

NICI Newsletter

WORD FROM THE STEERING GROUP

Patron: Brian Hanna

NICI is affiliated to the Irish Cycling Campaign Network and the Cycling Campaign Network of Great Britain

Well done to:

- The Derry Cycle Forum who report year-upon-year increase in usage of the cycle routes in Derry. 8.3% for the month of April and 46% for August
- Claudy Cycles for sponsoring Claudy Fun Cycle. Over 60 youngsters from the small village of Claudy went on a six-mile Fun Ride during Bike Week
- Translink for producing 'Bike-it with Translink', a comprehensive guide to getting you and your bike around the Translink Network and the leaflet 'Bicycle Park-and-ride' in conjunction with Sustrans
- Joe Twaites an NICI member who successfully lobbied for a bike shed at the Royal Courts of Justice. Joe Drew, Eastern Division manager, Roads Service, who is also a keen cyclist, opened the shed with great ceremony (*see photo below*)



Welcome to all new members who joined at the Green Living Fair. We had an excellent response to our stand with 25 new members and the expectation of more completed membership forms arriving in the next few weeks.

Steering group members continue to campaign and lobby for cycling in many different ways. NICI is now represented at the following levels:

- The Ministerial Integrated Transport Stakeholders Group
- The Northern Ireland Cycling Board and Forum
- Belfast Routes Group
- Coleraine Routes Group
- Newtownabbey Routes Group
- Omagh Routes Group

We continue to work closely with Sustrans and the CTC chivvying at grass roots level and encouraging policy change from the top.

At times progress can seem slow. Society's attitude to transport does not seem to be moving towards a sustainable mode. Yet when we compare 1994 to 2004 we see big changes in Governmental attitude both at a central and local level.

There is infrastructure on the ground and an acceptance of cycling as a realistic transport mode that's good for health, the economy and the environment.

We have worked with Sustrans producing a response to the Physical Activity Strategy and intend to contribute to the recent Fit Futures Initiative.

To all new members thank you again for joining and to existing members, thank you for your continuing support.

The steering group can be contacted at www.nici.org.uk or by calling the membership secretary, Kathryn Carson, on **028 9068 3582**.

IR176 – Green Travel – A guide for employers and employees on Tax and National Insurance Contribution

This Inland Revenue Guide is a mine of information.

Did you know that employers can provide cycles or cycle safety equipment for their employees travel to and from work, the employees will not have to pay tax or NIC?

Did you know that the approved mileage allowance payments are 20p per mile for cycling?

Did you know that employers can claim relief for capital expenditure and travel plans if they buy cycles as part of a travel plan?

Did you know that employees do not have to pay tax or NIC on cycle parking facilities provided by an employer?

Cycle Forum gets wheels moving in Craigavon

The Craigavon Cycling Forum has been established by Craigavon Borough Council with the help of Sustrans.

Matthew Bushby, the Recreation Development Officer, is the cycling force behind the development of the Forum and a wide range of objectives are targeted including improving cycling skills in co-operation with Cycling Ulster, upgrading cycle infrastructure and links.

Outcomes will include improved health both physical and mental, environmental improvement and easier access to the countryside.

Agonising over the black stuff

According to Alan Bridle, Head of Research, Bank of Ireland, *it's realistic to assume that the recent tightness in oil markets is not a temporary blip. Prices are in a process of transition to a higher range with more expensive energy for us all. The days of \$20-\$25 a barrel appear to be over for the foreseeable future.*

The oil price has to move to \$80 a barrel to reach the oil shock levels of the 1970's.

Will transport policy in Northern Ireland adjust now that the days of cheap fuel appear to be at an end?

An American in Belfast or 'how to get your bike clamped!'

My parents moved to the far northwest suburbs of Chicago when I was a child. A land of urban sprawl; of single-family detached homes, large gardens, shopping centers and cars.

Cars, cars and more cars. Cars with single passengers riding bumper to bumper into the city each morning. Cars circling city streets looking for elusive parking spaces. Cars taking suburban children to after school activities.

After graduating from university, I vowed never to get caught up in the car madness. I moved back into the city and bought a bike. I pedaled to work. In summer I rode along Chicago's beautiful lakefront wearing shorts and t-shirts. In Chicago's frigid winters I biked with thermal long-johns under my clothes.

