

Welcome

CTC is the UK'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.

CTC is a not-for-profit organisation that is funded through its membership and donations.

CTC has campaigned for cyclists' rights throughout its existence. Major successes include the development of the National Cycling Strategy and representing the cyclists' voice in the countryside, protecting the right to ride on roads, paths, trails and towpaths.

The CTC's Right to Ride Network has over 500 accredited local representatives throughout the UK and Ireland working for all cyclists.



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The snow has gone, the sun has come out (well, maybe not today) and all around the country, bikes are being woken from their winter hibernation.

If you have never tried it, cycling through the winter is neither difficult nor arduous. As the old saying goes, there is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing. Certainly, here in the east of England we are blessed with a dry, temperate climate that is ideal for year round cycling.

If your bike hasn't seen daylight since October then do it a favour - take it to a bike shop and get it serviced. Put plenty of air in your tyres, make sure the chain is clean and well oiled, and it will reward you with an easy ride.

It has been a busy few months for cycle campaigners in North Herts - some good, some bad, but plenty of it. I'm not sure that we would have coped with it all if the credit crunch hadn't eased pressure on fee paying work.

Frustratingly, much of that workload has come about simply because designers haven't followed the plans and strategies that have been worked out over the years, and haven't followed basic design guidelines.

That is inexcusable. It wastes our time and resources, it wastes the time of officers and councilors, it makes a mockery of the consultation process, and it means that we are forever battling to ensure that conditions are not made worse, instead of planning how to make them better.

Elsewhere we have important news from the Department of Health and from NICE. We have long known about the obesity time bomb ticking away in our society. We know that the key to defusing that bomb is to encourage better diet and more active lifestyles.

The Department for Health has now published guidelines on what needs to be done and who needs to do it. Not surprisingly, much of it says exactly what we have been saying for years about creating a more walking and cycling friendly environment, and encouraging active travel for everyday journeys.

Pavement conversions ?... No thanks.

If you have read previous editions of this newsletter you will know that there is more to providing for cycling than painting lines on pavements. In fact painting lines on pavements tends to be very unhelpful and creates more problems than it solves.

This isn't breaking news. The Dutch authorities devised a Hierarchy of Measures many years ago and have been applying it successfully ever since. It starts with measures to reduce traffic volume and speed, making the road environment safe and comfortable

(Continued on page 2)



Happiness is... riding out with my best friend

"Cycling to work is an important issue for business – the more who do it, the more our communities will support it. Healthy and green, cycling is worthy of the support of every business in the land."

Sir Digby Jones, director general of the Confederation for British Industry, February 2006



Roadside footways like this one in Letchworth do not make good cycling infrastructure

The common temptation to apply the hierarchy in reverse order, ignoring the first two solutions (which evidence suggests may also have the most impact on encouraging sustainable travel patterns) must be resisted.

Hertfordshire Cycling Strategy



British footway conversions are invariably too narrow, and full of hazards and obstructions. They rarely, if ever deal satisfactorily with the need to leave and join the roadway, or with side turnings.



Inactive lifestyles and obesity cost Hertfordshire's health trusts twelve and a quarter million pounds per year. Stay slim, ride a bike



(Continued from page 1)

for all road users. Junction improvement and carriageway redistribution come next, with pavement conversion at the very bottom.

British policy makers have adopted the same hierarchy. Sadly you would not know it from the results.

Conscious of the temptation for designers to apply the hierarchy in the reverse order, the authors of [Hertfordshire Cycling Strategy](#) specifically warned against it.

Alas, it seems that many designers have not read the strategy, or the national guidelines which all say the same. Worse, there seems to

be no system of accountability

I cannot think of any "cycle improvements" built in North Herts in the last decade that

roads for example, or shared use paths away from the carriageway. Unfortunately this is not how they are being used. In most situations they are inappropriate and in many they are downright dangerous.

So we have called for a halt to the conversion of roadside footways to shared use.

So little money is spent on encouraging cycling in Hertfordshire that there is no excuse for ANY of it to be spent on low quality pavement conversions.

If designers feel they cannot do a decent job at one location then there are plenty of others crying out for attention.

"So little is invested in encouraging cycling in Hertfordshire that there is no excuse for ANY of it to be spent on low quality pavement conversions."

have aimed for "top of hierarchy" measures. The first, and only measure considered is to put cyclists on the footway.

There are situations where footway conversion can be of benefit. Alongside busy rural

Be healthy, be active

What is the cost of inactive lifestyles?

According to the Department of Health's publication "[Be Active, Be Healthy](#)" it is costing Hertfordshire's two health trusts £12.25 Million per year.

