

David Begg is acutely aware that “everyone is a transport expert” particularly when he is travelling on trains and lets slip to fellow passengers that he is Chair of the Commission for Integrated Transport. Professor Begg sits on the Board of Transport for London, the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority and is Honorary President of the Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign.

David knows from personal experience, “the hardest part of being a politician is changing travel behaviour.” He was Convenor of Transportation on Edinburgh Council in the 1990s, during which time any new traffic calming measures were nicknamed “Begg’s Bumps.”

In his address to the February meeting of the GMPTA Health and Transport Working Group Begg noted that more people can be carried by tram than an eight lane motorway. An ironic observation at a time when the M60 is being widened to eight lanes and the funding for Phase 3 of Metrolink has stalled. When it does go ahead it could take 3.5 million people out of their cars. These benefits have to be locked in - otherwise the vacated road space will simply fill up with other cars. Strong regional government (such as the London Assembly) is vital in this process but not enough. In Bavaria where the Lander runs a first class public transport system bus use has fallen in the absence of car restraint.

Across London there has been a modal shift towards buses with a 15 per cent increase in passengers. Services have improved and waiting times have fallen. Less congestion has contributed to a rise in air quality Journeys by car have fallen from 36 to 32 per



Commissioner Begg calls for Expansion of Congestion Charging

cent over five years while more cyclists and walkers fill the streets.

Mayor Livingstone controls London buses – a power unavailable to the GMPTA in deregulated Greater Manchester. Now that he has been re-elected Ken plans to expand Congestion Charging westwards. Begg’s vision is of a Zone bounded by the M25 generating £3 billion per annum which could be pumped back into public transport *and* reduce Council Tax for Londoners.

Nationally Begg noted the impact of planning decisions on individual and collective life, “Outer city malls have replaced neighbourhood shopping centres, people now spend more time in their cars than their homes.”

The response to climate change is inertia – “politicians are more concerned with the next election rather than the next generation.” The impact on public health is alarming: 40 per cent of pollution is generated by congestion, 14 per cent of children suffer from asthma and 24,000 Britons die prematurely each year due to poor air quality. Car dependency limits opportunity for exercise contributing to the rise in obesity. Transport guru Mayer-Hillman has warned, “we are

raising battery chickens not free range children.” David Begg’s young neighbours are driven to the amusement arcade to play on the car simulator. Yet a Glasgow survey showed that pupils who walk or cycle to school are more alert. In Greater Manchester yellow buses sponsored by the PTE, modelled on American practice offer a sociable alternative to the school car run.

The Chair of the CfIT is convinced that restraining demand is vital to containing congestion. Begg believes that a combination of in-car technology (facilitating universal road charging) and work based parking levies (within the power of local authorities) will do more to slow the inexorable rise of car use than any amount of traffic engineering.

Postscript. Two weeks after the Manchester meeting 74 per cent of Edinburgh residents in a referendum voted against road tolls. The turnout was 62 per cent. Alistair Darling, Transport Secretary and Edinburgh Central MP had supported the plan. As had David Begg, who commented, “If Barbara Castle had held a referendum on 1968 on whether to introduce breathalysers and drink-drive laws, I think the public would have voted against.”

Transport Minister, battered by Bikers, banished by Blair

Charlotte Atkins, MP for Staffordshire and the Moorlands and Transport Minister since September 2004 addressed the Sustrans Rangers Conference in Manchester. She recalled life as a cycling Wandsworth Councillor, “I was constantly trapping my front wheel in poorly positioned drains. Transport matters - congestion around schools comes a close second to neighbour disputes as the issue most raised by my constituents. Sadly the National Cycling Strategy Board has failed to increase cycling. The government has now invested £10m in its successor Cycling England.”

The minister faced a barrage of criticism from her audience about the paucity of this sum compared to the billions spent on road building. She was unable to commit more funds to Metrolink Phase 3 – or to promise that government departments would do more to help their 6,561,000 staff (1 in 4 of all UK workers) take up cycling through better bike parking and enhanced mileage allowances. She did reassure a questioner that Labour has no plans to legislate for compulsory helmets, “Personally I support them and feel obliged to wear one if I am photographed anywhere near a bike.” John Grimshaw then rescued the Minister from further verbal assaults when he presented her with a plaque recognising official support for the Sustrans Safe Routes to Schools programme – 250 links have been made between the National Cycle Network and schools.

During the election campaign Ms Atkins hit the headlines for announcing on a Radio Stoke phone-in that Labour will abolish Council Tax. A claim swiftly denied by an official spokesman.

