bio energy is being recognised. If you add to this the increasing use by the medical profession of faecal enemas to treat previously untreatable stomach conditions, then it looks like sh\*t is in need of some serious upbeat rebranding. Something I suspect coprophiles have always known.

### **Not the 19th**

It has been said that the best way to spoil a nice walk in the countryside is to play a round a golf, and there are usually plenty of plus-four folk hacking divots out of the greensward in Ashton Park. The white house here, adjacent to the shared use path is not the 19th hole but an old station, or to be precise a halt, on the former Green Ayre to Glasson railway line. No common or even public station this, it was the private halt of Lord Ashton who could request the train to stop at his personal bequest.



*Traffic calming on the Glasson spur.*

### **Fireweed**

Another probable legacy of the railway age is the rose bay willow herb, which as I write in August, has colonised most of the hedgerows. It is also known as 'fireweed' because it has a liking for ground that has been on fire. That might explain why this purple spiked plant thrives on railway corridors and, in the past on old bomb sites, courtesy of the Luftwaffe.

If you called in at the White Cross and the Waterwitch then there is a public toilet at

Condor Green, where you can also get refreshments at the quirkily ungrammatical Café d’Lune.

Follow the estuary round to the right along the path whose surface soon becomes loose chippings. Turn off left before you reach the Glasson Basin marina and take the road over the Glasson Spur canal. The view from the parapet of Brows Bridge is of a ruler straight canal branch to the left and a busy marina to the right. I always stop here.

### Sinister goes on?

Take the flat, road left across Thurnham Moss passing a green shipping container in a field on the left. Do not be fooled into thinking this is nothing more than the HQ for local remote control plane enthusiasts. I have it on the highest authority that it is mission control pod for USAF attack drones.



*Plover Scar lighthouse in the background*

### Lady of the lamp

Turn right at the T-junction into Moss Lane with the old school house on the corner. This narrow lane will bring you out at the estuary lighthouse. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the nearby lighthouse keepers cottage housed the only female lighthouse keeper in the country. If you look at the position of Plover Scar lighthouse you realise it must have taken quite a lot of courage to get out there in all weathers to rekindle the light.

Dynamo is writing to British Waterways to try to get the canal towpath surface between Lancaster and Carnforth improved. This may be a lost cause, but we’ll keep trying. We don’t want a case of “nice aqueduct ramp, shame about the path”.



*Make sure you leave your weapons at home*

By the Cockersands fishing baulk info’ board, pass through the first of the four gates. You are now on the sea defence wall and the narrow track has priority for walkers. This is always the windiest stretch of the loop which makes for even more careful cycling for it is easy to let your concentration wander to the floral carpets of beautiful sea lavender down on the shore.



*Don’t baulk the info baulk*

### Friesians and an abbey

Passing though the next gate brings you into a field that is shared by the remains of Premonstratensian Cockersands Abbey - don’t think Westminster – and, a so far, docile herd of half-interested Friesians. The chapterhouse is generally locked but you used to be able to borrow the keys from the adjacent farmhouse. If you look down at the exposed shore you can see the red sandstone outcrop from which the abbey was built in the middle ages, when it was situated on an island surrounded by the sea. (The redness of the sandstone is also indicative of a hot desert landscape – of course, that was a bit before my time.) If Department of Environment plans go ahead and the sea defences retreat in the face of the threat of rising sea-levels then the abbey, the

cows and surrounding farms may disappear under the waves once again.



*Friendly Friesians with the chapterhouse in the background.*

### **They also come in black**

The estuary diffuses here into channels, brooks and fleets and at low tide it is a great birding spot. In May, I met a couple of birders who lent me a pair of binoculars to observe two black swans. The native Australians whose discovery pulled the rug from underneath the certainties of inductively reasoned generalisations. For prior to the discovery of Australia by Europeans all swans were observed to be white. A book of the title 'Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable' by Nassim Taleb explains how relying on standard statistical tools like Bell curves can rule out extremely unlikely events, which when they do happen can be catastrophic, such as the credit crunch. He argues, these events can be prepared for, as long as we ignore the arrogant certainties of so called economic experts. Or any self-styled expert for that matter.

### **Static holidays**

The narrow unmade path drops you down below the sea wall where you emerge into the holiday zone at the first of two caravan parks: Cockerham Sands County Park. You pedal right next to the vans in pole position i.e. the ones next to the defensive wall with uninterrupted views across the estuary to Pilling Church spire and Fleetwood peninsular. Some of them have cultivated really nice gardens while others, perhaps less inspired by this panoramic delta, have installed a kwok on the van.

The next, smaller caravan park is the appropriately named 'Bank End Farm', after the dam wall that allows road passage at very high tides. Free range sheep graze on the raised, salty plateaus at low tide. The farm advertises 'Salt Marsh lamb for sale', a case of

illiteracy being bliss for the young gambolling woolly backs.

