

Traffic Advisory Leaflet 11/97
November 1997



Cycling to work

Introduction

The National Cycling Strategy (NCS) published in July 1996 established a target of increasing the number of cycle journeys fourfold by 2012. The NCS highlighted the important part employers could play in encouraging cycling by improving conditions for their staff at the workplace. This leaflet gives advice and guidance to employers on the good practice that is developing in the UK. It also refers to the co-ordination role that local authorities can play in stimulating changes to make cycling an attractive means of travel to work for more people.

For many people, the journey to work can be one of the easiest to transfer to a bicycle. It involves a regular journey that can be planned and requires little or nothing to carry. For those travelling longer distances, combining bike and rail can be a practical option. Many employers over-estimate the length of staff journeys, possibly because senior staff often travel further than the average employee. The 1991 National Census showed that about 66% of journeys to work are under 5 miles.

Workforce

Employers have much to gain from a fitter, healthier workforce. Employees who regularly cycle to work will be fitter than those travelling by car or public transport. Cycle friendly employers can derive other tangible benefits, through reductions in car parking provision, a greener corporate image and reduced sick leave by staff.

Becoming a cycle friendly employer is a good way of benefiting, and being seen to benefit, the environment and the local community. Many new business initiatives and awards require proof that an organisation has a good relationship with the local community and respects the environment. Providing for cycling, especially at the expense of the car, is a very visible way of doing this.

Employees can also benefit from a more reliable, less congested, healthier travel mode, and from reduced costs.

Government perspective

Government Perspective: The Government has endorsed the National Cycling Strategy, with its targets for achieving a significant increase in cycling. An influential factor will be the extent to which employers are able to provide good facilities at the workplace for cyclists.

Most Government Departments have secure cycle parking facilities, lockers, showers, and changing and drying facilities. Loans are available for bicycle purchase, and allowances of around 6p per mile are available to staff who use their bicycles on official journeys. Many local authorities and private employers also provide similar arrangements but there are many employers, particularly large companies, who could do more for their staff and set an example to smaller firms.

Cycle challenge

In 1995 the then Department of Transport provided £2m for a cycle challenge competition designed to encourage cycling at a local level. A total of 62 projects were supported. Over half had elements encouraging cycling to work. The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) aims to draw attention to the results in a series of Traffic Advisory Leaflets. Among employers involved with cycle challenge were Boots, Pfizer, Bell Northern Research, Nottingham County Council, Nottingham City Council and a number of NHS Hospital Trusts. The London Cycling Campaign worked with a number of employers to produce a report 'The Best Way to Work' which was part funded under cycle challenge. The North Cumbria Health Unit, and Project Bike Bristol have produced employers guides. Advice on this topic is also available from the CTC and Sustrans.

What can employers do?

There are a number of measures which employers can introduce, both to benefit existing cyclists and encourage others to take up cycling. The first and basic requirement is secure parking, showers and changing facilities. Interest free loans for bicycle purchase and the establishment of Bicycle User Groups (BUGS) can assist in establishing a pro-bike culture within a company, as part of wider efforts to establish a change in attitudes and culture and to promote cycling positively. Showers and changing facilities can be used by employees for other health and fitness activities, and to meet health and safety requirements. At Nottingham Trent University, as part of the Nottingham Cycle Friendly Employers Scheme, shower facilities were integrated into a general health and fitness complex.

Things local employers can do:

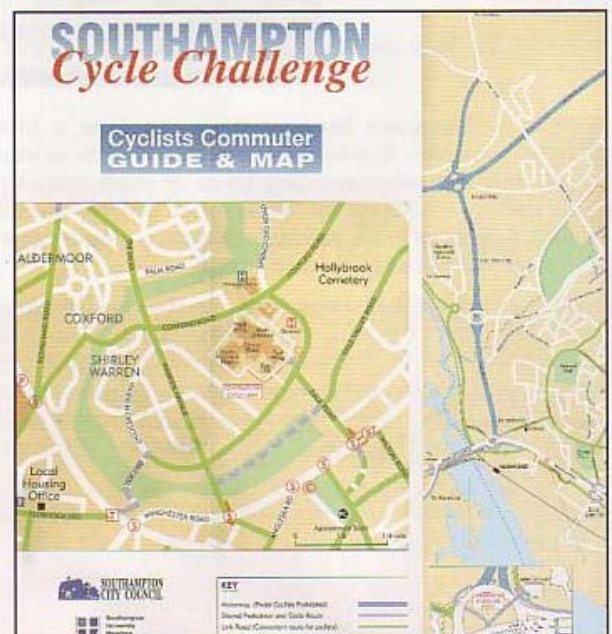
- Provide safe, secure and covered cycle parking
- Provide lockers, changing/drying facilities and showers
- Publicise to staff the facilities that are available
- Offer financial incentives, such as loans and discounts for bicycle purchase



Advanced Stop Line, Sandwich: Dover District Council

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- Publicise to staff the facilities that are available
- Offer financial incentives, such as loans and discounts for bicycle purchase
- Provide "pool bikes" and mileage allowances
- Relax dress code and introduce more flexible working hours
- Encourage local authorities and others to provide better facilities for cyclists
- Provide maps of local cycle routes
- Locate in areas accessible to all modes of transport



Southampton
Cyclists Commuter Map:
Southampton City Council

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Employers might find it useful to issue a questionnaire to their staff before embarking on changes. Work to develop a suitable questionnaire has been undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) for the DETR. The questionnaire is reproduced in the TRL report 'Trip End Facilities for Cyclists'. This can help identify the real potential for cycling, and suggest the kind of facilities which would be most influential in encouraging more cycling.

Good publicity to employees is essential to inform staff what is available to them. Local maps showing the best cycle routes for staff are a useful measure. Southampton City Council have produced such a map through their cycle challenge project. The appointment of a cycling officer to co-ordinate cycling issues might also be helpful. Such a post could be filled by a member of the BUG.

There are many other ways employers can help cyclists, some of them unique to individual employers. Pittards in Yeovil supply their cycling staff with chargers and re-chargeable batteries for cycle lights. Some employers provide a spares box for cyclists including puncture repair kits, basic tools and lights. Such items can be supplied at very little expense.

Pool Bicycles

Some employers may find it an advantage to buy pool bikes for use by staff for local business trips or during lunch breaks. Pool bikes could bring a saving over existing car expenses, though employers would probably need to provide insurance cover for staff using them. Folding bikes make excellent pool machines. Winchester City Council and BNR Europe bought pool bikes through cycle challenge. The CTC is planning to introduce an insurance package for employers seeking to cover their staff whilst cycling.



*Dr Bike Clinic at
DETR offices,
National Bike Week
1997*



Showers at Winchester City Council offices



*Lockers at Bike Park,
Leicester*

Working with local authorities and others

Employers can also liaise with the local highway authority to improve conditions for cycling locally, through the medium of green commuter plans. On large sites, employers might consider a partnership with the local authority to develop easy and safe access points. Good examples of this are Dover District Council, who worked closely with Pfizer plc; the Nottingham Friendly Employer Scheme; and BNR Europe in Harlow, Essex. In Dover the Council have worked with Pfizer over the introduction of advanced stop lines and cycle parking in the town of Sandwich and are also discussing with the company a new major cycle route, which would benefit employees.

Sefton Council, in partnership with Sefton Health Service, have as part of their cycle challenge project produced a short video 'Wheels of Fortune'. The video highlights some of the practical steps employers should consider when developing proactive cycling policies.

Larger employers may be able to stimulate an increase in cycling through the introduction of a transport plan aimed at overcoming congestion, pollution or parking problems at a particular site. Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust introduced a transport strategy which has reduced the amount of car access onto the hospital site by 15%. In addition to encouraging car-sharing and increased bus use, around 8% of staff now cycle to work.

