

Cycle and Road Safety Campaigning in North Herts

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Welcome

This newsletter isn't about cycle sport. Competitive cycling, in its many different guises, is an exciting spectacle that draws huge crowds even in these supposedly disinterested islands. However we recognize that the people reading this will probably not be able to name a single member of the British Cycling team that has just swept the boards at the World Track cycling championships in Manchester.

This newsletter is about how we can make it safer, easier and more attractive for ordinary folk to cycle to work, or to school, or the shops, or just for a bit of fun. Not because we want to give them something frivolous to do, or because we want to "force drivers off the road" but because it could save their lives, save the NHS a lot of money, save our towns, countryside and economy from death by traffic suffocation, and make the world a cleaner, safer, nicer place to live in.

This time around we are going to make an exception. With the world's greatest festival of sport soon to open in Beijing, on current performance we are confidently looking forward to a bucket load of British medals coming home from the Olympic velodrome.

So, for one issue, please forgive a little indulgence. Let's celebrate a sport that is very popular in Britain (in spite of what people might have you believe), and which we are very good

at. Let us celebrate those role models for our children, and perhaps question where our future champions will come from if we keep driving them off the roads.

To wet your appetite, here is one of our brightest stars - she is young, intelligent, good looking, devastatingly fast and she is a "local girl done good".

Let me introduce Victoria Pendleton, a Stotfold lass. Sportswoman of the year 2007; winner of 2 gold medals and one silver at this year's World Championships.



But before we get to the fun stuff, there is the nitty gritty of what is happening in North Herts.

Feel free to contact the editor with any questions that you might have.

"When I see an adult on a bicycle, I do not despair for the future of the human race."

HG Wells

Urban Transport Plans

North Herts Highway Partnership are currently considering Urban Transport Plans for Hitchin and Baldock.

Might we suggest that the first place to look for inspiration is the 1999 Hitchin Transport Plan. Well researched, excellent recommendations - why hasn't any of it been implemented?

There is absolutely no point in spending time and resources drawing up plans and strategies unless those are followed through and implemented - not in a partisan way, with officers promoting their own, often car centered, agendas, but in a way that redresses the inequality and injustice that has resulted from our spiralling car dependence.

The two most popular measures identified in the 1998 Hitchin Transport Plan were:

- , Pedestrianise the High St and Market Place (partially implemented)
- b Creation of cycle network (NOT STARTED)

We don't need a new plan, we need to implement the old one.

To read our comments in full visit our website (www.stevenagectc.org.uk) and click on the campaigning tab)

£1 million of free money. Going... going...

The standard answer given by officers to requests for investment in improvements for cycling is that there is no money, or that it is being spent *somewhere else*, leaving nothing for your particular problem.

Well it has come to our attention that almost £1 million worth of developer contributions (\$106 funds) are sitting on the table, gathering dust, and much of that will have to be handed back to the developers shortly because it has not been used.

Of that money, three quarters is specifically allocated to developing the cycle route network or to other sustainable transport schemes. These are projects that are consistently starved of funds in the normal LTP bid process; it is absolutely criminal that these funds have not been used effectively and constructively.

We are now faced with the likelihood that, if spent at all, the results are likely to be rushed through, poorly thought out and without adequate consultation.

This is a very disappointing and shameful waste of available resources.

Connect2 and the Royston Cycle Network

After all of the fanfare of Sustrans' success in the Big Lottery vote it has gone a little quiet in Royston. We have seen, and commented on, some proposals for an embryonic cycle network.

These are promising, but we would be lying if we said that we did not have concerns. The very limited "cycle facilities" in Royston to date range from the downright dangerous (in Kneesworth St, approaching the station), to the bizarre (the cycle track to nowhere, around Fairfield Way). Nowhere is there anything that we would consider an asset to cyclists.

We cannot over-emphasise the need to treat the problem, not the symptoms, and to apply holistic solutions (eg 20 mph limits, dealing with one way streets and other barriers to cycling) not to marginalize cycling and put cyclists on the footway.

Read our comments in full on our website (www.stevenagectc.org.uk) and click on the campaigning tab) for updates.

Hierarchy of solutions DfT TA 91/05

b	Traffic Reduction	Consider first
b	Speed reduction	
b	Junctions and Traffic Management	
b	Carriageway Redistribution	Consider last
b	Off road provision away from highways	
b	Roadside pavement conversions	

Hitchin Station

Ten years ago Hitchin Station forecourt was dug up. We were consulted through Hitchin Vision and were highly critical of the proposals. Unfortunately we were ignored.



Now, a decade on, we have seen preliminary proposals for doing it all again. I get a little wry satisfaction from seeing that the proposals for reorganizing the bus and taxi circulations are as we had suggested 10 years ago. It is a shame that we were not listened to at the time, it would have saved an awful lot of expense now.

