



Cycle-Aid

THE DEDICATED ASSISTANCE SERVICE FOR CYCLISTS

Accident Advice • Reconstruction • Investigation • Appraisal

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IN THE FRAME – in your area

Newsletter April 06

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The Cycling Demonstration Town initiative is approaching the six month anniversary of its announcement, so April's edition of Cycle-Aid's e-news letter comments upon each area's completed and proposed plans and identifies some of the challenges that have been encountered.

Cycle-Aid is a wholly independent organisation.

Preaching to the converted?

Whether the function is an International conference, a local forum or the monthly meeting of a campaigning group, both speakers and audience are already convinced that an increase in cycling is essential. The benefits in terms of health, congestion and ultimately finance are already fully rehearsed among the faithful.

The keynote address to the Choosing Cycling Choosing Health conference at Nottingham University delivered by Cycling England's chief executive was unequivocal; if the quantum leap in cycling that is required is to occur the message must be received and accepted by the general and in particular the car-addicted population as a more than viable alternative to total car dependency.

Nowhere is this more vital than in the six Cycling Demonstration Towns. We have, or rather had, three years – now 30 months- to make a radical difference in these areas. Only when a sceptical Secretary of State for Transport can demonstrate to H M Treasury that there are financial rewards to be seen from a minimal investment are we likely to see the project widened and supported financially.

The planners, engineers, police, local authority cycling officers and campaign groups in the CDT's have precious little time to organize themselves and implement a raft of measures to sell the cycling idea.

Don't panic...just yet?

There's a danger that everyone is thinking 2008 as the deadline. Wrong. People won't suddenly all jump on their bikes in September 2008 in droves, just like they didn't form a queue around the Millennium Dome in its first week. It will take time to **sell** the improved facilities, **complete** the training, to **remove** the perceived risk. The target audience will only slowly adopt the idea, make plans and kit their children out with shiny Christmas and birthday bikes.

So we must not think October 2008, rather April 2007 – Eighteen months into the project and just a year hence. That's when the training in schools must be in full swing, cycle routes completed, the journey plans organised, the employers and primary care trusts geared up, the local partnerships in place.

This won't be helped if we cannot all pull together. Example: Lancashire County Council Road Safety Team gave a presentation to Lancaster's CDT Steering Group on 6th February stating that, in their opinion, the new National Training Standard **is not going to work.**

We must avoid having the various plans and schemes only coming on stream in 2008, with insufficient time remaining to capitalise and sell the principle to the prospective market. Such an outcome is not going to cut the mustard in Cabinet. There will have to be tangible results, on the ground, supported by data.

There's a year to build, a year to sell and summer 2008 to assess the results.

In the Demonstration Towns...

Cycle-Aid has attended and exhibited at Official Launches in Aylesbury and Darlington; between which was the Nottingham Conference. We also found time to send our founder director to York for the four day National Standard Instructors' course.

Darlington has hit the headlines for a variety of reasons. An impressive re-branding has seen the previous '*Town on the Move*' brand replaced with '*Local Motion*' which was launched in the market square on a brisk 4th April. The *Local Motion* theme includes a free membership organisation with cycling incentives; there is a massive potential here in a focal point which is something other CDT's could well consider adopting.

The Town's traffic Wardens are being equipped with bikes....maybe clearing the parked cars from the cycle lanes would be a good place to start. As an initial amnesty, we would like to see the Wardens equipped with adhesive tape with a tyre-tread design to affix to the bonnet/boot of the offending motors in the hope that a first humorous hint might have the necessary effect....

It's unfortunately the case that Darlington's high way engineers seem loathe to become involved in liaison with the cycling officers, campaign groups and cycling forum. In Yarm Road the pavements were widened but without the addition of any cycle-lane. Advanced stop lines and green/red boxes are conspicuous by their absence. There is still no signage to tell motorists that Darlington is a CDT.

As perception of danger is identified as a major obstacle to the uptake of cycling, surely such road marking and cycle-awareness strategies ought to be top of the pile?

There's serious controversy due to a senior local policeman advocating banning bikes from the recently car-free and pedestrianised town centre. Needless to say this individual's views were well aired in the local press. Given the criticism that some of the Tabloids are making of cyclists, this is particularly unwelcome in a CDT.

