

## Cycle and Road Safety Campaigning in North Herts

[www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk) [www.northhertsctc.org.uk](http://www.northhertsctc.org.uk) [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

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### Welcome

What a summer. Possibly not the sort of weather that inspires first timers or "born again" cycle commuters. Those of us who cycle for transport as a matter of course know that in fact cool, grey weather is ideal for cycling to work in.

You could not ask for better inspiration than that provided by the Great Britain Olympic and Paralympic teams. What a display. We were expecting great things from this team on the road and in the velodrome, but they have excelled themselves. This year's cycling team brought home more medals on their own than the entire British team has done in 10 out of the last 12



Local golden girl Victoria Pendleton with fellow gold medallist Chris Hoy and silver medallist Jason Kenny

Olympics.

What a result, what a team, what fantastic role models for our children.

***"I'm doing all that I can to encourage mass participation - it's topical, addressing issues of pollution, health, fuel and finances.***

***I'd love to cycling on the national curriculum. Swimming is, so why shouldn't cycling be? We could teach kids how to ride safely and the whole nation could benefit"***

David Brailsford, Olympic Cycling Team coach, interviewed in the Metro 18 September 2008

What do those children have to look forward to if they try to emulate the example set by their newfound heroes and heroines?

There the picture suddenly gets a lot less rosy. For the second time in ten years Hitchin Station Forecourt has been dug up, for the second time in 10 years we have lobbied furiously to prevent people who cycle to the station being marginalized, inconvenienced and put at risk, and for the second time in 10 years we have been ignored.

The people of Hitchin said 10 years ago that, after pedestrianising the market square, what they really, really wanted, was a good cycle route network.

Did they get it? Not at all. 10 years on there is **NOTHING** to show for it. And what of the 1999 NHDC Cycle network plan? **NOTHING**. Even where substantial sums of money have been set aside for investment in the cycle network through developer contributions, these have not been spent.

It is a disgrace. The people of North Herts deserve better.

In surveys, ordinary people consistently show concern over rising traffic levels and support for improvements for cycling / walking. So why isn't it happening?

It is hard to draw any conclusion other than that there is deep rooted, institutionalised discrimination at work against cycling. Attitudes towards cycling are often deeply entrenched, founded on nothing better than the feeling that somebody who rides a bike is somehow "different" and less deserving than "other" folk. We need to change those attitudes and to weed out those people who put their own prejudices in the way of safer, fairer roads.

## £1 million going... going...

Last issue we reported on nearly £1 million of developers' contributions scandalously gathering dust instead of being invested in the badly needed infrastructure that they were assigned to. What is happening to this money? We don't know, do you?

Read more about it by clicking on the "Campaigning" tab on our website at [www.northhertsctc.org.uk](http://www.northhertsctc.org.uk)

## Connect2 and the Royston Cycle Network

It has been a quiet summer in Royston. After the excitement of Sustrans' immensely popular win in the £50 million big lottery vote, there has not been a great deal of progress.

Proposals for the underpass itself look good, but the access is not so good. If the surfacing to the current driveway were repaired it would be ideal for all users. Like a quiet country lane with wide verges, there is plenty of room for people to walk and cycle, and for allotment holders to park if they need to, without anybody getting in anyone else's way. There is no need for a "segregated" facility.

The wider cycle network is a matter of concern to us. The quality of existing "cycling infrastructure" in Royston is dangerously poor, particularly near the Station, on the one and only crossing point for the railway.

It is vital that any new scheme addresses these dangers. Unless this pivotal road is made safe the people of Royston will never feel comfortable making that switch to bikes. For a town where no point is more than 5 minutes from the center or the rail station, that would be tragic.

Any new "cycling infrastructure" must be built to best practice if it is to be an asset, not a



*The cycle lanes in North Road are dangerously narrow – less than half the recommended width, exacerbated by traffic islands that push vehicles into the cycle lanes. These are all predictable and unnecessary hazards*

deterrent.

Unfortunately we have seen very little "best practice" in Hertfordshire and an awful lot of poor quality, inappropriate pavement conversions. These are invariably slow, to use and do not have a good safety record. They create conflict points every time they join and leave the road. Typically this is the point where child cyclists are most likely to be killed or injured. On top of this, anybody who continues to use the road when there is a very visible cycle path next to it is likely to suffer harassment, abuse, and even violent aggression. This is why pavement conversion is the measure of last resort in the hierarchy.

Pavement conversions are not an asset in most urban settings and will not be welcomed.