When I moved to this side of the Atlantic, it seemed only natural to continue bike riding. Europeans had, so I thought, a much more progressive view of the environment. I travelled around the continent and saw hundreds of bike commuters in Amsterdam; bike paths everywhere in Berlin and government sponsored bike programs in Scandinavia. Yes, this was the place for a biker to live. Six months ago I landed a job in Belfast City Centre; a town with lots of biking potential. Compact enough that one can get anywhere on a bike. A beautiful trail follows the Lagan; south through forests and green spaces, north along the waterfront. My office, in fact, is located just one block from this bike path.

But one major problem quickly surfaced: the management of the building I work in refuses to allow people to park bikes on the street.

Laganside Corporation has appointed Irish Estates to manage the development that includes the Lanyon Place office building, BT tower, the Hilton Hotel, the Waterfront Hall, a car park and a new office building. It covers an area of perhaps 4 city blocks. Plenty of people working in the area. Plenty of people coming to the area for concerts, the hotel, etc. Potential for lots of congestion, but because of its central location, a great opportunity to encourage transportation other than cars.

Irish Estates posted signs along the streets of the development saying vehicle-clamping zone. I parked my bike on a pedestrian mall half a block

from the nearest street and the bike was clamped. The fee to remove the clamp is £65.

Last week, with the help of the Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative and the Citizens Advice Bureau, a meeting was held to discuss this issue. I was pleased to hear that the management company support the idea of more bike racks and are willing to pay to install them, I was shocked to hear that they won't tolerate bikes parked anywhere other than at a bike rack.

"Bikes damage trees, " I was told. "They remove the paint from metal surfaces ".

Now I'll be the first to admit that I have seen some pretty irresponsible bike owners, blocking access to buildings or riding at high speeds in crowded pedestrian areas. But we needn't even begin to talk about the number of irresponsible motorists there are. But bikes causing damage to metal poles?

Somehow cities all around the world have managed to cope with bikes in city centres.

In my native Chicago, there are 8 million people in the greater metropolitan area. Hundreds of thousands of people commute to work in the city centre. Yet with all this congestion, the city has still found space to add bike trails. Yes, there in the most car dependent country in the world, the city has installed a bike centre downtown where biker riders can shower and change before heading to the office. They now have bike racks on city buses and allow people to take bikes on subways and elevated trains in non-peak hours. There are thousands of bike racks in Chicago now, and yes, people still chain their bikes to city lampposts and trees. The lampposts have not rusted away and the trees have not died. And I've never heard anyone complain that these bikes are causing damage and ought to be removed.

So why is Belfast different?

In my case, my bike was chained to a lamppost. It is not a painted surface. In fact, none of the lampposts in this area are painted. So what is the problem?

Editors note:—

Thanks to Steve Shore, NICI were alerted to the problem and with the help of Laganside, Irish Estates and Paul Thompson, Roads Service Eastern Division Cycling Officer, bike parking is being installed at Lanyon Place. We are still working on getting Steve's bike back and the clamping fee being waived. Finally the managing agent arrived by 4x4; Lanyon Place to his office cannot be more than ¾ of a mile.

Injured cycling or driving on our roads?

**Contact our sponsors
Reavey & Co Solicitors**

**Carrickfergus: 028 9335 5535
Whiteabbey: 028 9086 0335
Rathcoole: 028 9086 0335**

Bike friendly fashion

by Alexandra Shulman, Editor of Vogue

If you had told me a year ago that I would fall in love with cycling, I would have labelled you a fantasist. But that's what has happened. I am comfortable with the notion of driving to the newsagent's at the end of the road, but a combination of London's hateful congestion charge and a desire to take more exercise made me try cycling.

Being a bit of a weed and not keen on braving the dark, I confined my excursions to the weekend at the beginning, but now I cycle to work. That's 40 minutes each way, which, by my reckoning, lets me off the gym at least once a week. Well, it would if I did it often enough, and the only thing preventing me, of course, is what to wear. Cycling is great if you don't have an office to go to, but finding an appropriate mode of dress for a magazine editor that is also bike-friendly is eluding me.



Oxford belle: Paltrow's Plath

Last week, I set forth in white trousers, a pair of Marc Jacobs wedges and a black chiffon top, full of the joys of London on a sunny morning. The top was perfect, but oil on the chain has demolished the pricy pair of trousers. Jeans are an option but they are not always suitable for work. Pencil skirts are a non-starter.

I see some women adopt a Fifties Oxford belle style - colourful, flared skirts and cotton shirts - but I don't know how they manage. Any flapping fabric so easily gets caught and the thought of bare legs exposed to the traffic is daunting. On the plus side, I've learnt that summer's bright colours are terrific for announcing my presence as I zoom up the left-hand lane, and, certainly, the less aggressive you look, the less likely the white van man is to cut you up.

