



Cycle and Road Safety Campaigning in North Herts

www.ctc.org.uk www.northhertsctc.org.uk www.sustrans.org.uk

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Welcome





We hope that you all had a very Happy Christmas, and we hope that you are having a prosperous New Year despite all of the economic doom and gloom.


Did Santa bring you anything special this year ?


We asked for a few treats for the festive season. We weren't expecting to find them in our stockings on Christmas morning but we would like to see them become a reality over the coming months.


All of the suggestions are the sort of thing that can be addressed straight away, by local councilors, without needing major funding or changes in policy. Many are already in local plans. Let's make them a reality.


 Put together a delivery programme for the [North Herts Cycle Network](#), including how it will be funded.


 Create a gap through the road closure at the end of [Lytton Avenue](#), Letchworth (opposite the Council HQ) to allow cycles to enter and exit.


 [Cycle training](#) in all North Herts schools.


 Fill all of the pot holes in [Ashwell High Street](#) and [Ashwell Street](#), not to mention at the end of [Bygrave Road](#) in Baldock.

 Cut back the vegetation and improve maintenance of the [path](#) between Coachman's lane in Baldock and Works Road in Letchworth. Build a proper [entry](#) onto Works Rd.

 Upgrade all of the paths linking the [Burns Road estate](#) to the surrounding areas to shared use, to make this single entry estate more permeable to cyclists.

 Install cycle advanced stop lines at both ends of [Hermitage Road](#), Hitchin. Service the loop detectors so that they reliably detect cyclists.

 Build a segregated cycle path and crossing point from the A505 Little Chef roundabout to the [Litlington turning](#) west of Royston.

 Put together a plan to increase cycle parking at all of North Herts' stations, not once, but year on year. Say 10% annually (that is only 1 or 2 stands at the smaller stations, 5 or 6 at larger stations). Experience shows that the more you provide, the more people use them.

Feel free to contact the editor with any questions that you might have. If you would like to read our comments on any of the following issues visit our website (www.northhertsctc.org.uk) and click on the campaigning tab)

"An engineer designing from scratch could hardly concoct a better device to unclog modern roads - cheap, non-polluting, small and silent..."

Rick Smith, International Herald Tribune, May 2006

Maintenance

Road maintenance is always at the forefront of our minds at this time of year. The cold weather brings black ice, frost and rain break up the road surface.

Cyclists suffer more than other road users from poorly maintained roads and paths. Black ice is a very serious danger on a bike and yet council gritting policy directly discriminates against cycling routes. It may not be deliberate, but it is discrimination just the same.

Councils grit busy main roads but leave minor roads and paths untreated. Cyclists use minor roads to avoid the busy main roads. A dark, icy morning is most definitely NOT the time that you want to be forced to use the main road.

People cycle less in winter, but not by a great deal, the average for the winter months (November- February) when cycling is at its lowest is only 20% less than the average for the year as a whole.

Good, inclusive winter maintenance is needed if people are not to be put at risk and put off cycling.

CTC operate an on-line pothole reporting service. It produces an automatic "league table" of Highway Authorities. It will not make comfortable reading for Hertfordshire Highways - only Surrey and Hampshire have more reported faults and both those authorities have a better clear up rate.



www.fillthathole.org.uk

I have worked in "third world" countries with better maintained roads than some of my local streets. It is shameful. Any successful business will tell you that you have to look after your assets. You will pay for maintenance whether you do it or not.

Let's raise our game.

Hitchin Transport Plan

Public consultation for the new Hitchin Urban Transport Plan is fast approaching. Will this be a worthwhile exercise or will it just be a box ticked?

Ten years ago we drew up a very good transport plan but hardly any of it has been implemented. Why are we even considering a new plan rather

than drawing up an urgent implementation strategy for the 1998 plan ?

Just to remind everybody of what was in the 1998 Plan, the top two most popular measures were:

- ↑ Pedestrianise the High St and Market Place (partially implemented)
- 🚲 Creation of cycle network (NOT EVEN STARTED)

Improvements to Market Place have transformed the centre of Hitchin, so why stop there ? Why was it not expanded into Bancroft and Brand St ? Let's finish what was started.

Improving conditions for cycling are not only popular in Hitchin, it carries overwhelming popular support nationwide.