In a town like Royston we should be able to achieve dramatic increases in cycling (and consequent reductions in traffic) in the town by the use of well targeted physical interventions, and "Smart Measures" - travel planning, marketing, training etc.

If you would like to read more about the Royston network clicking on the "Campaigning" tab on our website at [www.northhertsctc.org.uk](http://www.northhertsctc.org.uk).

## Hitchin Station

This summer saw a repeat of the disgraceful treatment of customers who cycle to the station, that was experienced 10 years ago.

Having botched the forecourt design and been forced to dig it all up once, you would have thought that the designers would pay a bit more attention the second time around. Especially since what they were trying to achieve this time (reversing the positions of the bus and taxi ranks), was something that we had recommended a decade ago.

Unfortunately not. In a stupefying display of arrogance, the designers have ignored not only our advice, but national guidance. The result is so obviously dangerous and unusable that it simply beggars belief.

Why is this allowed to happen? In 1999 there might conceivably have been an excuse - government guidance on cycling infrastructure was poor, and there was no precedent of a 10 year old failed scheme to act as a warning. But now there is **NO EXCUSE**. Current guidance is good, and time has demonstrated that we know exactly what we are talking about.

**Let us be clear, this is not just a little unsatisfactory, it is dangerous, and could result in the death or injury of a station user. It must be addressed.**

Just in case anybody is lingering under the misapprehension that this is just whingeing from an irrelevant minority, you will remember that



creating safe cycling conditions was the **SECOND** most popular measure in the 1998 Hitchin Transport Plan, polling twice as many votes as all but two other measures.

The forecourt is being designed around the needs of buses and taxis, and yet more people cycle to the station than either of these space hungry modes. Moreover cycling has the potential to replace **ALL** car trips to and from the station (all of Hitchin is within 5-10 minutes ride of the station). Buses and taxis will never be able to achieve that sort of modal switch.

Evidence from sustainable travel towns has shown that this isn't just wishful thinking on the part of cycle campaigners either - modal shift to cycling is an order of magnitude higher than to any other mode, as it is the only mode that gives that quick, cheap, door to door service that car travel promises (but does not always deliver).

### **Cycling Champions**

As a reminder, Cycling England are keen to identify local councilors at all levels who would be willing to push forward cycling initiatives in their local authorities. There is an online support group and you can, of course, rely on help from CTC local campaigners.

Could that champion be you? Do you have a cycling interest, even a casual one, and would like to learn more about it? Contact the editor or:

tony.russell@cyclengland.co.uk

### **People who live on busy roads have less friends**

It is obvious really. When you think of lively local communities they rarely feature heavy traffic running through their midst.

New research in Bristol found that people living on busy roads had less than one quarter the number of local friends compared to those living on similar streets with little traffic.

*"Traffic is like a mountain range, cutting you off"* said one resident. So if we want a vibrant, well connected, inclusive community we cannot afford to allow traffic to dominate our streets.

Read the full research or a summary at:

[www.livingstreets.org.uk/what\\_you\\_can\\_do/content/traffic.php](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/what_you_can_do/content/traffic.php)

### **Personal Travel Plans and Rail Commuters**

Many people drive, not because of any pressing need, but because it has never occurred to them to do otherwise.

One of the most successful initiatives coming out of the Sustainable Travel Towns has been the use of Personal Travel Planners. These are trained planners who sit down with ordinary people,

discuss their travel needs, and work out how to reduce their reliance on car travel.

Some people will find it easier to switch than others. There are some very obvious target groups, namely rail commuters and the school run.

In both cases, the majority of people are accessing local facilities and have little need to carry items that cannot easily be transported by bike.

North Herts is well served by rail stations and its towns are of modest size. Everybody living in a North Herts town can reach their nearest rail station by bike within 10-15 minutes and for most people it is less than 5 minutes.

So why do people drive?

The added influx of traffic heading for the rail station jams up the roads and the insatiable demand for parking blights residential streets nearby. We have seen demands for more car parking spaces at many local stations, a demand that drives ticket prices up for all rail users however they reach the station, add traffic to our roads, and sterilise town center land that could be used more productively

There is a better way.

With very few exceptions, rail commuters live within walking and cycling distance of their nearest station. All that is needed is a change in mindset.

The Department for Transport has published a white paper "Delivering a Sustainable Railway", proposing that rail stations adopt travel plans in partnership with the local authority. The CTC would like to hear from anyone interested in creating a station travel plan in their area.