More disturbingly the designers have once again made the knee jerk decision to put cyclists on the pavement - ignoring the danger and inconvenience that this creates at the entrance

to the forecourt, and without allowing anything like enough space to allow cyclists and pedestrians to share without conflict.

Once again, designers have gone straight for the very poorest provision and ignored basic guidelines, without ever considering more appropriate alternatives.

Let us be clear, roadside pavement conversions are rarely **ever** appropriate or beneficial in an urban environment. They are usually only appropriate alongside busy inter-urban roads with few side roads and few pedestrians.



Pavement conversions benefit nobody in an urban environment

Bad though the station forecourt is, there are much more pressing problems associated with Hitchin Station than what goes on in the forecourt. The surrounding roads are unnecessarily hostile for walking and cycling and the A505 bridge is awful. What is really needed is some constructive progress on the cycle route network and some imaginative initiatives to reduce impatience and aggression on Hitchin's busier streets.

Transport Fundamental Services Review Workshop

We attended a workshop at NHDC Council offices, focused on Road Safety, Car Parking, Streetscapes, Travel Planning and the Environmental impact from transport. It was a busy and productive day, and we had a lot to say. There is no room to summarise it here, but you can read all about it on the Campaigns page of our website www.stevenagectc.org.uk. Get yourself comfy first, there are 24 pages !

How to Cater for Cycling on British Roads

Designing infrastructure for cyclists is really very easy. Unfortunately many designers regard it as an incomprehensible black art and resort to copying inappropriate details out of a manual, filling it with hazards and barriers, with no regard to convenience or even practicality of use.

Like we said, it is actually very easy. Unless they are forced to do otherwise by artificial barriers or intimidation from traffic, a person on a bike behaves in exactly the same way as they would in any other vehicle. What a cyclist is **NOT** is a wheeled pedestrian.

All a designer has to do is follow some simple rules, as follows:

- b In the vast majority of urban situations, the most appropriate place to accommodate cyclists is in the road. If you need to physically segregate cyclists from other traffic it is an admission of failure to make that road safe and civilized - and that is to the detriment of all road users.
- b Make the road safe and calm and you will never need to provide "cycling infrastructure".
- b A bicycle is the same as any other wheeled vehicle. It has all the same needs, it is just less demanding on space. **To design for cycling a foolproof rule of thumb is to design that facility for car traffic and then halve all dimensions.** That will produce perfect infrastructure every time.
- b Audit your design by imagining that you are in a half sized car and drive down it. Anything that you would regard as a hazard, or nonsense, or obstruction, or just plain discriminatory and unreasonable when driving your half sized car will be just as unreasonable to a cyclist.
- b The purpose of building "cycle facilities" is to encourage people to cycle, and thereby realize all of the many direct and indirect benefits, to the individual and to society, that higher cycle use brings. Don't put people off; it must be direct, convenient, safe, cohesive and attractive. Any old rubbish won't do.

Getting Started – riding with children

This is the time of year when people feel most inspired to dust off their old bike. A bit of sunshine, and a picnic are the perfect ingredients for a family outing - who needs more ?

If you haven't been on a bike for 20 years then the best thing that you can do is get some proper cycle training. It will save tears and give you greater confidence, both in your own abilities and those of your children. Find a local qualified trainer at:

<http://www.ctc.org.uk/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=4748>

When marshalling children, ride slightly behind and outside them. Give them lots of encouragement and try not to criticize. Look out for hazards ahead and draw their attention to them so



D Young/
Sustrans



CTC guide to family cycling

that your children learn to recognize those hazards.

Above all have **FUN**, because that is what it is all about.

Read all about it in the CTC guide to family cycling available by calling 01795 414824.

Easy Riding top tips – saddle position

Getting your saddle height right makes a huge difference to how hard cycling feels and how comfortable it feels. Most beginners set the saddle far too low and then struggle.

The saddle should be **level**. Sit with your **HEELS** on the pedals while steadying yourself against a wall and try backpedaling. Your leg should just straighten without having to rock your hips from side to side. If you have to rock, your saddle is too high, if your legs don't straighten it is too low.

New cyclists may find this a little unnerving at first because you cannot put both feet down while sitting in the saddle. It only takes a little practice to learn to slide forwards off the saddle to put your foot down and your knees will thank you for having your saddle height right.

Considerate driving – cyclists' road position

Good road positioning is key to staying safe in the saddle. A cyclist who rides too close to the kerb is out of the drivers' field of attention and at risk.

On a clear road you should ideally ride around 1m from the kerb. Roads are seldom clear though and when approaching hazards, obstacles, busy side roads etc or when a reckless attempt to overtake by following traffic would put you in danger, a prudent cyclist will move to the center of the lane.

People do not do it to obstruct or antagonize you, they do it for their safety. Respect that. If a cyclist moves to occupy the center of the lane there is a hazard ahead, he is about to turn right, or he is feeling intimidated by your behaviour. Hang back, give him space, allow him to negotiate the hazard and take your chance to pass when you can do so without putting the cyclist at risk.