### **Out of the skies**

At the end of the dam wall turn left into Hillam Lane, where you are reunited with smooth tarmac. Don't be alarmed by parachutists falling from the sky, slowly, most times. It's only thrill seekers from Cockerham Parachute Club not Argentine commandos.

At the end of Hillam Lane turn left onto the A588 Cockerham to Lancaster Road. Depending on the time of day this road can be quite busy, and since autobahn grade tarmac has been recently laid, fast too. I generally ride early on Saturday morning when it is reasonably sane, and am calmed by the fact that it's only a short stretch back to the Stork where you are reunited with that good old cycling haven, the Lancashire Coastal Way.

Ed

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## **FROM OUR SCANDINAVIAN CORRESPONDENT**

### **Cycling up the Fjords**

This year I have found myself working on cruise ships. Playing piano and singing to the passengers every evening with the days free to explore ports of call on my trusty Brompton, which stashes neatly under the desk in my cabin.



*Spot Rob, our man up the fjord*

Having the ability to cycle off past the predatory tourist traders and into the reality of the cities and countries the ship visits are pretty much what keeps me sane!

One June day is particularly memorable. I was working on Fred Olsen's ship 'Braemar' which visits various ports in Fred's home country of Norway. We sailed 120 miles inland

up the Sognefjorden Fjord. The ship sailed majestically and quietly between precipitous sheer rock faces which at times you could almost reach out and touch either side of the ship.



*The Brompton meets the Braemar*

What a fantastic experience to be onboard ship yet completely surrounded and enveloped by snowy mountain peaks - waterfalls everywhere.

Eventually we reached Flam, a small, originally agricultural, village at the head of the Fjord. From here the steepest railway in the world heads of through tunnels and cuttings into the mountains and on eventually to connect with the main Norwegian railway network. There is also a well maintained single lane road which tracks the railway up into the mountains for about 20 miles. The road is snowed in for several months each year and exists primarily to serve the farms which dot its steep circuitous route.



*Steepest railway in the world*

So, off I set. Coming back was going to be easier than going! The road wound up and up and up, and then around. With each false horizon came another magnificent vista of waterfalls, black rocks, green fields, snowy peaks and blue sky. No traffic, no walkers, no cyclists. Nobody. Blissful peace and tranquillity.

After about two hours of slight to vicious inclines the little Brompton and I reached an (un)-level crossing. I could see and hear a train way down below me, chugging and tooting up the mountain, so, a good place for a rest stop. Eventually Puffing Bjorn exits the nearby tunnel. I am plainly visible from the train, sitting at the junction of track and road. All the passengers seem to be waving and pointing their cameras at me, surely, **they** are the strange sight in this isolated mountain place?

Bearing in mind that I haven't come across a single soul until now, a few bends down the road I catch a glimpse of another cyclist, slogging his way up towards me. Ten minutes later and he is dismounting with an incredulous look on his face.

'Man, steep or what'. He is an American living and working in Singapore who has taken a few days out of a business trip to London to explore Norway. For the next hour we continue on up together. We are like minded on most subjects and never stop talking, despite the altitude! Eventually we reach the entrance to a long verdant valley with a steep drop down into it. Here we shake hands and part. He is going to cycle on along the 4 or 5 miles to the end of the road, and I am mindful of my ship's sailing time. I needn't have worried, three and a half hours up - 30 minutes down, including a goat stop.



*Beautiful goatherd leads her laconic flock*

About half-way down I met a hundred or so goats walking laconically up the trail towards me. Accompanied by a rather beautiful, enigmatically smiling goatherd

Back to the village of Flam in time for a coffee and chat with some locals before sailing.

What a wonderful, memorable day!

## Coda

The Brompton in my cabin makes the whole experience of working on a ship brilliant. Last winter I spent three and a half months in the Caribbean. **The link to my Caribbean blog:** [http://web.me.com/rob\\_bee/Fred\\_Olsen\\_Braemar%22\\_2010\\_11](http://web.me.com/rob_bee/Fred_Olsen_Braemar%22_2010_11)

Rob Bee

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## JOB OPPS' SECTION

**You can handle a bike? The sky is the limit.**

It is the case that bicycles once rolling will usually stay upright, with or without a rider, although usually for longer periods with someone in the saddle. I recall discovering this truth some thirty odd years ago on the Cockerham to Lancaster road while 'riding' two bikes simultaneously - one of which was being pushed alongside the bike I was actually pedalling - as I was on my way to the station to deliver it to a friend so it could be ridden back to Cockerham. At the top of the curving descent just past Thurnham Hall I lost my grip on the passenger bike and with a mixture of amazement and anxiety watched the runaway, riderless bike accelerate away down the slope holding a perfect line for about 200 metres before veering off and coming to an ugly heap against a barn door.