Contact the editor or [chris.peck@ctc.org.uk](mailto:chris.peck@ctc.org.uk)

For more information on personal travel planning visit the Cycling England website "Smart Measures" portfolio, or visit [www.dothelocomotion.org.uk](http://www.dothelocomotion.org.uk)

### **Reasons to Cycle – Congestion**

Wasn't it nice being out on the roads in the school holidays? Whether you were on your bike or in your car you could **MOVE**. And isn't it always a shock to the system when schools go back and the roads suddenly become choked again?

The reduction in traffic is around 20%, equivalent to the typical traffic levels in the late 1980s / early 1990s.

If everybody who currently drives, left their car at home on just **ONE** day a week that would bring traffic levels down to "school holiday" levels.

Now wouldn't that be nice - for all of us?



### How to Cater for Cycling on British Roads

We have said it before and make no apology for repeating ourselves. The way to encourage people to cycle is **NOT** to put them on the pavement or on some other unsatisfactory "facility", it is to make the **ROADS** safe and inviting for cyclists.

That is the inclusive, joined up approach. A road network that caters well for cyclists, caters for everybody.

The Hierarchy of solutions (reproduced below) is enshrined in UK National guidance and the Hertfordshire Cycling policy. So why is it never applied? Why do designers so often go for the lowest quality, least appropriate measure (pavement conversion).

We need our engineers to read and apply the guidance, because at the moment they are starting in the wrong place and steaming off in the wrong direction, creating problems, not solutions.

<b>Hierarchy of solutions</b> DfT TA 91/05	
<b>b</b> Traffic Reduction	Consider first
<b>b</b> Speed reduction	
<b>b</b> Junctions and Traffic Management	
<b>b</b> Carriageway Redistribution	Consider last
<b>b</b> Off road provision away from highways	
<b>b</b> Roadside pavement conversions	

There are only two things that designers really need to remember:

- b** The place to cater for cycling is in the road, not on the pavement. Make the road safe for cycling, don't remove cyclists from the road.

- b** Cycle lanes and tracks are roads for cycling. Design them as any other road and then halve the dimensions to produce the ideal cycle facility.

### Getting Started – don't get caught out by nightfall

This time of year the evenings draw in very quickly and it is easy to get caught out. Bike lights used to be big, heavy and unreliable. Thankfully those days are gone and you can now buy cheap, compact LED lights that slip into a pocket. They are not all legally compliant but they will ensure that people can see you. Carry them for those trips where you aren't expecting to be out after dark, but might be caught out.

### Easy Riding – rubbing brakes

Rubbing brakes are usually caused by one of two things:

- L** The brake pivots need lubricating or..
- L** A spoke has broken causing the wheel to go out of line

Both are easy to fix so take your bike to your local shop and get it serviced.

### Gold Rush

What a year for British Cycle Sport. British athletes have shown themselves to be kings of the track and queens of the road.

This is a sport that we do very well at, despite the hostile environment in which athletes have to train.

It brings national prestige, but more importantly it provides inspiration for people to change their lives for the better.

We may not all be capable of winning Olympic medals, but we can become healthier, happier individuals, making fewer demands on the economy and on our fragile environment. We may not become champions of the world but we can be champions for ourselves and for those around us.

We need to support cycle sport and ordinary,



### Queens of the road

*Nicole Cooke and Emma Pooley who kicked off the Olympic medal haul with gold in the road race and silver in the time trial*

everyday cycling, by making Britain's roads safe and welcoming for all who get on a bike. After all, if we kill or frighten off promising athletes, or if their parents think it is too dangerous, where will the champions of tomorrow come from? Who will be the role models for our children's children?

A brief run down of Britain's cycling successes this year:

- 11 world championship medals, nine of them gold
- 9 more golds at the paralympic world cup
- Manx rider Mark Cavendish shows himself to be the hottest sprinter on the European circuit with two stage victories in the Giro D'Italia and an unprecedented four stage wins in the Tour de France.
- 14 Olympic medals, eight of them gold. Britain's best performing sport, we were kings of the track. Success in the velodrome pushed the UK up to fourth position in the overall medal table.
- 20 medals, 17 of them gold in the Beijing paralympics. Darren Kenny wins 4 golds, ensuring GB are second overall in the medal table.
- Nicole Cooke added to her Olympic Gold by winning the World Road race championships.
- British rider Steve Cummings comes second in the Tour of Britain, only 5 seconds behind winner Geoffroy Lequatre after a week of racing.
- Scotsman Mark Beaumont set a new world record by circumnavigating the globe on a bike in 195 days.

