

NEWSLETTER

May 2008



Lancaster and District Cycle
Campaign

Free to members

<http://uk.geocities.com/dynamocyclecampaign>

EDITORIAL

Phoenix Street

Nobody can remember exactly when a contra-flow down Phoenix Street emerged as a potentially useful and doable piece of infrastructure. I remember visiting the site with a city engineer, Gordon Mackay, in 2003 and his confirming it was indeed viable. Long before that though, the idea was crystallised. At committee meetings members would invariably ask 'How's Phoenix Street coming?'. The standard reply was on the lines of, 'Don't hold your breath'. Phoenix Street had become a sort of Godot.



Phoenix Street before . . .

The securing of EDZ funding in 2002 at least put Phoenix Street on the political and engineering agenda. The city council though, could still find plenty of impediments of varying degrees of legitimacy: it was too dangerous to have

cyclists going against the flow; the Comet delivery artics wouldn't be able to swing into the loading bay; and the five hallowed parking bays would have to be sacrificed.

These objections became somehow less objectionable with the passage of time and last autumn Gary Bowker, the City's acting senior engineer, announced that work would go ahead. Despite a last minute bureaucratic lapse which caused further delays by failing to publish the TRO in full, work at last started in early January.

On 9th January at around 9.30 in the evening returning from Morecambe over the Millennium Bridge and under a nimbostratus downpour I heard the thumping of compressors. There on the start of the gyratory, outside the Yorkshire House pub, in silver floodlight, a gang of hard-hatted, high-vizzed and sodden men were breaking up the hard-boulder central reservation in order to move the road so that the pavement could be widened to accommodate a cycle lane. Gary Bowker stepped out of the shadows, rainwater sheeting off the brim of his safety hat.



Working on the crossing

'This is the easy part. The part I enjoy. It's all the meetings and discussions that are difficult,' he said.

The cars, now reduced to one-lane, aquaplaned past, spraying the labourers and anybody daft enough to be watching the work in these dreadful conditions.

'We have to work at night because of the volume of traffic,' he explained. Even at this time it was a constant, thrumming stream.

'I finish at 10 but the men work on till 2 a.m. They can't work any later because the landlord of the Yorkshire House has to get to sleep.'

The fluorescent rain, still tipping down through the floodlighting, had no intention of relenting.

Of course, unlike Godot, the contra-flow did arrive, and - leaving aside the car-favoured retiming of the Toucan crossing - it is a fine piece of engineered cycling infrastructure.



. . . and after

In a way, this protracted process seems fairly typical of the way that progressive cycling facilities might get done in this country. Bright cycling initiatives are invariably objected to by car-obsessed county engineers and city councillors. It can take years of meetings and lobbying

before objections finally seem to fade away. Then, of course, the schemes need funding, which require alert council officers to work their way through the maze of funding streams, and then submit an impressive bid. Finally, there are the difficulties on the ground faced by the gangs of engineers and labourers.

On the continent they do things rather differently. Central governments decide cycling is a good thing and they go ahead and build the facilities.

Ed'

CYCLE DEMONSTRATION TOWN, PHASE II: *just when you thought it was safe...*

Three years used to last a long time - seemingly forever in primary school days - but these days is over in a jiffy. This means that CDT1 is looking long in the tooth, and in the yet-to-emerge genre of cycle development films (Noir? Feel-good? Farce?) means that CDT2 is in production.

Spring is the time for planting. The seeds of CDT2 could be planted in the well-dug beds prepared by CDT1 ... more of the same as sown last time (yummy... *didn't we feast?*), but stronger bigger plants this time... and also new varieties to make Lancaster's cycling garden that much more vibrant.

So what to plant? Will they grow? What worked before? Should we have used fertiliser on some plants? What were the weedy bits we'd rather forget about? Ooh ... I saw some gorgeous *elementae bipedallonia* in full bloom last time I was on holiday... I wonder if they'd flower here?

So as not to further fatigue and already over-tired set of sarcastic metaphors, a summary of Dynamo's input onto the design of the CDT2 plan is outlined below. The deadline for the Council's submission was 31st March, and announcements will be made later in the summer sometime.

We haven't yet seen the submitted document so can't comment on what found its way in.

There will be an extra 10 towns and 1 city in the next round to "join the existing 6".