Interest free loans

Most Government Departments provide staff with an interest free loan for bicycle purchase. A number of other employers, including local government, do likewise. For instance, DETR provides loans for bicycle purchase of up to £350, which may include the cost of a cycle helmet. There is no best level for such loan payments, but loans of up to £500 would not be unreasonable to cover bike purchase, panniers, racks, mudguards, lights, waterproofs and insurance. Loans for bike purchase could also be amalgamated with a season ticket loan, to enable staff to combine



DETR Cycle Pound at Great Minster House



Covered cycle parking at Stoke on Trent Hospital; MVA



Sheffield stands at Queens Medical Centre, Nottingham



Folding bikes and cycle lockers at Taunton Cycle Centre

public transport and bicycle journeys. Folding bicycles which can be taken on buses and trains are becoming increasingly popular, as they readily enable the bicycle to form part of a longer commuting journey.

Bicycle Purchase

For both cycle purchase and cycle loan or lease schemes, employers may be able to negotiate a discount on the usual price for bulk purchase, either with the manufacturer or their local cycle shop. Employers might also consider inducements to employees such as discounts on bicycle purchase, particularly if it involved staff giving up valuable car parking space.

Stockport Healthcare NHS Trust purchased bikes for lease to staff. The Stockport scheme has been very successful and a waiting list for bike lease is now operating. The Trust have produced a report on how to set up a leasing scheme.

The Heathrow Area Transport Forum's cycle challenge project encouraged staff to borrow bicycles. Around 80% of those who have taken up this opportunity purchased their bicycles at the end of the scheme.

Secure parking

An important aspect in giving people the confidence to cycle more is making certain that they are able to park their bikes securely under cover. Fear of theft is one of the biggest deterrents to growth in cycling.

Cycle parking at the workplace needs to be conveniently located to give reasonably easy access for staff, whilst retaining a high degree of cycle security. There are many ways in which this can be achieved. Best are often cycle sheds or stores, to which only registered cyclists can gain access, perhaps by a swipe card or combination lock. The sheds should be fitted with secure, well designed cycle racks, which can be either wall loops or floor mounted Sheffield stands. Closed circuit TV can add considerably to security.

Room for cycle sheds can be found in car parks if enough staff are willing to give up their car parking space. This would be seen as a

clear statement on green commuting. It might also prove a valuable incentive to reducing car use by employees, especially if it involved senior staff and was combined with loans for bicycle purchase or a bicycle loan scheme. It is worth remembering that one car parking space can accommodate up to 10 bicycles.

Where sheds are not possible or the number of staff is too small for a cycle store to be viable, under cover cycle racks are the next best option. Where cycle racks cannot be provided, a secure room or lockable area within a building can be an acceptable alternative. This method was used by Winchester City Council in their cycle challenge scheme. Consideration might be given to suspending bicycles on hooks or providing semi-vertical or vertical stands, but as these are not suitable for everyone to use, they may not be feasible in some workplaces. Details of manufacturers of good quality cycle parking, including lockers and cycle racks, are available either from the Cyclists' Touring Club, the London Cycling Campaign, or the DETR.

It may also be possible, without reducing security, to make cycle parking available to visitors. Good signing is necessary to enable visitors to locate the cycle park and some employers may need to make advance arrangements for visitors. An excellent example of such a facility is the cycle park at the Traffic Director for London's office in Westminster.

Secure parking costs

A Sheffield stand for two bicycles costs around £35, wall loops are a similar price. Installation cost of a Sheffield stand is around £100 per stand. A covered secure cycle park for around 12 bikes could cost less than £500. A cycle cage with a key or combination lock system will cost around £1,500 for 12 bikes. Semi-vertical or vertical stands can be introduced at around £80-£100 for 4 bikes. Individual cycle lockers are more expensive, but are popular because they permit the safe storage of clothing, helmets and accessories along with the bike. Cycle lockers may not be necessary at most locations unless it is difficult to provide secure cycle parking, or there is a history of cycle thefts.

Where CCTV is desirable, it may be possible to utilise existing cameras to cover cycle parking areas.

Mileage allowance

Generally, allowances above the national rate of 6.2 pence per mile for business journeys by bike will be subject to tax. Guidance is available from local tax offices. Some local authorities have introduced significantly higher mileage allowances; whilst these will attract tax, they can provide staff with an incentive to consider using a bike. Where allowances are paid to staff to cycle to work, the full amount of the allowance would attract tax.