The problem seems to be the activities of a minority of delinquents who use cycles as an aid to their alleged criminality. So in comes the sledgehammer response, which affects the innocent majority and makes no attempt to address the root cause.

While the local Cycling Forum ponders how to address this issue, there's a further blow to the Demonstration Town scheme with the imminent departure for pastures new of the Cycling Officer, Oli Loughed, whose interview on the CDT initiative in Darlington was published in the Guardian in January and widely circulated.

After a well orchestrated and funded start we sincerely hope that Darlington's new brand will weather this particular storm.

Lancaster has now appointed Kathy Bashford as the *Bike It* schools officer. The dedicated site www.celebratingcycling.org.uk is great once you've found it (see Bottom Bracket). Events for the summer are starting to appear, opening on 18th June at the Salt Ayre complex. Lancaster has earmarked a proportion of (presumably CDT) funds to grants of £1500 to private initiatives to '*boost cycling in the District*'.

One idea Lancaster (and all the other CDT's) can have for free with our compliments is: **get some signs up ! On street lights, roundabouts, Council vehicles.** The Odense project in Denmark has proved that cycling is safer when there are more bikes....if the notion that **there will be bikes** is rammed home, the message may start to sink in.

Cycle use of the wide Morecambe promenade ought to be a 'no brainer', but as soon as this was aired the local paper started filling its correspondence pages with a letter from a local worthy who knew someone whose Aunt was said to have been inconvenienced by an altercation with a cyclist in the last half century.... and the local horse riders are saying if they can't use the beach, why should cyclists use the prom?

Good grief! We've local elections soon and a few electoral commitments on the Promenade issue wouldn't go amiss. All of Lancaster's Councillors have their e-mail addresses on the site www.Lancaster.gov.uk

Aylesbury had its official launch on 25th March, at which Cycle-Aid exhibited along with the Company of Cyclists. We decided to follow a standard routine with enquirers; about half seemed to know that Aylesbury had achieved something to do with cycling but couldn't be exact as to what. However, the results of a survey-*essential reading*- are available on www.bucksc.gov.uk - check out the replies to questions 13 & 14!

Jim McGurn's Company of Cyclists had a ready take up of their facilities all day, most of the time with a queue. Encouraging to see the teenagers (who are said to believe cycling to be seriously un-cool) having a go.

The council's circulating a booklet at quarterly intervals to 26000 households in the town to spread the word; this ought to be standard in all CDT's and any one that isn't yet doing so should think long and hard.

Exeter have had an initiative to come up with a caption and the result is awaited. There's also a photographic competition there too. Exeter's probably on a par with Lancaster in gaining column inches in the local press: 13 items this year to date. Good coverage of school cycle lane projects (essential as this is a major parental obstacle to their children cycling) and the part of Sustran's rangers in observing and maintaining the routes. Finally the link with Exeter's Primary care trust was covered at the end of March.

Either there's a dedicated PR person in Exeter/Devon councils or a sympathetic local editor. Makes a happy contrast with the negative stories appearing elsewhere.

We've been unable to find Exeter's equivalent of Dynamo or Bricycles; in other words the local campaigning group. Surely there must be someone out there? Please tell us who you are!

The link is from www.exeter.gov.uk to the cycling section of Devon CC's web pages. There's a useful combination of hard and soft measures and the appointment of a training (Bike It?) officer soon.

Derby has had misfortune visited upon it and particularly upon the enthusiastic cycling officer Bella who broke her wrists in a snowboarding accident (who say's cycling's dangerous?) and then was smitten with a viral infection as she returned to work. The Derby Cycling Group (www.derbycyclinggroup.org.uk) have been keeping the flame alive meantime along with the training and schools officer Andy Culshaw. There's the Five Parks Ride on June 25th and various meetings listed on their site.

Brighton's team are off to see the Transport Minister Derek Twigg MP on 20th April while Southern Water holds a sustainability conference in Hove Town Hall. There's a free bike maintenance and security marking session outside at the same time.

Unfortunately the press release announcing all this was posted 18th April- that's two days before. Unsurprisingly *The Argus* hadn't featured it...nor had it filtered into the latest Bricycles newsletter.

On the upside, in March that paper reported an absence of bike racks at the Jubilee Library; by April there were 42 of them, so clearly someone had sat up and taken notice.