With Britain bathing in the reflected glory of our cycling team's success, you might think that our athletes would be cheered and feted as they ride Britain's streets. Not so, read what local golden girl Victoria Pendleton (from Stotfold) had to say about the way she is treated:

*Olympic champion cyclist Victoria Pendleton has revealed how road-hogs **put her life at risk and shout abuse at her** when she trains on Britain's streets. Pendleton said she found it 'depressing' that motorists would put her in danger at least once an hour.*

*"It is hard to deal with," she said. "I am trying to do my training - it is my job. In Manchester (where she trains) when it's fairly busy I can guarantee there will be one occasion per hour where **somebody takes a stupid risk and basically puts me in danger.***

*"You are not trying to hold them up. I don't go out with my bike at rush hour just to \*\*\*\* people off, I wait until it is over. People are very proud, **but I wish they were a little more considerate for our cyclists.***

*"It can get you down, **it can get quite depressing when***

***people are shouting abuse at you."***

*From the Manchester Evening news 28 August 2008*

Not exactly adulation then. You can see why so many ordinary people in Britain are turned off cycling. Some of us have thick skins and can shrug off the abuse, but for many people it is just aggravation that they do not need.

It really is a shameful reflection on British society.

### ***Wasted talent***

The dangers of cycling as an activity are grossly overstated. Mile for mile cyclists are more likely to be injured than car occupants, but this very simplistic comparison belies the fact that you would never try to replicate your driving habits on a bicycle.

People who cycle satisfy the same needs with shorter journeys, closer to home. If you cycle to get your shopping you use a local store, not one mile away with a big car park.

The upshot is that people who cycle live longer, healthier lives, with no greater risk of road death than people who only ever travel by car.

This does not mean however that the level of risk to which cyclists are exposed by their neighbours is acceptable. It is not. Without the presence of motor traffic, cycling presents little risk to anybody; it is wholly unreasonable for people to have to suffer disproportionate risk for the benefit of other road users.

Competitive athletes are considerably more exposed to danger than everyday utility cyclists. They cover far more mileage than the rest of us, and do not have the luxury of using those quiet back lanes and traffic free paths for training - training to go fast requires fast (and often busy) roads.

On the next page are four tragic stories of talented young men and women, whose lives have been shattered by the carelessness someone behind the wheel of a motor vehicle.

How much were their lives worth to the nation? Not very much judging by the penalties awarded against those responsible for putting them in a coffin or wheelchair.

It is a terrible waste. A waste of life, a waste of talent, a waste of opportunity, a waste of inspiration. We should place much greater value on the lives of our champions, potential future champions, and people who will probably never be champions but want to make a bit more of their lives.



*Emma Davies-Jones. Left with a broken back by a hit and run driver. Made an astonishing recovery to win a commonwealth bronze medal. The driver received just a 6 month ban and community service*



*Jason MacIntyre, British time trial champion 2006. Killed by a driver who turned across his path while training for Olympic selection. He leaves a widow and two young children. The driver was fined just £150.*



*Paula Craig. GB Age group triathlete from St Albans left paralysed after a hit and run. She continued competition as a wheelchair athlete*

*Commonwealth medalist David McCall was killed by a car while taking part in a race near Belfast this summer..*

*On his way to winning the "Big Woody" Ironman this August, James Parker had to recover from being hit by a car. Isn't Ironman hard enough already? Why do competitors have to put up with this added danger?*

## **Coffee Room Myths - "Cycling is slow"**

Ask Jeremy Clarkson about that.

People might disbelieve the "commuter challenges" where the cyclist invariably comes out top, but when Top Gear pitches Roger Hammond (not a champion cyclist) on a bike against Jeremy Clarkson in a power boat, James May in a car and Stig on the tube, and the cyclist still wins there can't really be any argument.

Cycling IS the quickest, cheapest, cleanest, healthiest, most efficient form of urban transport that there is. So why are we so reluctant to use it?



## **Good Examples**

Thankfully it is not all bad news and some British designers know precisely what to do to make urban cycling safer and more attractive.



This "cycle plug" allows cyclists to pass through an environmental road closure. The lane is wide, smooth and free of obstructions - just like it would be for

motor traffic.

Even young, inexperienced or nervous cyclists will use this sort of street without needing segregated lanes.

## **Contacting us**

You can email the editor with any queries or comments, or help with any cycling related issues at [aldasair\\_massie@LineOne.net](mailto:aldasair_massie@LineOne.net)

Visit the CTC local group website at: [www.northhertsctc.org.uk](http://www.northhertsctc.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.

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