- 🚲 68% think that cyclists should be given **greater priority**
- 🚲 73% believe that cycling should be encouraged to ease **congestion**
- 🚲 79% believe that cycling should be encouraged to reduce **environmental impact**
- 🚲 87% believe that people should be encouraged to cycle to improve **health**

Office for National Statistics 2002 Omnibus

Let's see some positive action to encourage cycling in Hitchin and North Herts. The Plan has been on the table for a decade, let's see it built.

Of course it takes more than a few lines painted on the road to prise people away from the habits of a lifetime. We need to educate people as well. We need to educate school children (and adults) to ride safely, confidently and considerately by providing cycle training for all.

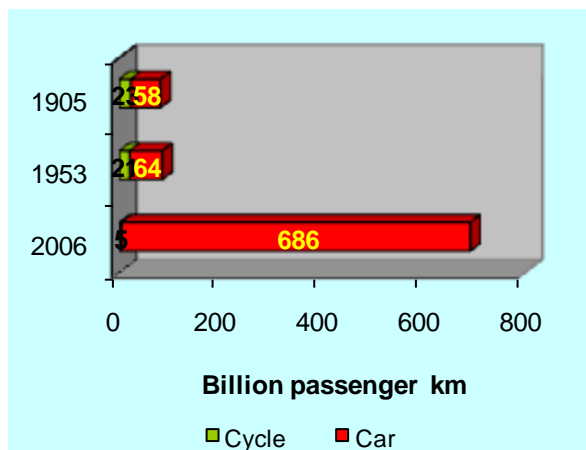
Personal travel planning.

Many people drive, not because they need to but because it has never occurred to them to do anything different. Personal travel planners look at peoples' travel needs and show them the range of alternatives. It addresses car dependency at the most basic level, not by lecturing people but by opening their eyes to the **choices** that are available to them.

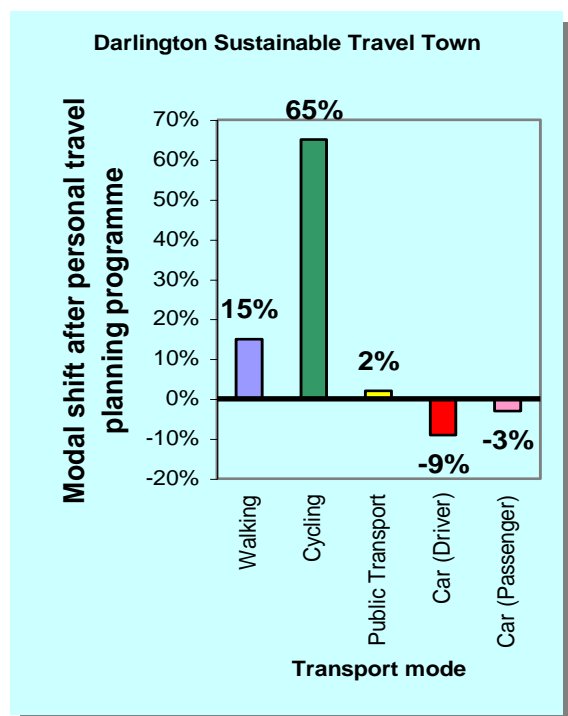
If anything, our need to travel has reduced over the past century as information technologies have improved. The explosion of car use in the second

half of the 20th century was not driven by need, but by the absence of any restraints.

We did not just stop travelling by one mode and switch to cars for the same journeys. In a car, distance is less of a controlling factor on journey times than traffic, so the result is that people are travelling ever further to avoid “the traffic”. It is a self defeating policy to which everybody contributes.



Personal travel planning is the most democratic way to address travel needs. It has been trialled in the “Sustainable Travel Towns” with great success.



20 mph limits

We need 20 mph limits in our residential streets. The current 30 mph urban speed limit was set in 1934 - a time when there was little traffic (fewer than 10% of the cars we have today) and less understanding about its effects. If we were to set an “evidence” based limit for urban areas it would be no more than 20 mph, where the risk of a fatality is less than 5%, not 50% as at 30 mph. In Europe, 30 kph (18 mph) is used. We should do the same.