On 5 May she retained her seat despite her majority being halved but lost her government position in the post election re-shuffle. Replaced by Stephen Ladyman, she returned to the back benches. Now without her Ministerial car, Charlotte is back on her bike, “a London cyclist seen and no longer ignored.” Thanks to Prodigal Ken.....

Two Wheels Very Good

The bicycle has been voted the greatest technical advance of the last two centuries, ahead of the internet and the internal combustion engine, in a survey of BBC Radio 4 listeners. It was chosen by 59 per cent of those who took part, winner by a country mile over the transistor and the electro magnetic induction ring, which came joint second with a mere eight per cent each. Professor Heinz Wolff of Brunel University who nominated the bike, claims it "changed humanity by providing affordable personal transport."

Trans-Atlantic Cycling.....

"I've cycled to school or work since I was about 13 – in London, Boston, Washington and New York. Cars are mean to cyclists everywhere. New York is the only city where the cyclists are mean to each other." *Stephanie Flanders, London-based American economist.*

Sustrans rangers mobilise in manchester



Better than 'Critical Mass'

Sustrans' volunteer rangers meet annually to discuss the latest issues in their work looking after the National Cycle Network (NCN) and receive some training from Sustrans professional staff. They met in Manchester on a lovely day in March, and GMCC's Vincent Walsh and Dick Venes were there to record the event. The day started with a large assembly of cyclists at Piccadilly station, complete with MEN reporter and photographer. Vincent conducted the 50 plus riders round the City of Manchester stadium, 'B of the Bang' and the

Velodrome, pointing out local facilities and taking lots of photos along the way.

Grimshaw turns on the charm

Once back at the Mechanics Institute on Princess Street, the rangers got down to the business of the day, starting with a welcome from Councillor 'Green Manchester' Neil Swannick. Sustrans head honcho John Grimshaw then gave an excellent presentation on progress with the NCN, complete with stunning mapping software. He pointed out that 3 of 6 awards for National lottery funded projects had been cycling related and the NCN

won the major award. In looking forward to the next 10 years, he anticipated further improvements in the areas of: links to NCN routes such as the Fallowfield Loop, cycling to schools, and new bridges to link communities for walkers and cyclists. He posed the question as to whether Sustrans activities have a role in combating climate change, for example, by encouraging people to explore their local area by bikes on holiday rather than travelling by unsustainable modes. Finally he asked for support for the Trailblazing ride from Cambridge to Preston from 12th to 18th September this year (more details in the next issue of 'Pothole').

BIKE WEEK, JUNE 2005 - PLEASE TRY AND SUPPORT SOME OF THESE EVENTS AND ENCOURAGE OTHER 'CASUAL' CYCLISTS TO DO SO

	Saturday 11th	Sunday 12th	Monday 13th	Tuesday 14th	Wednesday 15th	Thursday 16th	Friday 17th	Sunday 19th
Bolton				Bike2Work commuter challenge, ASDA, Middlebrook, cyclists breakfast 0730 - 0930. Women only bike ride, 1100 - 1300, venue tbc.	Bike2Work Commuter Challenge, Victoria Square, cyclists breakfast 0730 - 0930. Cycle Festival, Victoria Square, 1000-1600 Mass bike ride, Victoria Square to Rivington and back, start 1830.	Cycling through Seven Acres, 1100 - 1300, led cycle ride, details tbc.		Family bike ride, Moses Gate Country Park, 1300 - 1500
Bury		Pilkington's Family Group Ride, 1100, Pilkington's shop on Bolton Road (0161-764-2723)					Company of Cyclists roadshow, Kay Gardens, contact c.m.wilkinson@bury.gov.uk	Ride the Red Rose Trail, Outwood to Holcombe Brook. Contact c.m.wilkinson@bury.gov.uk for details
Manchester	City Centre Show, St Ann's Square, 1100 - 1630.	Dawdling Doctor's gentle ride to Styal, 1000 Chorlton Water Park (Maitland Rd entrance)		Family ride, St Wilfrid's Primary School, Newton Heath, 1800.	Bike to Work Day. Family ride, Chorlton Water Park, 1815.	Family Ride, St Anthony's R.C. Primary School, Wythenshawe, 1800.	Cycling pub crawl, 15 miles, mostly off road on Fallowfield Loop & TPT. Chorlton Water park or Lloyds Hotel, Chorlton, 1800	Fallowfield Loop ride 12 miles (meet Chorlton Water Park 1100) & picnic in Albert Square. Manchester Airport to Albert Square, 1030, Airport cycle centre
Oldham				6 mile ride along Pennine Bridleway, meet 1830 at car park on A635 Manchester Road, near junction of Well-I-Hole Road. Suitable for family groups	9 mile challenging ride between Alexandra Park (meet 1830) and Harthead Pike, using quiet lanes.			
Rochdale			Bike to Work breakfast, 0800-1000, followed by Company of Cyclists roadshow, 1000- 1600, The Butts, Rochdale town centre		Bike to School day for 'Bike It' schools.			Cycle skills session for families and children, 1300-1600, Hollingworth Lake visitor centre
Salford								
Stockport								
Tameside								
Trafford								
Wigan		Ride for Health, for council, college and health trust personnel, Haigh Hall		Off Road cycling, 1830, Haigh Hall, pre-booking essential - contact j.noakes@wiganmbc.gov.uk	Bikers Breakfast for Council staff in Wigan			Off Road cycling, 1300, Scotsman's Flash, pre-booking essential, contact j.noakes@wiganmbc.gov.uk