See <http://www.cyclingengland.co.uk/demotowns.php> for the word on the (cycle friendly?) street.

Dynamo believes that future development should:

- Be informed by the lessons of CDT 1
- Develop successes & fill in gaps from CDT 1
- Be based on the stated priorities from Cycling England, focussing on:
 - health
 - city centre permeability for cycles
 - bikeability
- Be based on what has been shown to work well elsewhere - no need to re-invent the wheel
- Innovate to push the boundaries of cycle development, and confidently tackle barriers to ensure that CDT2 can *demonstrate* effectively how structures, policy and behaviour can change
- Develop Lancaster's distinctiveness and put Lancaster on the national and international cycling map

A Cycle Demonstration Town has to *demonstrate* how to do good things *and* overcome barriers. It should be designed to identify problems and tackle them rather than avoid them.

We consider that the second round of CDT activity in the Lancaster area should focus on:

1. A cycle hub.

This could take several forms, but needs to be a high profile physical focus for cycling and take cycling to **non-cyclists** rather than require people to visit the hub. It could comprise a cycling information point, cycle hire, cycle repair, café etc. It could be a single building with all facilities in one place, a small high-

profile hub that directs visitors to other places, a high-quality mobile unit etc.

The form, components and cost would need detailed appraisal. There are many examples of these in other places, and one for Lancaster should be designed based on what works well from elsewhere.

Pedal Power, who already recondition used bikes, train mechanics and cyclists, would seem to have some of the expertise and experience to operate such a hub.

2. Making the city centre permeable to cyclists.

Permeable means *both* easy to cross (key routes) *and* possible to cycle to all places. Dynamo's view of what "permeable" means has been outlined previously. Since then, the Mayer Brown proposals have been put forward. We do not think that these produce a permeable city centre. We think that a *minimum* would involve:

- Ensuring that cyclists can pass both ways on Church Street and Common Garden Street (East-West routes), and have safe cycle lanes north and south around the one-way system. These must be clear of parking and other obstacles through effective enforcement.
- Being able to cycle within the pedestrianised area (at walking speed - possibly re-designate current pedestrianised area as a 5mph zone)
- Advanced stop lines at all signals
- Toucan crossings where cross-town routes cross the gyratory (i.e. Stonewell)
- Ensuring that traffic lights are timed to help (and certainly not hinder - e.g. Middle St - Common Garden St) cyclists

3. Linking cycling to health

Cycling as a way of promoting health needs to be actively promoted. Partnerships and initiatives should be developed that are designed so that the health benefits of cycling impact on a wide range of sectors of society. These should

actively include those who currently experience difficulties cycling due to physical or mental problems. It should also focus on getting the health benefit messages of utility and leisure cycling out into the mainstream.

These should be linked to key national and local policy and guidance, including

- ➔ NICE 2008 Physical Activity and Environment
- ➔ Department of Health's 2008 Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: a Cross-Government Strategy for England

Structures should be developed that ensure that these are used to "proof" LCC policy and guidance development, as well as the activities of LCC and other large employers

4. Identify roads to close to through traffic

Many roads - especially in residential areas - do not require through travel by vehicles, so long as access is retained. Closing these off using either fixed or rising bollards has been shown to reduce the intensity of motorised traffic and open up the streets as places for living. This promotes cycling and walking, especially if linked in to a wider cycle network.

5. Implement 20mph speed limits

20mph limits are shown to result in the encouragement of cycling as well as the reduction of accidents between vehicles and cycles (and pedestrians). Paradoxically, a reduction in speed limit often *increases* vehicle transit times through congested areas, so everybody wins.

The Lancashire Local's agreement to implement 20mph zones throughout the city centre and residential areas should be implemented as a priority. In addition, other areas not covered by the Lancashire Locals agreement should be considered for speed reduction (Morecambe, Hest Bank etc).

6. Using the planning system to make travel plans work

A key way of promoting cycling to work is through travel plans. Unfortunately, it is common that these are prepared but either not implemented or not enforced. The Council - as the planning authority - should adopt and develop emerging national best practice to ensure that the positive benefits of a travel plan are locked in to the planning agreement. This could involve stringent tightening of parking standards to "lock out" extra car trips to an extension of a site.