We still don't understand, after 150 of research, what gives a bicycle its stability. While some physicists while away their lives deep under a Swiss mountain searching for a grand unifying theory of everything, others, above ground, devote their expertise to solving the planet's most important conundrum: how does a moving bicycle remain upright?

Physicists and mathematicians have produced the equations and now understand some, but not all, of the factors that contribute to the poise and balance of this noble upright machine.

Firstly, the gyroscopic effect of a spinning wheel keeps the axle in the horizontal plane. Secondly, the geometry of the handlebars and forks distributes the bike's mass so that they twist as the bike leans, causing it to steer into the fall. And thirdly, the need for a trail, which is the distance between the point of tyre contact with the road and the point the front forks would make if they were extended in

straight line down to the road. And there are other, less important, ones too.

Of course, keeping it stable for hours, days, weeks, months, years, even a lifetime also depends on you the rider. And what you do to achieve this is perhaps more complex than you might imagine. Indeed, physicist Mont Hubbard of the University of California has a colleague, who studies how pilots control aircraft and he says, 'Riding a bike is much more complex'.

So how do we do it? Scientists are not exactly sure but we rely on a mix of feedback controls from various sources including eyes, the vestibular system, and the nerves in our elbows and knees. A lack of any one of these, such as vision will not necessarily stop you balancing, as racing cyclist, Tony Doyle demonstrated in 1987 by cycling blindfold. But do not underestimate the role of your knees, for at low speeds riders need to waggle their knees from side to side to stay upright. However, the work of the upper body has been overestimated. I don't know about you but I have been told countless times that one steers into a corner with one's upper body. Not so, as most of the steering is done by moving the handlebars. Perhaps best not to think about that too much next time you approach a corner at speed.

Anyway, you may well ask what is the purpose of all this research. Well, one is to design from first principles, based on equations a more stable bike, as lots of traditional style bikes - often the type ridden by the elderly - are not particularly stable. Secondly, to investigate just how complicated a machine humans can deal with. To this end, scientists at the University of Mons in Belgium have built the Anaconda. It comprises a two-wheeled bike connected to a line of steerable monocycles. The linking joints are so hinged that that it will twist and turn chaotically, unless riders have truly expert control. Groups of school kids who don't mind falling off usually do best.

Anybody fancy skilling down to airline pilot level?

Ed

*Dynamo would like to thank Michael Brooks, a consultant for 'New Scientist' for his inspiring article, 'Easy Rider', published on 28/5/11.*

*Further reading, try, 'History of thoughts about bicycle stability', bit/kya4gl*

## OBITUARY? The Motor Car?

Whether we have reached Peak Oil is a subject of regular mainstream media debate, but what about Peak Car? Has the accursed machine got one wheel in the grave?

In the developed world, surprisingly enough many countries have reached peak car, when it is defined in terms of **per capita driven**. Car sales, although declining too, are a less reliable indicator, as modern cars generally last longer. As far back as the 1990's Japan reached peak car, where 'demotorisation' is a widely recognised concept. More surprisingly perhaps, 2004 was the tipping point for peak car in the USA, UK, Germany, France and Australia.

The explanation for this phenomenon is not quite clear. Urban gridlock, parking difficulties, air pollution etc. are all contenders. But according to Fred Pearce, New Scientist's environment consultant, the most likely cause is demographic.

In Japan for example, which has the oldest population, very few pensioners drive to work, or even not at all. In the US the biggest fall in car usage is among the under 35s. An urban youth culture that walks, or rides bespoke bikes to work, that telecommutes, that relies on social media rather than face to face interactions, and that shops online argues that there are better things to spend your money on than a car. Today's rebel is one without a car or a tidal wave quiff.

However, these good news stats are somewhat marred by those who opt for gas guzzlers, drive solo, or opt to fly instead of motor.

Of course, that we may have reached Peak Car in the developed world is hugely overshadowed by the car boom that is only just getting under way in developing cities from Sao Paulo to Shanghai. This year the number of cars on the planet's roads reached 1 billion. China, where currently only 1 in 16 people own a car compared with 3 out of 4 in the US, bought 13.8 million of the 35 million new cars and lorries sold last year. Neither are they buying economical hybrids – one Prius this year, but SUVs and Hummers.

So we can't even start to write the obituary of this accursed machine

*For further info' try, 'The Road Less Travelled' a 2008 report published by the Brookings Institution, Washington DC*  
Ed

Let us know if you would prefer to receive the newsletter by email in future.



### Tour-De-Renewables : Saturday 15 October

As part of the One Planet Festival 2011 there will be a cycle tour of local renewable energy installations, both domestic and community scale. Ride will be led by Dave Horton and will be approx 30 -35 miles calling at various houses, community centres and schools along the way.

Leaving from the LESS Office 8 Ridge Square Lancaster at 10am on Saturday 15 October.  
To book a place call 01524 66100

For up to date info on the festival follow us on face book

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- Annual membership: £5 waged, £2.50 unwaged

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Dynamo committee.