The obvious solution is to carry some clothes to change into, but my one attempt resulted in my Jimmy Choo heels falling out of the pannier and into the road, just as I was heading into three lanes of traffic.

Even if I do manage to crack this particular sartorial challenge, I'm not sure that I'm ever going to be able to deal with the effects on my hair of the hideous helmet. I gather the jury's out on how much these are likely to help in an encounter with a juggernaut but since I'd rather not discover personally, I'm erring on the side of caution. So, on goes the cycling helmet and out comes a sticky, flat

helmet of hair for the rest of the day. I urge Philip Treacy to have a stab at this problem. If a man can make a miniature galleon into a hat, a safe, comfortable and attractive bike helmet should be no difficulty at all.



Tweed culottes, sizes 8-16, £150, Mulberry. V-neck top with satin ribbon trim and bow, 8-16, £35, InWear



Prairie print blouse, 4-14, £165, Marc Jacobs at Harvey Nichols. Cropped denim jeans with turn-up bottom, 8-16, £35, Topshop
© Daily Telegraph Newspapers

Editor's note:—

Clare Coulson writing in the Daily Telegraph last month suggests culottes, cropped trousers and knee-high boots. For the anxious followers of fashion, worried about their hair she recommends a stylish, slicked back hairstyle like the one seen on Celine's autumn catwalk under your helmet.

Can Belfast learn from the Nijmegen experience?

By Nola Jamieson

As part of my final year in the School of Environmental Planning, at Queen's University, Belfast, it was necessary to undertake a dissertation on a topic of one's own choice. For me this topic concerned cycling, as after living in the city of Nijmegen, Netherlands, during the summer of 2003, I became familiar with urban cycling and soon realised that Belfast was somewhat less accommodating for both the skilled cyclist and particularly those, like myself, who enjoy cycling but are apprehensive of the pastime when this involves on-road cycling.

The foundation for the proposed study stemmed from the opportunity to assess the success of the Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy as well as other cycling policy, produced by Local Government. By undertaking the study I hoped to distinguish how comprehensive the prepared documents are in comparison with cycling policy in the Netherlands (i.e. The Dutch Bicycle Master Plan) and detect whether or not the implementation of these policies have lured people to the bicycle, as a mode of transport. These issues led to the typical research question, which was to investigate:

**"Urban Cycle Routes:
A Comparative Analysis of Belfast
and Nijmegen."**

In the course of the study, three cycle routes were chosen from within both Belfast's and Nijmegen's Urban Area.

The routes were analysed with respect to:

Safety from a traffic and social perspective;
Cycle parking facilities;
Street profiles.

The Way Forward in Belfast

While the Netherlands is renowned for its high level of bicycle use, Northern Ireland has, in general a weaker cycling tradition. As a result, within both countries, there are variations in cycle use. In the past transportation strategies have encouraged the use of the private car but recently Government has recognised the need for alternative modes of transport. Local Authority interest in cycling have grown enormously over the last few years now that the benefits of cycling have been identified, as a transport alternative, and are trying to encourage a shift from motorised transport modes to non-motorised modes.

Despite recent attempts to provide for the cyclist, within Belfast, cycle usage is still low. With the long tradition of cycling in the Netherlands, perhaps Belfast could learn from the experience of a Dutch city namely, Nijmegen.

With reference to Northern Ireland and, in particular Belfast, it is certain that progress is being made towards catering for the bicycle and adopting a cycle-friendly infrastructure. Government, District Councils and other sector organisations are trying to integrate cycling into the transport system but, as was suggested during the interviewees, much more promotion of cycling is required if the tracks are ever to be used to their full potential. One could say that Government has done its part in encouraging cycling, but it now lies with the public to shift their attitudes to pro-cycling and as the saying goes "get on your bike"!