Consider that against the cost of providing a safe and constructive environment in which people can travel on foot and by bike. The whole of the North Herts cycle network was only forecast to cost £5.4 million, for a programme intended to be spread over twenty years.

Over that same twenty year period, inactivity and obesity will have cost us £245 million.

Am I alone in thinking that we have got our priorities badly mixed up?

The Department for Health report emphasises the need to design the built environment in such a way as to encourage activity both for sport and leisure, and for people to get about without resorting to their cars.

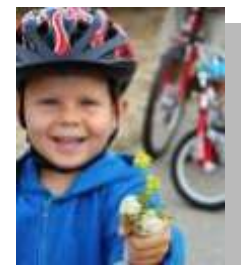
The House of Commons Select Committee on Health's Third Report on Obesity found that cycling was the 'best buy' for tackling obesity:

"If the Government were to achieve its target of trebling cycling in the period 2000-2010 ... that might achieve more in the fight against obesity than any individual measure we recommend within this report."

NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) [called for urgent action](#) in 2006 to stem the rising tide of obesity. Amongst other measures was for local authorities to:

- provide facilities and schemes such as cycling and walking routes, cycle parking, area maps and safe play areas
- make streets cleaner and safer, through measures such as traffic calming, congestion charging, pedestrian crossings, cycle routes, and walking schemes

These recommendations are repeated in their [Obesity Quick Reference Guide](#), their [2006 four common measures guide](#). And their 2009 guidance on promoting [physical activity amongst children](#) and young people.





Pictures from amsterdamize.com and copenhagencyclechic.com

Going Dutch

Denmark is the only nation in the world that can seriously challenge the Dutch when it comes to designing an attractive environment for walking and cycling.

Both countries are affluent, industrialised countries with excellent transport infrastructure and high levels of car ownership. So how do they achieve urban modal splits for cycling of 35% (approaching 50% in some cities), when we cannot achieve one tenth of that figure?

The quality of the cycling infrastructure is unquestionably a significant factor, although we should not underestimate the damaging influence of our deep ideological attachment to cars has in the UK.

So how do we tap into the well of knowledge that our near neighbours have built up over the

past half century?

There is plenty of published material. The CROW [Design Manual for Cycle Traffic](#) is the definitive guide to cycling infrastructure design (published in English). This manual forms the backbone for all UK guidance.

But why just read about it? Hembrow Cycling Holidays run [Study Tours](#) aimed specifically at design-

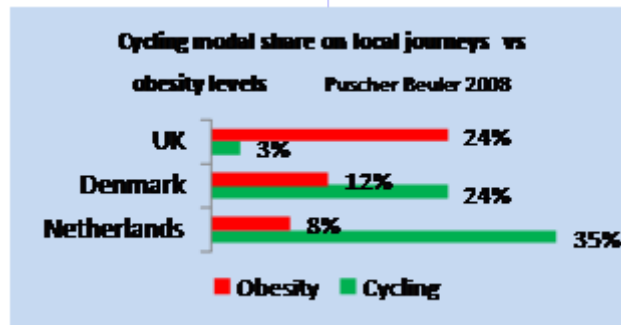
ers, councillors, officers and anybody involved in providing cycling infrastructure.

The deadline for this coming May tour has just passed, but they will also organise bespoke tours for groups such as Herts Highways.

There is no substitute for learning from the masters, so book a tour now.



Learn how the Dutch do "the impossible". Take a study tour in Assen. Hembrow Study Tours



Don't blame your genes

People must stop believing that cancer is down to 'bad luck' or their genes and look to their lifestyles, an expert warned.

An unhealthy diet and poor lifestyle, such as a lack of exercise and being overweight, causes three times as many cases as genetics said Dr Rachael Thompson of the World

Cancer Research Fund. Evidence suggests 39% of the most common cancers could be prevented through following a good diet, exercising and keeping weight under control.

Republished from the [Metro](#).

"Drivers wish for better roads and less congestion, but are unprepared to make personal sacrifices by reducing the amount they use their car in order to achieve this outcome."

'Counting the Cost, Cutting Congestion', RAC Foundation,

Turn it off!

"It's safe to talk on the phone while driving as long as you use a hands free set, isn't it???"

No it isn't, and the adverts that claim hands free sets are "safe" are being wilfully misleading.

It may be legal to use a hands free set, but that is only because the government did not think that a law against them could be enforced.

A substantial body of research shows that using a hands-free mobile phone while driving is a significant distraction, and substantially increases the risk of the driver crashing.