No information at time of going to press - contact cycling officers (see back page table) or try the Council website for events.

Cycling on t'Internet in Greater Manchester



What do Rangers do?

Rangers were then entertained by presentations on signing the NCN, risk assessment for work day tasks, use of the rangers website and the work of the 'Friends of the Fallowfield Loop'. They also participated in a variety of workshops on ranger activities, which gave them the chance to compare notes and ideas. I was particularly interested in one on 'working with local authorities', but the difficulties were highlighted by one ranger, who is a local authority employee, admitting the problems many volunteers have in making contact with the right officers!

Cycling - the political game

John Grimshaw's 'clout' with the political establishment was illustrated by the appearance of Charlotte Atkins MP, a transport minister with responsibility for green issues and cycling. She presented some useful statistics on the NCN and who is and is not cycling, being particularly concerned with the low level of women cyclists - only 8% of women cycle regularly. (The composition of the ranger meeting didn't help to illustrate any change, being overwhelmingly male, white and middle aged, including the GMCC members!). She gave a brief overview of changes in the way the cycling is addressed at national level, with the NCS Board being replaced by English Cycling, chaired by Philip Darnton. She identified one of the key issues as training, for both children and adults, and also mentioned a new helpline as an information source for local authority officers on cycling issues - run by the CTC! The minister fended off a few pertinent questions from rangers, which contributed to my view that she represents 'New Labour' at its most typical. They are keen to 'consult' on issues such as cycling, getting the right policies and bodies in place but then failing to do enough practically and financially to make any difference.

This article is a continuation of 'old git's' research on the cycling content of Greater Manchester Local Authorities' websites. All sites had been first checked on 31/1/05, and cycling officers asked what they intended to do to rectify poor publicity for cycling issues. The sites were all rechecked on 3/5/05 using the same criteria as previously, with the following results.

Progress!

Has my first article and queries to cycling officers produced some results? Of the 5 Councils who featured, Oldham MBC site shows the most improvement, as it now contains information on the cycle forum and links to cycling organisations such as Sustrans and GMCC!. Manchester has added good information about events for Bike Week, and now mentions the Cycle Forum and cycle parking. None are yet up to the standard of Bury's superior efforts. The Tameside site now includes a date for the next cycle forum (unfortunately out of date!). Wigan retains its wilderness status with no change.

Then and now

I was hoping that the prospect of the other Councils' websites coming under scrutiny in this issue of 'Pothole' would have spurred on cycling officers and IT persons to improve their content. Sadly, the results are generally disappointing.

Bolton bonus

The contrast between January and May could not be more spectacular than Bolton MBC's cycling content. Despite Bolton MBC's claim on their homepage that 'we are excellent', the original search for 'cycling' came up with a section on clinical waste and searches for 'cycle forum' and 'cycling strategy' came up with no match. There was no entry for cycling in the A to Z listing! Bolton's new cycling officer, Kevin Toye, apologised for this - it was due to a failure to transfer information to a new system. Anyway, he has sorted it out so the 'cycling' search now comes up with several sections, including: strategy, forum min-

utes, Bike Week and a list of bike shops. However, it is disappointing there is nothing on Bolton's exciting new off road route from Horwich to the town centre, and too many of the items are only available as pdf downloads. Thanks Kevin and we look forward to the new GM site - score ***.

Stockport stability.

On the original survey, Stockport rated highly, and their site continues to benefit from regular updating. Using the search feature brings up information about the Cycle User Group and sub-group meetings (slightly out of date) and minutes thereof. It also leads to information on cycling and rights of way, Stockport Community cycling club, and a good list of summer rides for 2005. There is no link to Stockport's cycling strategy. The other disappointing aspect is that using the A to Z list comes up with cycling, but only gives cycling officer Don Naylor's contact details, without links to all the other cycling information on the site - score ****.