After undertaking the dissertation, and from my own experience of cycling in both Belfast and Nijmegen, many insights have been gained on the topic of cycling in urban areas. Most importantly, it was quite evident that many disparities exist between both cities. It is clear that the bicycle is almost an essential part of everyday

life in Nijmegen, a scene not so common in Belfast. As a result, there will always be a need to continuously update and improve the previously existing bicycle infrastructure in Nijmegen. In contrast, Belfast has the task of actually establishing a bicycle infrastructure. Presently, Belfast schemes are narrower in scope, than anything that has been produced in Nijmegen, and it is anyway questionable how far most of them really justify the label 'network' as they mainly consist of only one main route, and feeder routes. A good example of this an NCN route, such as the Stranmillis Embankment, which has a high quality off-road cycle track, in comparison with roads that have advisory cycle lanes or shared bus/cycle lanes, such as Malone Road, where the shared bus/cycle lane only exists along a small section of the road. In addition to this, considering the city centre provides no cycle lanes, this makes it all the more difficult to say that Belfast has created a cycle network. However, regarding this matter, it is important to note that all proposals for cycle routes must be carefully evaluated in terms of their potential advantages over existing routes used by cyclists. These include, most of all, their greater safety but also their directness, their flatness and their attractiveness. In some areas cyclists can mix happily with other vehicles on more lightly used roads and there may be no obvious more direct route. Belfast's city centre has yet to become entirely pedestrianised, however, traffic restrictions, with exemption for cycles, are in place and this gives cyclists some priority over motor vehicles.

Belfast must take into account that providing for cyclists is not just a matter of providing segregated cycle tracks alongside main roads, or special measures at junctions, important as these are where space and resources permit. It is also very much a matter, especially in existing urban areas, of maximising the opportunities for helping cyclists in creating 'off-road' routes, such as paths across parks.

Indeed, the Belfast cycle planning experience in general is much less extensive than in Nijmegen with a stronger general cycling tradition, but

much could be learnt from abroad. Nijmegen has dealt with cycling provision for many years. Many mistakes have been made but much valuable experience has been gained. Belfast could prevent making the same mistakes as Nijmegen if interest groups from both cities conferred with one another.

Finally, even if cycling is now much more popular again, in Northern Ireland, and officials attitudes have begun to become much more sympathetic, one might question – in light of the Belfast experience, how much can realistically be expected to change in such a fairly short time?

Changing attitudes among a whole range of people whose efforts need to be harnessed towards encouraging a really 'bicycle-friendly' atmosphere will need a much bigger and more sustained effort than is required just to build one or two stretches of cycle route.

Youth cycling in Northern Ireland

by John Bann-Lavery

For the past two months or so, 10 Cycling clubs in Northern Ireland have been looking to the future in a proactive way.

The following clubs have each had several adult members complete the Bike Leaders Coach Education Course, and subsequently began a series of Bike Skills sessions:

Omagh Wheelers, Fintona CC, Clann Eireann CC, Banbridge CC, Cookstown Harps CC, Castlereagh CC, Newry Wheelers, Lakeland CC, Orchard Wheelers, and East Tyrone CC.



A total of 80 volunteers from all of the clubs are enjoying the Bike Skills each week at the various venues across Ulster, introducing well over 150 kids to the skills of cycling.



Each club has delivered or is delivering 6 structured Bike Skills sessions, followed by weekly fun Bike Spins for their club's new young cycling enthusiasts. Bike Spins are then the core activity of the junior clubs. The Bike Spin activities vary from towpath spins to grass track-racing sessions to rides along the National Cycle Network routes, whereby the kids are really getting a taste of all aspects of cycling.

The volunteer Bike Leaders from the clubs are doing a first class job - and really enjoying it. Guys like Mark Gilmore of the Castlereagh Club, Martin Brennan from Cookstown Harps, and Barry Cassidy from Emyvale are really putting a great effort into the initiative. Thanks to them and their fellow Bike Leaders in the various clubs, around 150 kids are enjoying cycling across the country each week. Orchard Wheelers' Lester Fiddis has been instrumental in getting Bike Skills off the ground in Richhill, where there were 28 new kids at the first Bike Skills session last Thursday.

This seems to be a very effective way to get kids on bikes, and make cycling a way of life for them as they get older. If we can introduce young people to cycling through skills sessions, improving their handling and control of the bike, and ultimately their safety whilst cycling, then they will soon grow to really appreciate the joys and benefits of cycling, and discover the various different aspect of the sport and pastime.

For more information on weekly Bike Spins and other cycling activities in

your area, contact John Bann-Lavery, Cycling Ulster Youth Development Officer, at **07816751471**, or by email johnbannlavery@cyclingleulster.com or visit www.cyclingleulster.com

Taking action for sustainable living

Sustainable living – What can you do about transport?

According to research in France, Austria and Switzerland the number of deaths from respiratory or cardiovascular problems that could be directly attributed to car fumes exceeded the death toll from crashes by a factor of more than 2:1.

- Make fewer journeys in your car, or car pool with a friend or neighbour
- Use public transport, cycle or walk.
- Run your diesel car on bio-diesel
- Work from home one day a week.