Portsmouth, Oxford, Norwich, Leicester and Newcastle have all switched to 20 mph default limits. Let’s add Hitchin and the other North Herts towns to that list.

Road Building and Traffic Growth

One of the most disturbing clouds on the local horizon is of a Stevenage to Milton Keynes superhighway being put forward by stealth. A “Hitchin Bypass” linked to a “Luton bypass” would create another high capacity motorway link cutting through North Herts.

I am a civil engineer by profession so I know that a good road network is vital for a thriving economy. Bypass building can remove unwanted traffic from towns and villages, making them more pleasant, safer places to live.

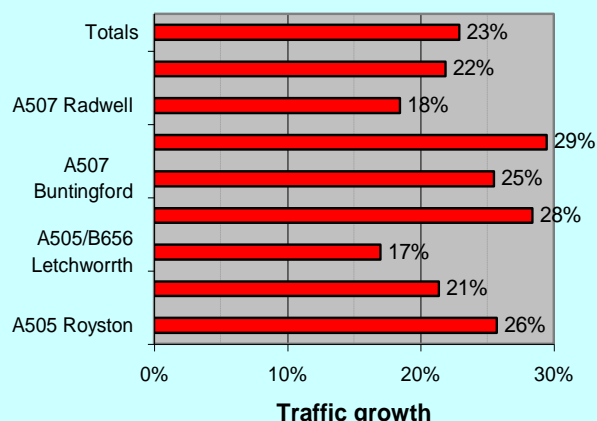
Unfortunately that only works if the new road does not fill up with traffic that would not be there if the new road had not been built.

Some people deny that road building fuels traffic growth, but the evidence is incontrovertible. We do not have to look further than the recently completed Baldock Bypass for evidence.

Traffic volumes in Baldock High Street have unsurprisingly fallen, although as someone who passes through Baldock every day, I’m not sure that I would actually have noticed. But if you look

Dealing with congestion by road building is like dealing with obesity by loosening your belt.

Traffic increases in the year following the second Baldock Bypass opening



at the TOTAL traffic flows on the main roads leading to and from Baldock, there has been a marked jump in volume - 20% to 30% in the first year after opening without any corresponding reductions on other roads. That is an awful lot of additional traffic.

These figures back up evidence from projects like the Newbury bypass. In the five years following construction there was an 80% increase in traffic south of the town. While traffic in the town fell initially, half of that fall has already disappeared.

Does it matter if the queues have gone and there is less traffic in the High Street ?

Well it will keep the loud voices of discontent quiet for a while. The problems that the bypass sought to address were acute and concentrated. People would sit in the queues, get angry and want something done about it.

The consequences on the other hand are dispersed and are not immediately obvious. Few people will associate the opening of the bypass with increasing congestion “downstream”, or the growth in traffic outside their doors. But that is precisely what happens.

That extra traffic does not simply materialize out of the ether, drive along the bypass, and evaporate again on the other size. It starts its journey in a residential street or country lane, and finishes it in a jam on the A1 or M25. Nobody likes other peoples’ traffic, even the most intransigently pro-motoring rights drivers, so it is in all our interests that we don’t inadvertently exacerbate traffic growth.

All of the roads that I use regularly have seen an increase in traffic since the opening of the bypass. The country lane that I live on has long since ceased to be “quiet” and we would never dream of allowing our children to cross the road to their friends house opposite without an adult escort. Their friends might as well live several

miles away for the ease with which they can see each other.

The queues on the A505 into Baldock acted as a deterrent to car-borne commuting. Now we have removed that deterrent without taking any other measures to contain traffic growth, have we made the world a better or a worse place ? The answer to that probably depends on whether you make a habit of driving past Baldock everyday at 8am.

Cycling Champions

North Herts needs a “Cycling Champion” to stand up for the interests of all who venture out on a bike. We cannot be there in council meetings, fulfilling that role. Can you ? You don’t have to be a “champion cyclist”, you just need an open mind and a capacity to listen.

We would love to hear from you if you are a councillor and you fit the description







How to Cater for Cycling on British Roads

Don’t forget that catering for cycling is not about putting cyclists on the pavement. A cycle friendly environment should not need segregated facilities, although there may be other reasons to provide them.

Always follow the “Hierarchy of Measures” defined in Manual for Streets, LTN 02/08 and TAL 91/05.