Bicycle User Groups (BUGS)

Many employers have encouraged or allowed their employees to set up BUGS. These are groups formed by employees so that the effectiveness of cycle facilities can be monitored and any problems brought to the attention of the employer. Such groups, with the help and assistance of their employers, might organise events to help promote cycling. These could include Bike to Work days, Dr Bike maintenance days, and health and fitness checks and promotions. National Bike Week at the beginning of June each year can offer an excellent focus for such events, and for setting up a BUG. A notice board where members can display newsletters and items of interest is good way of spreading information.

Some members of BUGs might be willing to act as cycle partners to new cyclists by showing them safe routes and passing on their experience. A good example of this is the BUG at York City Council, which provides one-to-one tuition for new cyclists. BUGs are also well placed to help employers and local authorities produce local cycle maps. Both Project Bike in Bristol, and Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, have produced information on how to set up a BUG at the workplace.

Financing cycle facilities at the workplace

In many cases such facilities can be relatively inexpensive to provide, especially if cycle parking is provided at the expense of car parking space. It should be remembered that

car parking can cost around £1,000 per employee per year, so money spent instead on cycle facilities can realise considerable savings. Cycle facilities offer a sound return on investment in terms of a fitter and healthier workforce. Cycle challenge has shown that partnerships between private industry and local authorities can also pay dividends in publicity and goodwill.

Cycle centres

In areas where there is a lack of employer based cycle facilities, local authorities, private companies or public transport operators might consider establishing a cycle centre. There are several new centres which have been set up with help from cycle challenge. These offer a wide range of services, on similar lines to those available at the best of cycle centres located in mainland Europe and the USA. Cycle challenge funded the establishment of cycle centres in Liverpool, Taunton, Leicester and Derbyshire. For a small fee they provide features such as secure parking, showers, lockers and changing facilities. Some also offer bicycle repairs, a laundry service, sales of accessories and a range of other services. Local authorities and others may find that local cycle clubs and environmental organisations will be interested in helping establish a cycle centre, and in running it. The cycle centres at Leicester, Somerset and Derbyshire illustrate this approach, whilst the Liverpool Cycle Centre is an example of a commercial operation. DETR plans to produce a Traffic Advisory Leaflet on cycle centres soon.

Information

The importance of providing employees with information about what facilities are available or planned has already been referred to in this leaflet. Its importance cannot be over emphasised. Posters, leaflets, staff bulletins, special events and the establishment of a BUG can all offer useful sources of information and feedback. Existing, new and lapsed cyclists should all be targeted. BNR Europe have made information about their facilities available on their Internet website. The site also lists details of organisations such as DETR, Sustrans and the CTC who offer advice to cyclists.

Further Information

Enquiries should be addressed to:
Walking and Cycling
Zone 3/27 Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR
Tel: 020 79442974

References

- National Cycling Strategy, Section 5.2 (also Appendix paper on cycle parking). Available from DETR (Tel. 0171 271 5168) and also on the DETR Website at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/>
- Nottingham Cycle Friendly Employers leaflet, from Nottingham City Council (Tel. 0115 977 4585)
- 'The Best Way to Work' A report by N Guthrie for the London Cycling Campaign. Available from the LCC (Tel 0171 928 7220).

- 'Wheels of Fortune' video. Available from Sefton Health Service (Tel 01704 530940 x3752), priced £20.
- 'Trip end Facilities for Cyclists', TRL Report 309 by G Gardner and T Ryley (Tel 01344 770783/84).
- Southampton City Council Cyclists' Commuter Guide and Map, from Southampton City Council (Tel. 01703 832366)
- Stockport Health Trust Bicycle Leasing Scheme Report, Stockport Health Trust (Tel. 0161 456 0998)
- Bike Week Information, Cyclists' Touring Club (Tel. 01483 417217)

Details of other Cycle Challenge projects mentioned in this leaflet are available from DETR, at the address shown above.

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