Competition

I will (attempt to) bake a cake to the specification of the person who - as democratically decided by the Dynamo committee sometime this year - comes up with the best strap-line to the new film "CDT II".

Small print: I cannot guarantee that the cake will be edible. All entries must be received before the first committee meeting after Dick & Patricia get back. Cakes may have to be shared with no bickering.

Alistair Kirkbride

NEWS IN BRIEF

Joined-up engineering

In the previous edition Dynamo complained that the new 'Deep Cutting' path alongside the canal from Haverbreaks was a path going nowhere. Recently the city council have rectified this by joining it up to make a route from the city centre to Lancaster University. Council labourers have built on-road cycle lanes on Ashton Road to connect with Ashford Road, which has a dedicated cycle and bus lane up to the cemetery gates. From here to the Boot and Shoe the road has been calmed with speed bumps. So we now have an alternative, if somewhat hilly and indirect, route from the city centre out along the canal to the Hala

Estate and on to the university. Whether it will attract staff and student commuters in any numbers remains to be seen. The obvious route to attract students has always been dedicated cycle lanes alongside the flatter and direct A6. Of course, we have to bear in mind it's poor old motorists who can't cope with hills and complicated navigation, that's why they need sat-navs and vroom vrooms.



Ashton Road



Junction of Ashton Road and Ashford Road

Infrastructure issues

The Lancashire Cycle Liaison Committee is complaining to Lancashire County Council County engineers about the following poor bits of infrastructure, so be extra careful when using them.

1. Morecambe Promenade roundabout has a very dangerous interrupted cycle lane that is cut across by cars going along Marine Drive.
2. Galgate village has dodgy cycle exit markings and inappropriate white lines.

Dynamo has also notified city council engineers about the motorist-biased timing of the Pelican crossing outside the Yorkshire House Pub.

Lancashire Cycle Liaison Meeting 17.4.08

Cycle Training.

Lancashire county council cycle trainers presented a summary of their work.

Robin Fields of the CTC remarked that the number of trainees (double figures only) reaching level 3 Bikeability proficiency, i.e. road user competence, was 'miniscule' for a county the size of Lancashire and that other authorities did it much better. Lancashire clearly needs to invest more resources, especially as Cycling England is keen on cycle training. Moreover, Preston is bidding for CDT status in phase 2.

Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minorities are hugely under-represented in the cycling population.

Mark Sandamas's study of the Asian communities in east Lancashire summarised some of the barriers, including the following: cycling was perceived as uncool and unfashionable, nobody else in their community cycled, and bikes were for the poor.

There was little encouragement for concerned cyclists in his report. A few

young Asian males did mountain biking but didn't really consider it as cycling, while young Asian females hardly cycled at all for a variety of cultural reasons.

While there was generally no desire to own, clean and store a bike, a few youths did express a desire to go for a ride. Perhaps cheap or free hire bikes à la Paris might be a way forward.

Lancashire's Cycle Strategy

Dynamo had responded to the cycling officer's request for comments on the county's new 5-year cycle strategy, by criticising its annual, county-wide targets of 2 contra flows and 4kms of cycle lane, as unambitious. The cycling officer replied that he thought they were reasonable countywide targets.

Critique of the CDT process

Dynamo had been asked by other cycle reps' on the committee to critique the Lancaster CDT process, in order that Preston might learn from our experience. The main thrust was, that despite much hard work from a variety of people and organisations, the process was hampered by the lack of support and commitment to making motoring more difficult and cycling more attractive by the highway authority i.e. Lancashire County Council. This did not go down well with the new chairman who gagged Dynamo's rep while in mid-rant.

The new chair, who is appointed by the county, owns a bike but rarely rides it. He is very anti-20mph zones and does not think new cycle infrastructure will promote cycling. Mmm. One can't help wondering whether these Cycle Liaison Meetings are a privet leaf to hide the naked road building ambitions of Lancashire County Council.

Editor

Lancaster's official CDT website:
www.celebratingcycling.org

A PERSONAL TRANSPORT VISION

The main transport problem this district confronts is the current difficulty of moving around by cycle. As you probably know, in some parts of Europe with a population size and density roughly equivalent to the Lancaster and Morecambe District, around one-half of all journeys are made by cycle.

