

# 10 things you might not know about Cycling Demonstration Towns



Lancaster and District Cycle Campaign

A Dynamo view from Alistair Kirkbride

## In a headshell

Lancaster will receive a £1.5 million contribution from Cycling England to a total pot of £3 million to be spent between 2005-2008. Six demonstration towns have been selected to show how cycling can be developed to become a mainstream mode of transport. This is a unique opportunity to make real advances in expanding cycling in Lancaster and district. It will involve bringing together a wide range of interested bodies to implement imaginative plans, as well as steering forward a programme of improvements and extensions to the cycle route network and other infrastructure.

### 1. What is a cycling demonstration town?

Cycling England (CE) was asked by the Department for Transport to select 5 towns that they think – with support – can demonstrate how to radically increase the number of people who cycle. The “deal” is that the towns would have to find £1.5 million to match that granted by CE over 3 years.

It’s the sort of project that some bigwig would be able to brag about in a few years’ time – such as at some transport conference, or on telly or radio.

What actually needs to be done is to work out what he or she will be bragging about (what will it be about Lancaster that makes it such a good place to cycle), and how we get from here to there.

The “demonstration” part of it is all about showing *how* to get things done and what works - and what doesn’t - so that other places can learn from what happens here.

It is worth remembering that in total less than £1 per person is spent on cycling in the UK. Securing CDT status means that this will increase to £5 in Lancaster – similar to that in continental European towns where cycling works well.

Phillip Darnton, Chairman of Cycling England explained.

*“We want to support towns to work with local schools, hospitals, employers and the wider community to demonstrate the real benefits that*

*cycling can bring: from reducing congestion to increasing levels of physical activity. People want to cycle and we must work together to help them do so more safely and more often"*

Lancaster's core CDT aim is to double cycling in 3 years, and use this as a foundation for cycling to go on increasing. Dynamos want to see 25% of journeys to be by bike by 2012 – compared to the current levels of around 3.8% - (National Census figures, 2001)

## **2. How did this happen?**

The bid was prepared by council officers – following some well placed nagging - coupled with significant input from interested local groups. It all happened rather quickly over the summer when Lancaster was shortlisted with 8 others from a longlist of 30 towns. The CE team visited in September, and we were officially informed that we'd been selected the day after the Dynamo AGM in October. The initiative officially started on November 1<sup>st</sup> and will run for 3 years.

Lancaster joins Exeter, Derby, Darlington, Brighton and Aylesbury as the six towns (increased from the original five).

## **3. Who is Cycling England?**

CE was set up by national government in the wake of the sad demise of the English Regions Cycling Development Team,

*"to plan and co-ordinate the development of cycling across the country. It was launched by the Minister for Local Transport in March 2005 and replaces the previous National Cycling Strategy Board. Cycling England is supported by a Government Group comprising several government Departments, including those covering health, education, planning and sport, as well as transport"*

While it may be a shady quango, it's run by a group of nine real cycling people, suggesting that it's not just a group of yes-men for the government.

Their budget is £15 million over 3 years (including the CDT cash). There's some bitterness that the Government were being lobbied for £75 million to support cycling. To put these apparently large sums in perspective, £15 million would build a mere 658m of the proposed Heysham-M6 link – and that's the *total* amount of money the government is putting directly into cycling! The good news is that we've got 10% of the national budget.

#### **4. Who is involved locally?**

The CDT programme will be managed by the Lancaster City Council – they will hold the purse strings and power locally.

There is a 'management board' of four and a 'steering group' of about a dozen. The latter comprises two Dynamo reps' and some similar-minded bodies, such as Alison Paige from Pedal Power, Jon Sear from the University and CTC reps'. It is designed to bring together the main groups to give the project direction.

The first two meetings of this group have produced some important debates, namely :

- So what exactly *is* the vision of a cycle friendly Lancaster? (now largely thrashed out).
- Should activities (and ££) follow the vision (and be defined by the most effective way of doubling cycling), or continue being about what's possible and (often) easier? There's a sense that the emphasis is shifting to the former.

The steering group is spawning working groups and sub-committees to actually get things done. To date, these include one to prioritise spending, one on new cycle routes, one on promotional activities and another on communications (press releases etc). There will also be groups to work specifically on education (cycling to schools, awareness raising in schools etc) and workplaces.

In terms of staff, council officers Rachel Scott – who has been working the EDZ project (employment stuff including cycle access to workplaces) will work 2 days/week on the CDT and be the main point of contact. Gordon Maclay (engineer – cycle paths) will shift emphasis of his job to include CDT stuff.

While we welcome this input, we (and Pedal Power and a few others) think it also needs an overall co-ordinator, but we have not yet got anywhere with this.

In general, Dynamo is well represented, and respected, on the various groups which include other good representatives. However, there is a sense that there are some key things that are missing, namely; a co-ordinator, and secondly evidence of what works to radically increasing cycling. Evidence that should be informing our decisions.

#### **5. How will it all happen?**

Local authority "schemes" are a dark art to most people. The main blocks of CDT activity are split into infrastructure and promotion. We've been

arguing that this split shouldn't be set in stone: but that's a lingering debate at present.

Infrastructure. This includes generally speeding up the construction of the cycle path network, implementing an effective signage strategy (to places that people recognise – "ASDA" rather than "Ovangle Road" – with distances and times) and improving cycle parking. The (re-) prioritisation of cycle path schemes is currently happening (with Dynamo input).