Hierarchy of solutions

Manual for Streets, LTN 02/08 and TAL 91/05

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



\$300 oil - Radical change is here: It is time to embrace it

Oil at \$300 a barrel¹ is certainly a scary prospect for the whole world. But then again if it is a realistic way to bring about radical change in our behaviour then, frankly, bring it on.

Radical behaviour change is, after all, going to be absolutely vital if we are to start to stem the tide of global greenhouse gas emissions and avert environmental catastrophe.

That means radical change in the way we live, the way we work and in when and how we travel. It will mean us all rethinking the way we value aspects of our lives which may be considered as cheap necessities but tomorrow become expensive luxuries.

Experience to date suggests that without such serious financial motivations, the vital radical change is impossible. Individuals and nations will wring their hands, but then prefer to grin and bear the climatic consequences as the only "realistic" option...

Could the very real prospect of \$300 a barrel be the long awaited tipping point? Could we at last have a fiscal driver that will kick-start the long awaited and much needed drive towards a low carbon future?

Editorial in the "New Civil Engineer" 3 July 2008

"Cycling should take centre stage for short journeys - providing towns and streets are redesigned to allow for it. But the real challenge will be in how much we travel."

Stephen Joseph - Executive director of Campaign for Better Transport

¹ Equates to a price of approximately £2.50 per litre at the pumps. Developers of proposed "Eco Towns" have been briefed to base their forecasts on oil reaching \$300 per barrel by 2015.

Easy Riding – staying warm

People think that staying warm on a bike is a problem. In fact you generate a lot of warmth by cycling. What is more, because the exercise raises your metabolism you stay warm all day. While colleagues are shivering by their fan heaters, you will have that "Readybrek" glow.

If you wear the same clothes that you would wear to walk into town, you are likely to overheat. Don't over-dress, dress in layers, and be prepared to strip off.

The bits that will get cold are the extremities, particularly those that are exposed to the wind. If you are going to buy one item of winter cycling kit make it a pair of windproof cycling gloves. A windproof hat and a "buff" (tube scarf) are also great at this time of year.



Considerate driving – Dip your lights !

It should be obvious, but it is amazing how many people thoughtlessly dazzle on-coming walkers and cyclists.

Lack of awareness is at fault rather than malice - it is much more of a problem where there are few cyclists than where cycling is common.



Facts:

75% of collisions involving a cyclist and a car are caused by driver error.

Facility of the Month

If you do not cycle yourself then you are unlikely to appreciate how truly awful the quality of most British “cycling infrastructure” really is.

This offering in Harlow instructs users to get off and walk eight times in 100 yards. Just in case you ignore the signs there are cunning raised kerbs to trip you up.

Who would ever use it ? What a waste of public money !

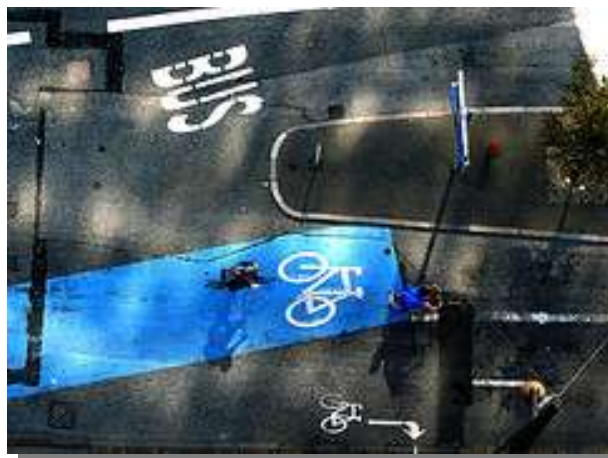


With thanks to Warrington Cycling Campaign. For a disturbingly amusing look at the very worst in British design visit:

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

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 example however comes from Copenhagen - a busy, vibrant city and one of the most cycle friendly on the planet. Drivers have no excuse for overlooking that cycle lane, and just look at the width allocated - there is no cramming of cyclists into 900mm wide “cycle facilities” in Denmark.

Young, inexperienced or nervous cyclists will use this sort of facility without fear, and even confident, fast riding cyclists will use it by choice.

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.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.

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 drive a car.