To provide just a couple of examples, twenty years ago the city of Groningen, in the north of the Netherlands, was experiencing levels of traffic congestion as bad as anywhere in Europe. Today, city centre roads and car parking are gone, the city's central square has been restored to a place for people, and over one-half of all journeys are made by cycle. In the Danish capital of Copenhagen around one-third of all journeys are currently made by cycle. The city's vision is to dramatically increase this level of cycling, and the authorities continue to find new ways of giving cycle traffic priority over motorised vehicles. Like Groningen, a generation ago life in Copenhagen was very different. It was only a pro-cycling vision which has helped to make both Groningen and Copenhagen two of the most liveable, and economically vibrant, cities in the world.

Some points to note:

- climate - places such as Groningen and Copenhagen are no drier than Morecambe;
- topography - the whole of Morecambe is as flat as either of these cities, as are the main routes between Morecambe and Lancaster, Carnforth and Morecambe, along the Lune Valley, between Lancaster and Lancaster University, and along the main north-south route through the district, the A6;
- changing priorities - high levels of cycling are today routine across northern European countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany, and this is *before* we take into account the urgent need to

change the way we move around in light of catastrophic climate change, dwindling oil supplies, and the obesity epidemic. As someone with professional knowledge, concern and interest in thinking about how we'll move around in the future, it seems obvious that we should now be planning for cycling to account for *at least* 50% of all journeys.

Obviously, then, looking at the Lancaster and Morecambe District today, we have some way to go! Today, cycling is almost completely disregarded as an important, ordinary mode of moving around. This district has the status (and attached money) of 'Cycling Demonstration Town'. Consequently, there are some efforts currently being made to increase levels of cycling here. But, given what needs to be done, what is being done is far, far too little.

To ensure cycling plays a key role in this district's future, and thus helps reshape our district in a sustainable, viable way, I would suggest the following needs to happen.

- cycling must be allocated a much greater proportion of the transport budget;
- much more space for cycling must be provided on the district's roads - for example, wide, continuous cycle routes along main arterial roads. This means taking space away from motorised traffic, in ways which slow that traffic down (via, for example, the removal of central lines on all roads);
- a maximum, enforced, speed limit of 20 mph across the district's urban and suburban roads;
- cycle contraflows as the norm rather than the exception;
- cycling having priority over the movement of motorised vehicles, so - for example - cycle routes are made continuous, with motorised vehicles always giving way to cyclists, and selective road closures open up safe routes to cycling whilst making journeys by unsustainable modes less attractive;

- changes to the cost structure of motoring, so that variable costs become an ever greater proportion of total costs. This means increasing the costs of car parking.

All the above are done in countries which take cycling as a mode of transport seriously, and they can be done here. Moreover, many analysts would argue that we have little choice, and certainly, if we have a vision of our district as a sustainable, safe, enjoyable and convivial place in which to live, work and play, then we certainly do have no choice.

Dave Horton

This vision was originally written in response to a request for ideas from Lancaster's official Transport Vision Board, who were paid a lot of money to produce a vision that came up with such bright ideas that included running buses on cycle paths.
Ed'



It's impossible to have too much of a good thing!

DYNAMO INTERVIEWS A BIKE-IT MECHANIC

The Sustrans-sponsored Bike-It scheme, which together with Pedal Power trains children and adults to cycle safely, has been a very successful part of the CDT initiative. Indeed, Cycling England is keen for Lancaster to develop cycle training should we receive further funding for CDT phase 2.

While Kathy Bashford is largely responsible for delivering the Bike-It training, bicycle mechanic Colin Stones provides lots of support services. Dynamo caught up with the busy spanner-man to find out more about his work.

- Safety checks are an important part of the job.

- What, you mean servicing?

- No, I don't like the word servicing because it suggests what happens at garages, where customers drop the car off, service items are replaced, and they pick it up when it's ready and are none the wiser about what's happened. I like to show the kids what needs to be done, and how to do it.

- Where do you do these checks?

- Mainly at local primary, junior and secondary schools, but also at Lancaster University for students and staff.

- How long do they take?

- Well it depends on the condition they are in. I once did 84 in a day at a school in Heysham.

- And what percentage need attention?

- About 50% are roadworthy, 45% need routine tightening and adjustments, while 5% are real death traps – brake cables down to a single strand, that sort of liability. BMXes are vulnerable to this because the giro braking system is difficult to repair. In fact, you can usually spot the keen BMXers by the grooves in the soles of their trainers that get jammed onto the back tyre as a replacement braking system. But I don't do shoe repairs.

