

NICI Newsletter

WORD FROM THE CHAIR

Richard Agus, a fully paid up member of the Institute of Highways and Transportation, has agreed to represent NICI at the Belfast Routes Group, replacing Pat McKeivitt, who is standing down. For those of you who might not know, the IHT has advocated for some time, the provision of cycle friendly infrastructure in all urban areas. Richard's expertise and enthusiasm is most welcome.

Pat has been a member of the routes group since its inception and we thank him for all his hard work.

The Steering Group is keen to attract new members, we meet about five times a year. Duties are not too onerous, qualities needed are an interest and enthusiasm for environmentally friendly, healthy and socially inclusive solutions to transport problems.

Matching and Hatching

Steven Patterson, Sustrans dynamic Northern Ireland director married the lovely Loraine Devlin, hon. sec. of NICI. Word has it that Loraine's sisters' wedding present was a tandem. What a lucky couple to get each other plus a tandem!

Congratulations to Liz Fawcett, our former chair, on the birth of Conor. Mum and baby are both well and for the girlies among you Conor weighed in at 7lbs 11ozs.



Regional Transport Strategy

NICI responded as a consultee to the final draft of the RTS. Some commentators are saying the draft is now de-facto policy and no significant changes will be made. The Strategy has seen changes in favour of everyday utility cycling but the big budgets and capital spending are still reserved for roads despite road traffic conflict in Northern Ireland costing £450 million a year.

Interestingly the Department of Regional Development (DRD) own consultants criticised the £12 million spend on the road from Belfast to Larne. Roads Service justified the scheme by pointing out, amongst other issues, that there is a potential for increasing speed of journey thereby reducing some journey times by a maximum of four minutes. A wonderful saving over 25 miles we think not.

Who will become Ulster's Gwyneth Dunwoody, the Westminster scourge of the English Dept. of Transport? Mrs Dunwoody is Chair of the Parliamentary Transport Committee, which has been heavily critical of

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)

Government Transport Policy. Will there be real political scrutiny of the RTS when it is presented to the Assembly? Are Alban Maginess and Alan McFarland up for it?

Launch of Belfast City Cycle Tours

'Irish Cycle Tours' have launched 'Belfast City Cycle Tours' showing the historical and contemporary sites of Belfast both urban and rural led by an experienced guide.

This is a new venture and the first of what we hope will be the many economic benefits that cycling can bring. For more details email info@irishcycletours.com.

Best wishes to Brian and Lyla Thompson the Directors of Irish Cycle Tours.

Are We On The Right Path?

Some thoughts from Ian Bell an NICI member:

Ideally we would all cycle short journeys but there are other big issues needing a coordinated approach by NICI. What does NICI currently campaign for? We press Government on policy and campaign for cycle infrastructure. Policy change is essential and we are succeeding with this. What else can improve conditions for ordinary cyclists? We need more bus and bike lanes, improved public transport that gives real alternatives for cyclists in wet weather and in the dark of winter.

Time to move on NICI, press for improved public transport and bus lanes.

Editors note:

NICI know that T2000, FOE and others are doing excellent work in the public transport field. Cycling is still seen as a weakling that can be ignored by transport planners and politicians. It is important to campaign as vigorously as we can, with our friends in Sustrans and CTC, for more cycling friendly infrastructure and the promotion of cycling as a real alternative for short journeys.

Compact Cities

We all know in the age of sustainability that compact cities and their development should be the Holy Grail of town planners and transport engineers.

The Belfast Metropolitan Residents Group have organised a conference with many high quality international and local speakers on the theme 'Towards the creation of a compact

city' to be held in the City Hall on 20th June 2002.

If you're interested in delving more deeply into the issues of good quality urban planning and development this is the conference for you. It is only £10, and that includes morning coffee and afternoon tea with lunch in the City Hall. We think it's unbeatable value. info@bmrq.org or 9086 3187.

Promoting Sustainable Living

Dermot Nesbitt, the Minister of the Department of the Environment, has published a consultation document on promoting sustainable living. NICI will be responding and the steering group would appreciate assistance from any keen member who knows a thing or two about sustainability and can use a word processor. Please contact Tom at tom.mcclelland@virgin.net or 9082 5279

Bike It With Translink

Translink have published a comprehensive guide to getting you and your bike around the Translink network. It's all the things you need to know about from parking your bike at the station to getting you and your bike on the Enterprise or bus. We assume it's available from any bus or railway station or feedback@translink.co.uk or 9066 6630.

Scary Bike Rides

Recently your editor has been out and about by bike. Belfast to Enniskillen by bus with the bike in the boot, then

Enniskillen to Castle Archdale by bike.

Road Service would have us believe that rural roads are quiet and safe for cycling. Practical experience has shown it is a scary ride from Enniskillen along the Kesh Road, the road is lightly trafficked but most cars seem to break the speed limit and pass cyclists without care or consideration.

What's happened to the Slower Speeds Initiative?

On a recent Saturday after a pleasant lunch in a Lisburn Road Bistro (I do have some style!), I cycled home to the country by way of Blacks Road. Going under the motorway bridge I was in the central lane, on my left was the traffic for Twinbrook, Poleglass, and Lagmore. On my right, traffic for the motorway! Although it was a Saturday afternoon the speed of passing traffic, the noise under the bridge and the fear that someone going fast hadn't seen me made for a very unpleasant 30 seconds. I have every sympathy for the pupils of St Anne's, Rathmore and Larkfield who walk to school.

I assume none of them cycle as it is so frightening on Saturdays with little traffic, I dread to think what they would face in a Monday morning rush hour.

What's happened to the Safe Routes to Schools initiative?

Get A Life Get Active

Loughshore Trail Launch around Lough Neagh and Antrim Cyclefest, Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th June. www.nicycling.com

Lifecycle organised by NICSSA, www.nicssa.co.uk events in Belfast 16th June, Coleraine 19th June and Newry 23rd June – get a life – get active.

Belfast week of Cycling 15th- 23rd June for details www.sustrans.org.uk

Derry Bike Week, 15th – 23rd June, www.pedalpowerni.org for full details.