Surprising Salford

Councillor Andy Salmon and scrutiny officer Peter Kidd's good efforts to raise the profile of cycling in Salford are reflected in the site's content, which rated satisfactory when checked originally and remains sound. The search function brings up information on the cycling forum, cycle strategy (downloadable as a pdf), training and how cyclists can request new cycle lanes and routes. These pages are also accessible via the A to Z list. The forum section allows downloading of the action points from the meetings - score ***.

Trafford -

tranfusion needed

The 'too posh to pedal' council maintains its perceived indifference to matters cycling in its website. The original search revealed nothing more than a 'Google' search site whose only cycling content was a promotion for bike shops and a telephone number for enquiries on cycling.

The top hit for the search 'cycling forum' was the news that councillors are elected on a four year cycle (geddit?!). At least back in January there were entries in the A to Z list for cycle training and cycling strategy, with contact numbers. Now there is no entry for cycling at all! - score zero stars.

Reclusive Rochdale

If anything the Rochdale MBC appears to have less cycling content now than in January. In January there was some information about two Rochdale Cycling Club rides (in August 2004!). Now the only thing appearing at 'cycling' search is a link to a large pdf download on Rochdale's LA21 strategy, with minimal reference to cycling, and information that safer cycling courses are given to all year 6 schoolchildren. Using the A to Z index for the letter C shows 65 entries including chemical spills and cockroaches but no cycling! This is very disappointing as Rochdale has an active cycle forum and some good people working on cycling related issues - score zero stars.

Conclusion

Can 'old git' claim any kudos for the recent improvement in GM local authority website cycling content? He would like to think so, but credit to those cycling officers who have persuaded their employers to get some decent information about cycling issues onto t'internet, a medium which should suit the target audience for increasing cycling - youngsters. There is obviously room for improvement in content of most of the sites and personally I would like to see more publicity for off road routes in the area, either through downloadable maps and guides or via explanations and links to organisations such as Sustrans and the Trans Pennine Trail. It seems to me that the cost of doing this would be well worthwhile bearing in mind the health and air pollution benefits of cycling, but unfortunately none of the websites yet make much of these more holistic links.

Cycling for Fun. (!)

Once a month a bunch of people collect at Chorlton Water Park at about ten o'clock on a Sunday morning and go out for a bike ride. There is usually a planned route, though this can be changed at the last minute if the wind is in the wrong direction. It is thought better to have the wind behind one on the way home. The rides range over the northern bit of the Cheshire plain, going as far as Bollington in the East and Great Budworth to the West. The pace is gentle and often broken by stops to stand around and gas while the people at the back of the ride catch up. There is usually a pub at the outer end of the ride, and if people are up for it, sometimes a tea stop on the way home. It's a social thing with a bike ride attached rather than any sort of race or endurance test, and it has garnered a steady group of between 15 and 30 people who go out regularly.

For the last ten years or so it has run under the name of The Dawdling Doctors, and it will continue to do so until the end of this year, when the "leader" is going to stand down in order to "spend more time with his family" as they say. It would be sad if

such an undynamic group of cyclists simply melted into the mist, and I hope that some people will take on the mantle and continue to "organise" Sunday rides for non-lycra cyclists who don't like reading maps.

All that is needed is a list of dates and rides, a person to go at the front who knows the way and another to go at the back and "sweep". It is not a club, has no members, no officers, no insurance cover, no bureaucracy. It is just a bunch of people going out for a ride. Anybody can go as long as they are over 18, or accompanied by a parent/guardian of under. It could be "run" via a website or a smartgroup. Roll up, roll up and keep this thing going. Yes it's not only possible to have fun on a bike, it's almost hard not to. As the writers of the Bikefix catalogue say:- "it's not just a free lunch, it's one you're paid to eat." Contact rob@bicycledoctor.co.uk



Caption Competition

As part of their introduction to Greater Manchester Cycle Campaigning Leah (on the left) and Lynda (on the right) were wheeled by their Dad, Vincent Walsh to Bicycle Doctor. Examine the photograph to the left and gauge their reaction. The best suggestion judged by Dad Vincent and Bicycle Doctor and (Grandad) Rob Raikes will win a copy of Richards 21st Century Bicycle Book and appear in Pothole.