- So you're kept pretty busy.

- Yes, I suspect that when some kids hear that free bike checks are coming to school then some skip-dredging goes on, judging by the state of some of the bikes which are basically unrideable rust poles.

- Full marks for showing recycling initiative, though.

- My general maintenance talks are aimed more at secondary and higher level, where I usually pick on a victim-bike and give a practical hands-on session, with time for question and answer afterwards.

- Is there a good response?

- Yes, the questions range from the novice – 'What's the best colour for a bike?', to the techno, 'What's the torque required to safely secure a bottom bracket?' – who may be trying to catch you out in front of his – yes it's always lads – mates. But having said that, it's usually the boys who want to go beyond routine maintenance. If you get a bright bunch they want to know about gear indexing, wheel truing and building.

- So some of them come with a basics in maintenance and building.?

- Yes, but most have no idea. These basic skills don't get passed on down through the family today. This knowledge seems to have missed a generation. The same generation that regards a bike as just another consumer item – one that gets stuck in the shed and forgotten about. Fashion items to be replaced – perhaps for the want of a few puffs of air – rather than maintained.

- I notice you've been billed as 'Dr. Bike' at the Maintenance Class for 7-11 year olds at the Dukes.

- Mm, Bike Dentist might be better. A toothbrush – preferably a used one – is what I use to demonstrate a water-free cleaning regime. It's really useful for cleaning chains and derailleurs. Then I use 12" by 2" strips of cloth to show them sprocket-flossing, great for cleaning between cogs and generally most components. Not to mention extracting glass and thorns from and tyres, and the image of rotten or decayed teeth gets the idea of worn cones across nicely.

- You've done an awful lot of maintenance and safety checks, do things ever go wrong?

- Mm. Once this keen boy racer had a problem with his derailleur hanger, which was well-bent and snagging his back wheel. After several gentle and ineffective attempts to straighten it I applied too much force and the arm snapped clean off. When he returned eagerly expecting to jump on and ride, I had to put a comforting hand on his shoulder and point out that at least now he wasn't in danger of trashing his back wheel any more.

- Let's end on a triumph, should we?
- Well there was this very young primary school girl who was dead keen to ride her two-wheeler, just like all her friends, but she was quickly losing interest as she kept falling off on the hard, schoolyard tarmac. The cause was fairly obvious: she was pedaling too slowly. So we onto the field at the back. I assured her that the grass was soft and told her to pedal for her life. Away she went, and the faster she went the less she wobbled, and the less she wobbled the more her confidence grew.
- So you also do some cycle training as well?
- Well, I suppose I muscle in now and again, but the job essentially is about encouraging kids to respect and take responsibility for the care of their bikes. Of course, that could put me out of a job one day.

Ed'

Colin does private repairs and safety checks. Mob. 0790 8782 027

OFF ROAD, OFF THE WALL SECTION

For those of you who missed Anna Redfearn's extremely well received 'Talk My Ride' at the Dynamo social in January, or if you want to relive it, here is the transcript. Hold on tight.

'This is my favourite ride, and I'd like to tell you about it.

It is a sort of free-ride, dirt-jumping-cum-northshore-circuit, in a secret location in Lancaster, and I love it!

Some of you may know where it is, but for those of you who don't. Well . . . sorry, I'm not going to be the one to tell you where it is, I don't want to end up like one of those bumps, if you know what I'm saying!

If you who have never had the pleasure of visiting or trying this type of cycling, I think it best that I try and clarify a few points. As I said, this is a sort of blend of dirt jump and north shore cycle track.

Dirt jumping is where a group of riders get together with bikes, a set of shovels, perhaps a pick-axe and some old carpets. They join forces in areas where the natural topography lends itself to lumps and bumps that feel good to ride over. And then they make them bigger.

I can't claim to be a construction expert here, but they set about digging and piling up banks of mud, carefully space apart steep hillock designs with names like '6 pack', rhythm sections and berms and then they get on their bikes and ride them.

The '6 packs' are a series of jumps that allow riders to shoot skywards, where some may temporarily part company with their machines to perform stylish airborne tricks – a more specialist area of riding I admit.