Although the government accepts the evidence, they do not think a hands-free ban would be enforceable. RoSPA disagrees.

[Mobile Phones & Driving](#) -RoSPA

No phone call is worth risking somebody's life over—switch it off before you turn on the engine.

Even more mind-blowingly irresponsible is texting or tweeting behind the wheel. Who on earth thinks that is acceptable? Driving a car is the only activity that most people engage in where there is a realistic danger of them killing somebody. It is not something to be taken lightly.

There is only one place for your attention to be when driving—on the road ahead.



Careless talk costs lives
Switch it off.

Almost half of drivers admit to phoning or texting when behind the wheel.

One in three found it impossible to ignore messages while driving. Drivers in the East of England are the worst offenders

[Metro 09/4/2009](#)

Lynne-Marie Howden, 43, has been charged with dangerous driving after causing a fatal crash while talking on a "legal" hands-free set



Kids on bikes have more fun



Dutch school run

The secret of happiness

Research by York University has ranked the UK amongst the worst countries in Europe for Youth Wellbeing. Nor is it the first survey to conclude that British children are less happy than our European neighbours.

The factors affecting wellbeing are complex and interrelated—health, income, education, freedom and opportunity all **play a part**. You can't help noticing that the countries at the top of the table are all countries that [value, encourage and provide well for cycling](#).

One Dutch school child interviewed by the [BBC](#) made clear his view that cycling was the key to why Dutch children are so much happier than the British counterparts.

Why would this affect children's wellbeing?

Well high levels of cycling amongst children obviously has a very positive effect on health. It is no secret that the Netherlands have one of the lowest levels of obesity in the developed world.

But health is only part of the story. Children growing up in countries like the Netherlands have much greater independence than their British counterparts. They can get about safely and without fear, without needing an adult escort wherever they go. Because there are always people about, Dutch parents do not suffer the same fears for their children's personal security, even after dark.

Youth Wellbeing Survey—International rankings

- 1 Netherlands
- 2 Sweden
- 3 Norway
- 4 Iceland
- 5 Finland
- 6 Denmark
- 7 Slovenia
- 8 Germany
- 9 Ireland
- 10 Luxembourg
- 11 Austria
- 12 Cyprus
- 13 Spain
- 14 Belgium
- 15 France
- 16 Czech Republic
- 17 Slovakia
- 18 Estonia
- 19 Italy
- 20 Poland
- 21 Portugal
- 22 Hungary
- 23 Greece
- 24 United Kingdom
- 25 Romania
- 26 Bulgaria
- 27 Latvia
- 28 Lithuania
- 29 Malta



Mapping the future

We recently learned that Hertfordshire County Council are commissioning a cycle map for Letchworth and Baldock.

Good news, we thought, except that we did not hear this news from the County Council.

That begs the question what sort of map HCC are planning to produce that does not involve users!

Sadly, this is not a great surprise to us. Most of what passes for "cycling infrastructure" in North Herts has been implemented without

reference to users as well, and believe me it shows. It is very hard to think of any that you would cycle on by choice.

Which begs the question, what is going to go on the map?

Once again I suspect that we already know the answer. Many

The [CycleStreets](#) photomap combines an on-line cycle journey planner with thousands of photographs illustrating problems and solutions, enforcement issues and best practice.

cycle maps merely plot locations of pavement cycle ways without giving any useful information on road conditions, frequency of interruption, routes with barriers, quality of surface etc. That is the sort of information that people need to know when planning a route into town.

As it happens, much of that information is already easily available. Using the [CycleStreets](#) website, developed by members of the Cambridge Cycling Campaign, you can plan routes online and check out conditions yourself by viewing the thousands of photographs on the site.

That is the great advantage of this site. You don't get the sometimes ill informed views of a civil servant who may not even cycle. These are informed views from people who actually use the streets.

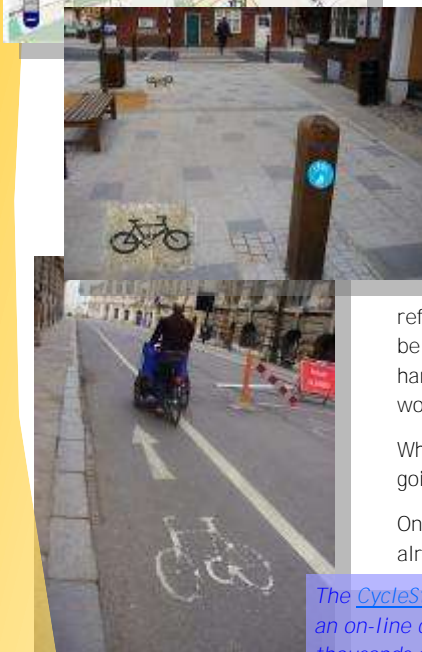
The site is currently under test, having recently gone

from a Cambridge specific to nationwide coverage, but there is already plenty of material on it for North Herts.