The mission statement remains posted on the site (www.brighton-hove.gov.uk) providing route planning courtesy of Bricycles, mapping, and the creation of a flagship centre of training. The survey of 10,000 souls for the purpose of personal travel planning is presumably proceeding, although the data that this reveals will need prompt analysis so that the requirements that are identified can be implemented while memories remain fresh!

Incentives are promised that will encourage take up of more sustainable transport modes.

An Invitation from Cycle-Aid.

Our legal teams in each of the towns will incentivise their services.

If you have or know of a business involved in cycling, cycle training or health and fitness the Cycle-Aid legal team will offer a voucher/credit note redeemable in such a local concern to any person utilising the legal services, for example mortgaging or house purchase.

Our lawyers aren't just involved in traffic incidents; there are specialists available to deal with the nicer things too! So we are keen to enter into partnerships that will help to carry the message in any of the Demonstration Towns

Cycle-Aid is a service for cyclists. We formed in 1988 combining our enthusiasm for cycling with formidable legal and forensic abilities. We were at the forefront of the telephone help line concept providing immediate advice on any cycling-related legal issue. This filled a gap in the services available to cyclists, the majority of whom (98%) had no direct contact with any form of help after an altercation on the road, unlike motorists who are only a call away from their insurers and brokers.

In the intervening 17 years our service has been used by thousands of cyclists who have needed advice and assistance; we have become the Cyclist's emergency service, which is reflected in our free phone – 0808 100 9995.

We post an information pack out to every caller the same day and once the questionnaire is returned we write a free appraisal letter setting out the relevant law and procedure to the individual incident. Almost all our callers elect to retain a Cycle-Aid panel solicitor to act for them on a fully funded no win no fee basis with a guarantee to deduct nothing from the damages award, so ensuring the claimant receives their award in full. We frequently adopt cases from other law firms that are unable to progress them.

We are committed to the training of cyclists from the earliest age, believing that the skills so acquired equip these road users of tomorrow to become proficient in whatever mode of transport they eventually use. We are convinced that cyclists make better drivers.

It's an unhappy fact that accidents involving cyclists will not be eradicated, so we aim to make the ensuing process as transparent as possible by employing a traditional style of legal service unlike the 'claims factory' method where an individual approach is often lost.

Compensation is almost always once and for all, so it is vitally important that the correct choice of representation is made at the outset.

Bottom Bracket

It's illuminating to check out the ease of finding training in each of the Demonstration towns. Top of the pile is Aylesbury, (www.Buckscc.gov.uk) with a very simple link to a full list of all qualified instructors including phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

Darlington's site(www.darlington.gov.uk) has an on-line form with which to register and a telephone number accessible straight from a search on the home page.

Although Lancaster has a dedicated website, www.celebratingcycling.gov.uk you would not find this from the City Council's home page; key words such as 'cycle training' diverting the inquirer to Lancashire County Council road safety. Assuming the determined will find the correct site, a training introduction for 'ride leaders' on the 29th April is mentioned, but without specifics such as location. There's a phone number for a local firm, Pedal Power that is said to provide training to the new National Standard. Inconveniently, the County Council has told the CDT steering group that the new National Standard won't work.....oops!

Exeter City Council site takes the interested to waste disposal and recycling when 'cycle training' is keyed into the search facility! Devon County Council's page (www.devon.gov.uk) on cycle training has comprehensive downloads for potential instructors (and offers a one day course to become an Instructor) but pre-dates the National Standard.

Brighton has cycle proficiency training on its own site; a link to www.bikeforlife.org.uk reveals access to the National standard.

We know that Derby's flagship project is cycle training in the City's schools, headed by the hyper-enthusiastic Andy Culshaw, of the road safety and travelwise team in charge of school travel plans. Happily, Andy's point of contact appears directly from a search on the home page www.derby.gov.uk

The point that emerges is that there is varied regional support for and take up of the new National Standard, which is unfortunate when the rationale behind it is considered. A one day course is insufficient to bring a competent cyclist up to the required Instructor standard. There is a recognised reluctance by parents to permit children to cycle on the roads; this can be addressed by explaining the comprehensive nature of the new standard and the levels of expertise required in order to teach it. But unless there is a widespread take-up the advantages and impetus that the new training promised will be lost.