The rhythm sections are more my kind of thing, they're undulating humps and bumps artistically spaced to let your bike rise and fall in perfect synchronicity with your own heartbeat, it's like riding a wave and it feels fantastic. The berms as you imagine, are what they say they are....long curved banks that ideally let a bike glide horizontally at what can seem break-neck speed around them.

The added thrill, as if you need it, is that all of this takes place in between the trees, so the importance of choosing a good line and perhaps learning to redirect your bike in mid air is a handy skill to learn quite early on.

The beauty of this track for me though is the union of dirt jumps and north shore riding. Now the northshore sections are again built by the riders themselves. They recycle industrial waste, wood, old pallets and use fallen trees to construct ramps, walls, jumps, drop-offs, narrow sections and sometimes see-saws that can all be clattered over on top of a bike.

The natural features are used to make high and low challenges and technical areas that can be ridden by all ages and abilities.

The drop-offs are just that, heart in the mouth, trust in gravity, plant the rear wheel first moves that look like poetry when executed correctly. Watching skilled riders negotiate narrow beams, ride up a wall and send a bike flying through the air off a gap jump is spectacular and something to be seen. We don't all ride like that though, when it's not done like that it's not quite as poetic, but we all have to learn don't we?

This place is a new way to cycle, compact, concealed in the woods, on derelict sites or down densely wooded hillsides all over the country, air-borne cycling, this is riding on both horizontal and vertical planes and on anything in between. It translates from the natural to urban environment, skills honed in the woods equip the midnight free rider to silently tackle the steps, walls, ramps and street furniture of the towns. Most towns have these pockets of un-used copses and wastelands that can be converted into new parkscapes for bikes relatively cheaply.

And that's the best thing about this track is how it evolved from an old overgrown area of woodland where people dumped rubbish and motorcycles tore through on a Sunday morning. Old and young riders alike came together to construct it out of a passion for riding bikes in an alternative way, they built it without help and they maintain it – something that takes huge effort and motivation which is a genuinely positive activity for young people.

This spot is part of the cycle rebellion of our youth, they look at the urban and natural environment with new eyes, they can be cycle acrobats, athletes and performers, they can be silent, graceful and elegant – only when they're on their bikes I've noticed, when they're off it's another story. It takes skill and bravery to build and ride these tracks, these young people could be our future engineers and astronauts (some of those jumps are pretty high) and hopefully environmentalists, judging by the amount of litter some one needs to be!

Obviously I am speaking entirely as an observer, I wouldn't dream of riding like they do.....I'd break my neck. I have missed the boat or bike for this sort of riding, but I do admire and support what any rider tries here. It's great to watch, it's exciting and innovative and if you dare to try it and you're over 30 you feel like you are giving your own mortality a backie, it is great fun though and I can't recommend it highly enough.

Anna Redfearn

FILM REVIEW

'A boy, a girl and a bike', (shown as part of the 3rd Bike Film Festival at the Dukes)

Released in 1949, 'A boy, a girl and a bike', promotes many of the benefits of cycling that our society is perhaps belatedly waking up to.

Right from the off it anticipates the menace of the motor car that was evident even in the early, quieter days by showing how it can, and often does, bring out the worst behaviour in otherwise inoffensive folk. Waxford Wheelers are out on the Sunday run, enjoying the beauty of their surrounding moorlands and each other's convivial companionship, when the local toff motors up behind in his sporty Bentley. Hand on horn, he toadily drives through the Wheeler's pack sending them into the ditch. Naturally, he gets his comeuppance when his motor later overheats and the pack pedals past. Quite optimistically, the film frames the proselytizing power of cycling, for the toff is later converted to cycling through the his attraction for the loveliest lovely in the peleton.

Another pro cycling theme is its power to build and cohere communities. The Waxford townsfolk not only congregate for day-runs and competitive road racing, but for cycle-touring holidays under canvas, when they gather round the camp fire for the evening sing-song. It's a democratic, all inclusive activity, too – even the toff is

allowed to join in. Open to all age groups, as well - there is a couple with a young child on a tandem sidecar. Admittedly, those days of confidently cycling three or four abreast along country lanes, undeterred by the very occasional motor car, have been lost, possibly forever.

