

NICI Newsletter

WORD FROM THE CHAIR

The Steering Group welcomes a new member to the steering Group, Jonnie Palmer.

For this newsletter, Jonnie has written about his cycling experiences in Edinburgh and the cycling contrasts with Belfast.

Date for you diary - AGM and Bike Ride. Please note in your diary **Saturday 1st February 2003 at 11.30am** in the One World Centre, 4 Lower Crescent, Belfast (Close to The Fly off Botanic Avenue) NICI is holding it's AGM.

Please give the Steering Group your support by coming along.

After the AGM I am going for a non-strenuous, family orientated bike ride exploring some of the cycling developments in Belfast with Steven Patterson, Sustrans' NI Manager. You are welcome to join us entirely at your own risk.

Tom McClelland
Tel 028 9082 5279
Email tom.mcclelland@virgin.net

Belfast Metropolitan Plan

Three strategies are emerging:-

A. High investment in highway improvements
Low investment in public transport
Some demand management

B. Moderate investment in highways (Addressing pinch-points in the strategic network)
Public transport gets rapid transit
Increasing demand management



C. High investment in public transport (extensive rapid transport and rail improvements, quality bus corridors and park'n'ride)
High levels of demand management (parking controls, road user charging, vehicle prioritisation)

A working conference is scheduled for early February to reveal the emerging thinking. It is likely that the preferred strategy will contain elements of all three combined strategies. The steering group think this will be another lost opportunity if strategy C is abandoned or diluted. We will keep you posted on developments.

Please let us know by e-mailing Tom before the end of January which strategy you prefer.

Regional Transport Strategy

Available now in hard copy, the RTS does not contain any surprises.

The wording of the document is fuzzy and aspirational in its approach. Cycling, while mentioned, is not seen as a key transport mode.

What is worse, proposals are being brought forward to allow all taxis and motorbikes into bus lanes. Bus lanes in Belfast are narrow and not properly

**NICI acknowledges the kind support of
John Reavey Solicitors,
28 West Street,
Carrickfergus
(Tel 9335 5535) and
625-627 Shore Road,
Whiteabbey
(Tel 9085 3361)**

suitable for cycling, but better than nothing.

It is our view that bus lanes are one of the slightly safer places to cycle on arterial roads, shared at the moment only with buses and black taxis. In Bristol, where motorbikes have been allowed into bus lanes, cycle use has been depressed.

We will be looking at this in more depth.

Please send your objections c/o the Editor (Tom) when the Order is advertised in the Belfast Telegraph in the coming weeks.

Minister's Visit to the Cycle Forum

Peter Robinson, the then Minister for the Department for Regional Development, visited the Cycle Forum before the Assembly suspension. Mr Robinson appeared to support cycling and acknowledged its role in the overall transport spectrum.

According to those who understand politics, the Assembly will be restored in the medium term and therefore the Minister's support for cycling is significant.

The Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy

The Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy was recently launched. There are welcome moves to increase the number of home zones and to reduce speeds on some rural roads and country lanes. Interestingly in Angela Smyth's (currently Minister for DRD and DOE) own constituency there are moves to encourage a default 40 mph speed limit on most rural roads.

Rural Single Carriageways

Rural single carriageways are where a lot of us cycle. The Transport Research Laboratory, a world leading independent consultancy, through long-term research has found the following: -

- The faster drivers choose to travel, the more likely they are to have an accident.
- Higher speeds on roads with otherwise similar characteristics are associated with more accidents.
- Fear of road traffic is one of the things that discourage many people from cycling.

At long last the Road Safety Strategy is addressing the issue of speeding rural traffic.

Cycling Leaflets

Sustrans recently published a series of 8 leaflets, which guide people through the various aspects of cycling.

Topics covered include basic bike maintenance, cycling with children, cycle

clothes and accessories and the right bike for you.

Well-done Sustrans.

More information at www.sustrans.org.uk or 0117 929 0888

Belfast by Bike

One of Peter Robinson's last duties as Minister was to launch the Belfast by Bike map, which shows recommended cycle routes through Belfast suburbs and the city centre.

A complimentary copy is enclosed. Are there any improvements that you wish to suggest for the next edition?

More maps should be available in your local bike shop and in the Tourist Information Centre in Belfast.

Edinburgh – what Belfast can learn

by Jonnie Palmer

Five years.... six miles a day.... cold damp Scottish nights..... but was it really that bad. The answer, well, actually not at all.

Edinburgh, the Scottish capital has embraced and protected the cyclist to great effect. The old, yet cosmopolitan city has responded to the needs of its inhabitants and now proudly exhibits a network of reserved 'red' cycle lanes throughout its streets. Each complemented with its own advanced stop areas, allowing the cyclist the opportunity to take their preferred location at the majority of the cities junctions. These areas often completely full with more than 10 bicycles, it wasn't difficult to understand the advantages to everyone in the city. Traffic wardens would police these areas stringently, issuing fines to any motorist that would dare to grace the hallowed ground with even the slightest patch of rubber.

Why?

Because safety, predominantly student safety, was paramount and with facilities in

place their use grew. I watched as more and more roads turned partially red and with the change, a small, yet recognisable annual increase in cyclists donning brightly coloured waterproofs took to the roads.



Most importantly the cycle lanes had the intelligence to take you somewhere that you wanted to go. *This was key.* It was possible to cycle through and around the city without leaving a reserved 'red' lane. Currently unachievable in Belfast. Instead the cyclist here must be content with sporadic moments of wellbeing. A timeout from jostling with their motorised counterparts before being rewarded by yet another ending cycle lane. If the uptake of cycling in Belfast as a mode of transport is to match that of the Scottish capital then the message appears to be clear. Make the prospective cyclist feel safe, protected and valued, through extensive road sharing as demonstrated so well in Edinburgh.



Newsletter Articles

Do you have any cycling stories or views that you would like to share with other NICI members? The next newsletter is due for May 2003 - get writing! Forward your articles to Tom at his usual contact details.

Disclaimer: the views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the NICI Steering Group.