With thanks to Sustainable NI.

OyBike

www.oybike.com

The OyBike system is a street based rental station network that allows you to hire and return a bicycle 24/7 via your mobile. Or to put it simply, it's a self-service bike rental service that you pay for through your mobile phone bill. Following a pilot scheme, the service is being rolled out across London. Bikes will be available at tube stations, public buildings, key transport interchanges and car parks.

No word yet of a similar scheme in Belfast.

Your comments please on bike parking in Belfast city centre

Paul Thompson, the cycling officer for Eastern Division Roads Service, has contacted NICI asking for suggestions for bike parking locations in Belfast city centre. Paul told us "Roads Service, in conjunction with Transportation Unit, Sustrans and Belfast City centre management team have been carrying out surveys in Belfast to identify suitable locations for cycle parking facilities."

The proposals for the current rolling programme are:

- Oxford Street, at St George's market, May Street end, 3 stands
- Botanic Gardens at entrance gates off University Road, 3 stands
- Royal Avenue at library, 2 stands
- Royal Avenue at post office, 2 stands
- High Street on Central Island, 2 stands
- Bridge Street at Northern Whig Building, 3 stands
- Lombard Street at Air Quality Unit, 3 stands
- Ormeau Avenue at BBC building alcove, 3 stands
- Donegall Square North at Mortgage Shop guardrail, 4 stands
- Adelaide Street at LA Fitness, 2 stands
- Adelaide Street at Clarence Court, 4 stands
- College Square East opposite BIFHE, Central Island, 4 stands

Other locations include Queen Street/College Street at Athletic Stores, Botanic Avenue at number 32, Royal Avenue at Castle Court and Social Security Office, Rosemary

Street at Bridge Street planter and finally thanks to new member, Steve Shore Fujitsu Building, Lanyon Place.

Paul welcomes suggestions for additional sites. Please send suggestions for new bike parking locations to Paul by way of our membership secretary, Kathryn Carson at kjcarson@aol.com or tel. **028 9068 3582**.

One journalist's thoughts during Bike Week 2004

Geoff Hill of the Belfast Newsletter saddled up and found that riding a bicycle was a bit like riding a bicycle, once you learn it you never forget.

How wonderful it was to set off on a bicycle on a fine summer morning, it felt like being a boy again, as I pedalled between the old tramlines, past Pat's Bar and down to the Lagan. The river was sparkling in the sunshine, and Derek Booker was just about to set off in the Joyce, with a dozen tourists for a tour of the river. Overhead, a plane was just climbing out of Belfast City Airport, and all was well with the world.

The epiphany was brought to me, since you ask, courtesy of Austin Brown, who has been an ardent spokesman for cycling since he had a revelation at the age of 20. "I loved cycling as a kid, then I forgot about it for a few years until I was in London. I bought a second hand mountain bike and that was me hooked," he said as we pedalled along by the river.

When he moved back to Belfast he opened the Life Cycle shop in Smithfield, and is now the only man in town qualified to teach on-road cycling in the province. "They pioneered this in York, running 6-week courses to teach children how to cycle safely on the roads. It was much more realistic than just learning to ride in the school playground, or a private road then being let out on the streets," he said.

He also put forward a proposal to the probation service to teach young offenders bike mechanics. "The plan is that they build their own bike, then we do a charity cycle tour from Belfast to Ballycastle, and the one who raises the most money gets to keep the bike. For me, rediscovering cycling at 20 changed my life, and I want to pass that on to others. It's cheap, environmentally friendly, and a half hour cycle into work is your exercise for the day and far more fun than an exercise bike or the gym."

By now we were in the leafy glades of Botanic Gardens. Young mums and children were sunning themselves on the grass, the warm breeze whispered in the trees and a bunch of Methodist schoolboys played touch rugby with a shoe until it got stuck up a tree. It was so much more enjoyable than being stuck in a traffic jam on the Westlink.

"You know that bike you're riding is only £240" said Austin. "I could do you a very nice deal on it."

"Do you think I could put it on my expenses?" I said, hunting in my pocket for a chequebook.

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For information on on-road training contact Austin at Life cycles on **028 9042 9959** info@lifecycles.co.uk

Editor's note:-

This article highlights the importance of cycle training in encouraging adults back to cycling. People who have been trained are twice as likely to have a sustained interest in cycling than those who have a short reintroduction.

Austin also raised the valid and interesting point about cycle-mechanic training.