Health and fitness comes with cycling, too. Following his initial run out on a bike, the toff is wheezing and finally collapses, but he soon gets fit through riding. Indeed, he eventually wins the team road race for Waxford in front of a madly cheering local crowd who have turned out to support en masse. There is a total absence of fat people in the Wheelers, although one of the lovelies of the pack - played by a youthful Diana Dors - is carrying a bit of puppy fat. Of course, in 1949 food rationing was still in force so restrained diets were the norm. The health promotion theme is somewhat clouded because it was a period when nearly everybody smoked - including a large percentage of doctors. Although the Wheeler's club meetings were enveloped in a fug of tobacco smoke, and a quick fag was part of the pre-race warm up, ciggies were always extinguished before mounting one's bike.

While the film extols the cycling virtues of sociability, community cohesion, communing with nature, physical fitness and healthy competition, there is one blot on this otherwise wonderful world of post-world war II cycling: the local bike shop owner and his repair man. Not only do they run a book on the road racing - at a time when street betting was illegal - they corrupt local youth. By encouraging vulnerable schoolboys to gamble foolishly and fall into debt, the pair then blackmail them into stealing bikes so they can respray and then flog them on. Naturally, they are eventually rumbled trying to pass off possibly the only bike in the UK at the time with brake cables buried in the top tube, because this is a film where the just get their rewards and the wrongdoers either reform or get punished. As the film is clearly grounded in traditional socialist principles we might want to interpret the bike repair man as corrupted by capitalist greed.

Anyway, Ruth Kelly and the rest of New Labour plc should watch 'A boy, a girl and a bike', as a reminder of some of the principles that their party was founded on, and some of the damage the motorcar has wreaked on our island. And above all, a reminder to start investing serious money in turning drivers into wheelers.

Ed'

DYNAMO RIDES

Summer Friday Feasts

As the (hopefully) better weather beckons, why not join us on one or all of our forthcoming Friday Feasts? These are Friday evening rides, **starting at 6.30 p.m. from Lancaster Town Hall steps**, heading for a local pub or cafe. The rides are moderate in length, and you have the option to just have a drink, or to order food if you wish.

We are lucky to have a good selection of nice pubs around Lancaster, and we generally have a good ride with plenty of stimulating conversation and good ale for those who appreciate it. This summer I am planning to take in most of the old favourites, including The Stork at Condor Green and The Black Bull at Brookhouse, and I would also like to try the Hest Bank or the Canal Turn for a change.

You need to ensure that you have lights as we usually return in the dark, and a puncture repair kit and a pump are useful (vital?) items to have handy. The evening's destination is usually decided on the night, and will take into account weather conditions, wind direction and the opinions of those participating. So if you have a favourite local pub that you would like us to visit, please feel free to make a suggestion.

The next three Feast dates are given below. If you intend to come, it is recommended that you check with Claire on 01524 33146 on the day of the ride, as unforeseen circumstances may lead to rides being cancelled at short notice.

Our next Feasts dates are:

- Friday 9th May
- Friday 27th June
- Friday 1st August

I look forward to seeing some of you, and hope that we get some nice fine weather.

Claire Duplock

FOR INFORMATION

Party on the prom

Lancaster City Council is organising a first anniversary party to mark the opening of the Morecambe promenade to cycling. It's being held on **Sunday 11 May**, so get yourselves down there. More details can be found on the www.celebratingcycling.org website.

See the above website for summer cycle rides too.

Volunteer rides leaders required

Rachel Scott of the City Council is looking for volunteers for summer rides and Bike It events. Please contact her on 582392 if you can help.

New cycle route website

Dynamo has received notification of a new website which has over 150 cycle routes categorised by county. It includes a section for Lancashire with a number of routes and useful links. Each route contains GPS files, elevation profiles and maps with a photographic aerial view of the route. There is also a facility for users to upload their own routes in GPS format so the website owner is hoping it will become a useful resource for sharing cycle routes in England.

The site is free and is called GPS Cycle Routes (<http://www.gps-routes.co.uk>) and you can find the Lancashire page here: <http://www.gps-routes.co.uk/routes/home.nsf/county-cycling/Lancashire?editdocument>

Dynamo has not yet had an opportunity to use it yet, so if anyone has any comments please contact the website direct.

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£5.00 waged, £2.50 unwaged

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

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

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