So if HCC is going to produce a cycle map, that is good, we give it our full support. BUT talk to us, the users, make use of the technology that is already available.

Most important of all, be honest with people—they will not be fooled that a barrier strewn pavement conversion is a good cycle route whatever you put on a map. All it will do is put people off cycling.

Oxford is to join Portsmouth in making 20 mph the default speed limit on all but main urban roads. Crucially the police will be enforcing the limit—enforcement is frequently a stumbling block. *Oxford Times*





How not to design cycling infrastructure. Pictures from [Warrington Cycling Campaign](#)

Following the Plan

For many years British designers suffered from a lack guidance on how to design for cycling. Not that designing for cycling is difficult—on the contrary it is just the same as designing for motor vehicles except that you only need half as much road space.

Ironically, engineers in the 1950s understood it much better than their modern counterparts. Back then cycling was still a commonplace way to get around.

Over recent years the Department for Transport has published a number of good, clear guidance documents. Two traffic advisory leaflets, TAL s [90](#) and [91/05](#) were followed last year by a comprehensive Local Transport Note [LTN 02/08](#).

Hertfordshire County Council has not been idle either. Two years ago HCC published an excellent

[cycling strategy](#), and [cycle parking](#) guide. The 1998 Hitchin Transport Plan and [2007 Letchworth and Baldock Transport Plans](#) both included significant proposals for improving conditions for walking and cycling.

Nor has NHDC shown a lack of will when it comes to planning for cycling. In 1999 the district council published a comprehensive [Cycle Network Masterplan](#) covering the four towns.

With all of that guidance available we should be seeing a genuine golden era in designing for cycling. So what is going wrong ?

It isn't just about a lack of money, although specific investment in countering the adverse effects of traffic growth on other road users is pitiful. No, in many cases there is plenty of money being spent, it **just isn't being spent with care**

and thought. In particular:

- ⊖ When road schemes go ahead, planned improvements for cycling are IGNORED. Or worse, NEW BARRIERS to cycling are actually created.
- ⊖ When assessing WHAT cycling provision to implement, only the LOWEST QUALITY, most inappropriate measures are considered.
- ⊖ When carrying out the DE-TAILED DESIGN, basic standards are IGNORED. Width, visibility, bend radii, and continuity standards are systematically ignored.

Take three recent examples: Baldock High Street, Bedford Road in Hitchin, and the Royston rail underpass.



Designers no longer have the excuse that there is a lack of clear guidance on designing for cycling.

Britain is one of ten EU countries facing court action because PM10 particle concentrations, which can cause lung cancer and heart problems, exceed set levels.

Cycling is not only the quickest and most convenient way to get around urban areas, it is the only true “zero emissions” vehicle.

Baldock High Street

Baldock has had a lot of money spent on it recently. £33 million on a bypass and a further £2.3 million on landscaping work. If you believe **HCC's blurb this is all to make Baldock a nicer place, with less traffic. A place where people will feel comfortable walking and cycling instead of driving the short distances that separate their homes from schools and services.**

What is the reality ?

Traffic on the High Street has indeed fallen, but only by 16% and you would be very hard pressed to notice the difference. The High Street is still extremely car dominated.

Against this there have been sharp increases in traffic on other roads within the town—up to 30% increase on North Road, Norton Rd, Hitchin St and Weston Way. And that is before we start looking at the roads feeding into Baldock.

Designers working on junction “improvements” around Baldock

claim that they cannot include any cycling provision because there is so much traffic that it needs ALL of the available space.

Still, at least all of that investment must mean some specific cycling improvements mustn't it ? Like **NHDC's route no 3 for example. A two way traffic free cycle track running the length of the High Street, down Bell Row and across into Church Street. After all there is ample width in the High Street and it is all being re-paved so it would cost NOTHING to implement.**

Sadly not. In spite of being in both the 2007 [Letchworth and Baldock Transport Plan](#) and the 1999 [Cycle Routes Masterplan](#), the designers simply “forgot” to include this route.

But it is worse than that, because as part of the work, Church Street was closed to motor traffic and made one way, without any provision for two way cycling. This is despite being on a planned cycle route and despite the [Hertford-](#)

[shire Cycling Strategy](#) specifically highlighting the need to maintain two way cycling through road closures and one way streets.