Reasons to Cycle – because we love sport and we love our champions

In this Olympic year we are celebrating the world's greatest festival of sport. In Britain we love our sport and we love a winner. Picture the jubilant scenes in 2003 as England's all conquering Rugby team brought back the world

cup, or the cheers for Paula Radcliffe as she won the London Marathon.

As we look forward to Beijing, consider where Britain's medals will come from. The athletics stadium has seen many British medallists over the years and we are rightly proud of our record in track and field. On the water, our rowers and sailors reliably bring home medals, with our kayakers supplementing them. British swimmers, marksmen, gymnasts, equestrians and judoka are always in the running and bring home a sprinkling of medals between them.

But.... if Britain's track cycling team manage to repeat their performance in the World Championships held in Manchester this



March, cycle sport could bring home more medals for Britain than all other sports put together.

In total, Britain won **eleven medals, nine of them gold**, and topped the medal table. We won a further **nine golds** in the paralympic world championships. Despite the sometimes hostile attitudes towards cycling in this country, we are currently the world's best cyclists ! Not all of the world championship races will feature in the Olympics, but if we take the Olympic events only, British riders won seven gold medals and one silver. In Athens 2004 Britain only won 9 gold medals in total across all sports, so track cycling on its own might well overhaul the combined Athens total.

That is before we even consider other branches of cycle sport. Nicole Cooke, one of Britain's most successful sportswomen ever is a dead cert for the women's road race and Emma Pooley could make it a British 1-2. British men stand a good chance of medalling in the time trial, and in triathlon we have strong prospects for both men (former world champion Tim Don) and women (where we have a host of top class athletes). Off road, we can also hope to see medals from our mountain biking team.

Where does all this talent come from in a country where cycling is often discouraged, discriminated against and sneered at ?

Much of the credit must go to British Cycling's Elite performance coaches who have spotted the talent, sometimes from other sports, and developed them into a world beating team. But the athletes themselves have to come from somewhere.

Despite the rather negative impression that you might gain from some portions of the press, cycling is and always has been a popular sport (and leisure pastime) in Britain. Cycling is currently the fourth most popular physical

activity amongst British adults and is number one amongst school children. "Small" local cyclo sportives and triathlons attract many hundreds of competitors. Big ones rival the major marathons for popular participation. Over a million people lined the roads of London to watch the prologue of the Tour de France, and if you look out of my bedroom window on a sunny Sunday morning it looks like most of them come to North Hertfordshire to have a ride with their family or friends.

Cycling is huge in Britain. So why are we so determined to "keep cyclists down"? We should be celebrating a sport that we are good at as a nation, which is accessible to all regardless of ability, and which addresses a wide spectrum of our most pressing social and environmental problems.

Before signing off, spare a thought for the lost and wasted talent - athletes who have been killed or injured while cycling on Britain's roads, and people who could have been champions but were never allowed by their parents to ride a bike because the roads seem too dangerous. Cycling is an exiting and successful sport and an efficient method of transport, it deserves society's support.



St Albans girl Paula Craig was an age group international triathlete before she was run down and left paralysed. She continues to compete as a wheelchair athlete and is an inspiration to us all.

Facility of the Month - railings



Continuing our tour of the very worst of British design, we enjoyed this creative use of the "Cyclists Dismount" sign... a useful warning to unwary cyclists who might otherwise try to vault the railings while still in the saddle!

This picture collects just about all everything that you should not do on a "cycle facility" neatly in a single location. Don't

put cyclists on the pavement, don't put railings and barriers in their path, and if you have to tell them to dismount then you have failed at the most fundamental level to provide a facility appropriate to the need.

<http://warringtoncyclingcampaign.co.uk/facility-of-the-month>

Good Examples - contraflows

One way streets are the bane of a cyclist's life. They encourage higher speeds, aggressive driving and make cyclists travel further and suffer more traffic exposure.

One way streets are a very negative street feature and we would like to see them all revert to two way working. If that is too radical a step for local authorities then two way cycling should be allowed.

In low speed streets there is no need to provide any segregation. All that is needed is to make clear to drivers that the cyclists' actions are legal and legitimate, otherwise some people may take it upon themselves to "teach cyclists a lesson".

On busier streets a contraflow lane or physical separation may be needed, but if you get to the latter then it is probably better to go the whole way and restore 2 way traffic.



Contacting us

You can email the editor with any queries or comments, or help with any cycling related issues at alasdair_massie@LineOne.net

Visit the CTC local group website at: www.stevenagectc.org.uk

About us

The CTC is Britain's largest cycling organisation with 70,000 members. Formed in 1878 we have actively campaigned for better, safer roads, locally and nationally since our inception. We have a large and active section for Stevenage and North Herts.

Hitchin Safer Cycling is a local campaign group, started last year, that developed out of Hitchin Vision.

I am the local "Right to Ride" Representative for North Herts, dealing with campaigning issues, and a civil engineer by profession. And yes, I have a car.