Email entries to vincentwalsh@tiscali.co.uk by 31 July 2005

Dangerous Corner

Charlie and I have both been sent flying at the corner of King's Rd and Upper Chorlton Rd. It is a particularly nasty road junction as King's Rd joins at an oblique angle so that motorists have to look back behind themselves to see if anything is coming, and of course cyclists are invisible, with their fluorescent clothing and so on.

It is also dodgy because traffic coming South along Upper Chorlton Road, having just got up to warp speed after the lights at Brook's Bar don't want to slow down again just because some bloody cyclist is coming the other way, and may just turn right in

front of you. They did in front of me, but by the time I came round, they'd gone, and I had a broken collar bone and a bit of a headache.

Charlie was skittled by a Mantax, who showed the same sort of caring attitude by bugging off quam celeriter. Charlie was lucky enough to find a good fairy in a four wheel drive who gave chase and got the taxi driver's details and offered to be a witness. So no more jokes about plonker tonkas, at least not this week.

I learned about the Motor Insurer's Bureau, from whom I made a claim for my injuries. They cover hit and run incidents, and

they sorted me out in six months. Needless to say I spent the money on yet another bike.

The Motor Insurer's Bureau was set up to cover hit and run incidents. It is funded from a levy paid by all the insurance companies. Should you be in the unfortunate position of having to contact them their details are:- Motor Insurer's Bureau, Linford Wood House, 6-12 Capital Drive, Linford Wood, Milton Keynes, MK14 6XT
Tel 01908 830001
Fax 01908 671681
E Enquiries@MIB.org.uk

Bike Shops Discounts to GMCC members

A1 Cycle Spares - 998 2882
414-416 Palatine Road, Northenden

A6 Cycle Warehouse, - 0161 248 5400
752-762 Stockport Road, Longsight

Altrincham Bike Shak - 9355
10 Oakfield Trading Estate, Oakfield Road

Bardsleys Cycles - 0161 432 4936
482 Manchester Road, Stockport

Bicycle Doctor - 0161 224 130368-
70 Dickenson Road, Rusholme

Eddie McGrath Cycles, - 0161 748 2733
31 Station Road, Urmston, Trafford

Hirts Cycles - 0161 794 2000
60-62 Chorley Road, Swinton, Salford

Ken Foster's Cycle Logic - 0161 881 7160
374-6 Barlow Moor Road, Chorlton

Lebram - 0161 928 6600
197 Manchester Road, Broadheath

Lebram - 0161 969 1818
172-4 Northenden Road, Sale Moor

NW Mountain Bike Centre - 0161 428 3311
249 Stockport Road, Cheadle

Skidmores Cycles - 0161 624 5912
37 Union Street, Oldham

Withington Cycles - 0161 445 3492
26 Burton Road, Withington

Pothole is the newsletter of the Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign. The Campaign meets on the second Monday of each month, 7.30pm at the Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester, followed by real ale at the City Arms, Kennedy Street.

Contacts:
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secretary@gmcc.org.uk or telephone 0161-224-3843.

GM Authority	Contact	Phone	Email	Next Cycle Forum	Date and Venue
BOLTON	Kevin Toye	01204 336115	kevin.toye@bolton.gov.uk	27 th July, 5.30pm,	Bolton Town Hall
BURY	Chris Wilkinson	0161 253 5269	c.m.wilkinson@bury.gov.uk	Contact Chris Wilkinson,	Bury Town Hall
MANCHESTER	Mark Stevenson	0161 455 2232	m.stevenson1@notes.manchester.gov.uk	8 th June, 5.30 for 6pm,	Manchester Town Hall
OLDHAM	Paul Bruffell	0161 911 4360	paul.bruffell@oldham.gov.uk	20 th September, 6pm,	Oldham Civic Centre
ROCHDALE	Dan Griffiths	01706 864374	dan.griffiths@rochdale.gov.uk	Contact Dan	Rochdale Town Hall
SALFORD	Peter Kidd	0161 793 3849	peter.kidd@salford.gov.uk	Contact Peter Kidd	Civic Centre, Swinton
STOCKPORT	Don Naylor	0161 474 4593	don.naylor@stockport.gov.uk	20 th July, 6pm,	Stockport Town Hall
TAMESIDE	Chijioko Ebizie	0161 342 3951	chijioko.ebizie@tameside.gov.uk	Contact Chijioko,	Council Offices, Ashton-u-Lyne
TRAFFORD	Paul Barrett	0161 912 4399	paul.barrett@trafford.gov.uk	Suspended - Council is too posh to pedal!	
WIGAN	Damian Garner	01942 404061	damian.garner@wiganmbc.gov.uk	Contact Damian re new Highway User Group	