Residents who live in streets like Orchard Road, only 50m from the High Street, now face a choice between breaking the law or a long detour to cycle to the High Street. Faced with that choice what incentive is there not to reach for the car keys ?

Why are designers allowed to simply ignore these plans and policies ? Where is the accountability ?

It is a problem that is easy to fix, and we have sent details of how to address it to both District and County councillors, but this is a wholly unnecessary problem. It will now cost money to fix a problem that should never have been created in the first place.

We must give credit where it is due. We have been contacted about proposals to improve cycle links to the [Clothall estate](#), but these will count for little if the town centre is not cycle friendly.



Church St Baldock



Hostile conditions unnecessary detours on the Bedford Rd gyrotory force many people onto the pavements. The solution however is to make the road safe, not to displace all cycling to the pavement.



No room for shared use on the Bedford Road pavement



We detailed out the national guidance for the Royston underpass designers months before planning. How did they still get it wrong ?



There is no need to segregate cycling on quiet lanes like the allotment drive. Here pictured on a busy show day.

Bedford Road, Hitchin

The gyrotory system made up of Bedford Road, Paynes Park and Old Park Road is a festering sore close to the heart of the town. Every time there is any public consultation the subject of the gyrotory, and how to remove it, is brought up.

The 1998 Hitchin Transport Plan called for its removal. So did the [1999 Cycle Plan](#), the [2004 Hitchin Town Centre Strategy](#) and the [2007 Paynes Park Plan](#).

When residents got wind of impending major roadworks on the gyrotory they were keen to ensure that this sore was at last removed.

Was it ? - No.

Far from removing the problem by restoring two way traffic, Herts Highways have added to the problems. A new narrowing on Old Park Road makes for very

intimidating cycling while proposals for Bedford Road go no further than a nasty pavement conversion.

There should be absolutely NO question what needs to be done here. The solution shouts at you and even if you are a little deaf it has been raised so many times that you cannot fail to have heard it.

Local plans say remove the gyrotory. National guidelines say remove the gyrotory. Hertfordshire's cycling strategy says remove the gyrotory. The cycle network plan says remove the gyrotory. Residents say remove the gyrotory. We say remove the gyrotory.

So why are Herts Highways putting cyclists on the pavement again ? Why are they allowed to ignore plans, users and consultation ? Where is the accountability ?

Royston Rail Underpass

In most respects the Royston rail underpass is the jewel in Hertfordshire's cycling crown. One of the 79 projects that make up Sustrans' successful £50million "Big lottery" bid, it aims to reconnect Royston's northern suburbs with the schools and leisure facilities on the other side of the tracks.

It is ideally positioned, with a straight approach that minimises the fear of strangers lurking around the corner—a serious problem in subway design.

We even managed to bat away the proposal to provide three segregated, substandard pathways to serve pedestrians, cyclists and allotment holders. Against determined resistance, common sense prevailed and cyclists share the allotment access road, just as they do any other quiet road.

With all of those little victories under our belt, what could possibly go wrong ?

Regrettably it was once again a simple, basic failure to apply numbers from a table in national guidance to a "real" facility. The

subway as proposed is too narrow.

It is inexcusable. We had even seen it coming and many months before had supplied the designers with a drawing detailing out all of the guidance. Why did they not follow the guidelines in the first place ? Why did they ignore our advice ? Where is the accountability ?

If you don't ride a bike, 1m might not seem like much, but put it into context—taking 1m off a cycle path is like taking a whole car's width off a road. A "standard" road becomes like a narrow country lane.

People would take a very dim view if they were presented with a 5m wide road as a new facility.

If we want to persuade people to drive less and to cycle more (and we need to do so for our health, wealth, sanity, environment and economy) then we have to make it ATTRACTIVE. That means designing facilities that are GOOD QUALITY, rather than designing them below the required standard.

Traffic Gyrotory systems are rarely, if ever, conducive to cycling, as they tend to increase both vehicle speeds and journey lengths. The Old Park Road and Hollow Lane gyrotory systems are two examples where this is evident. It will be better to achieve a long term and holistic traffic management solution to these gyrotory systems

[1999 NHDC Cycle Network Plan](#)

Happy Endings...



For anybody who does not follow the progress of our Olympians, please join us in congratulating our very own local sporting heroine, [Victoria Pendleton](#), retained her world sprint crown, bagging a silver and a bronze in other events on the way.

A below strength track team brought home ninemedals between them, coming third overall in the medals table.