*What Dynamo wants is:*

- Shift the thinking from schemes (e.g. Greaves Park) to strategic routes (e.g. Town-University) – i.e. making sure that the schemes serve the routes that people naturally want to use.
- Make sure that important links (informed by the *Missing Links* campaign) are tackled – even if they are hard to do – e.g. contraflows etc.
- Make sure that the hard bits aren't left out of the lists. Part of the "demonstration" town is all about tackling the barriers to making cycling work – and so challenging the procedures that prevent things from happening – e.g. the fact that *County* Council control highways.
- Build in all sorts of other types of infrastructure – making sure that cycle parking is of the right type in the right places; and contraflow schemes are safely signed.
- Make sure that best practice in bike infrastructure is a *starting point* in any road planning so we don't have to keep explaining why road modifications (such as South Road, Barton Road, Marine Drive) as *so* poor.

The infrastructure will take about 75% of the money and will be overseen by Gordon Maclay.

Promotion. Bike paths are only useful if people are encouraged to use them. A significant element of the CDT will be promoting cycling – especially to those who rarely or never cycle, but who are prepared to give it a go and make journeys that are very cyclable.

*What Dynamo wants is:*

- the opportunity for best practice from elsewhere to be applied here
- the opportunity for imaginative and creative ideas and plans to be developed and carried out with support from the city council
- the opportunity for a wide range of organisations (not just the usual suspects like Dynamo & CTC, but disabled groups, school groups, employers etc) to be included *as partners* in devising and carrying out projects that are locally relevant and effective.

Rachel Scott is overseeing the promotion stuff, and is doing well in taking on and organising the long list of ideas based on Dynamo's 'summer of cycling' programme. Prioritising these and making them happen has just started.

We've been a bit concerned that the Council see such a split between the infrastructure and promotional strands. Where is the evidence that says that 75% of the money spent on infrastructure (rather than promotion) is more effective at doubling cycling (the main aim) than if it was spent on an imaginative promotion campaign (including e.g. employing lots of enthusiastic cycling promotion officers)?

## **6. Is this real money?**

The £1.5 million from CE is real new money. The £1.5 million of match funding is from a combination of that already committed by the councils for cycling infrastructure, including some from the Economic Development Zone to develop further cycling to work.

This combination means that there needs to be some bedding down of what it's all about – i.e. the extent to which the CDT is influenced by the flavour of the match funding. While we appreciate this pragmatism, Dynamo think that the main aim of doubling cycling (and the rest...) should be the primary steer of the programme.

## **7. Who will benefit?**

Everyone. No, really.

This main focus is not to make cycling easier for cyclists - it is to make Lancaster into a place where people who currently rarely or never cycle are encouraged to take up cycling and build it into how they get around. In some ways, cyclists are at the bottom of the list, though clearly they will also benefit in many ways.

There is already significant interest from groups who want to make cycling a viable option for people with physical and learning disabilities, and there were loud noises at the November Dynamo/CDT meeting to promote cycling to the vast majority of school children who never cycle to school.

## **8. How will it change Lancaster?**

Think about place you know where cycling is engrained into the way that people get around...

I have strong images of the huge cycle parking barns near rail stations in Bruges and Roskilde, and am always impressed to see stately elderly women pinging their bells to pass bank managers, young children or parents with shopping stuffed in a basket. Sometimes these are cycling

on a segregated bike path network, other times they are naturally slowing other traffic on shared roads. Cycling is just “normal”, and the whole feel of the place is better for it.

Behind these images, I have a mental picture of people working in (council) offices, going to school, planning new buildings (etc) who implicitly see cycling as an integral part of how their towns work. It’s not an add-on, but cycling is just something that is a natural part of how their town breathes.

Lancaster could feel like this. While it almost definitely won’t all happen in 3 years – the CDT should help set up the structures and show that entrenched mindsets can be changed to make cycling a natural part of Lancaster life.

## **9. ...and further afield?**

The CDT is not just about Lancaster. The *demonstration* bit means that it will have to show to other towns throughout the UK what works, and what doesn’t. This means that there’s a part of the CDT programme that should focus on working out what needs to be done to overcome the usual barriers. For instance, if the split in highways responsibilities between City and County Councils is preventing key links getting off a wish list, the CDT should push to review the procedures. This will mean that it can demonstrate to the large number of similar towns how to tackle the same problems.

## **10. What can I do?**

- Encourage more people to get on their bikes – or cycle more
- Come along to events - and bring other people along too
- Think of what you’d like to see done – and what you think are the barriers to cycling – and tell the CDT team (email [celebratingcycling@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:celebratingcycling@lancaster.gov.uk) or contact Dynamo)
- Think of projects – and suggest them, or propose to run them, or suggest who should or could be involved (your local school or scout/guide group... the need for clearer signage... advice on best routes... help with servicing your bike)
- Think of people you know – especially those that don’t cycle (much) - and work out what would need to be done to get them cycling.

Don’t think that there are any boundaries. Even the wildest pans should be thrown into the pot – they might make a lot of sense alongside other people’s ideas. The CDT is all about increasing cycling, and the gut feeling and opinions of people on the ground are a main part of making things happen rather than some add-on.

Alistair Kirkbride  
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Links:

- Cycling England: [www.cyclingengland.co.uk/](http://www.cyclingengland.co.uk/)
- Dynamo CDT page:  
<http://uk.geocities.com/dynamocyclecampaign/page10.html>
- Lancaster City Council  
[www.lancaster.gov.uk/General.asp?id=SX9316-A7806251](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/General.asp?id=SX9316-A7806251) (including links to webpages of the other CDT towns)

Main contacts:

Rachel Scott: [celebratingcycling@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:celebratingcycling@lancaster.gov.uk) or 582392 – or feed questions or suggestions through Dynamo