

## Bikes (nearly, maybe, possibly) on Trams

### The Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign

meets on the second Monday of each month, 7.30pm at the Friends Meeting House on Mount Street, close to Manchester Town Hall. The meeting is usually followed by a drink in a nearby pub. Do join us

**Together we are stronger**

### I Bike Manchester Festival 2010

26 March - 30 April

www.ibikemcr.org.uk

*Whatever you do you should bike. Bike to school, bike to work... bike to places you never dreamt you could bike to. Be your bike a fixie with deep v's or a sit up and beg, bike in high heels or in lycra... Come and bike with us.*

Intense lobbying by Greater Manchester cycling groups forced an embarrassing climb down by the Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority. The full meeting of the GMITA on 12 February, effectively revoked the decision by its Capital Projects Committee in January to endorse the cycle carriage ban on Metrolink.

At the earlier meeting an unholy alliance between Lib Dem and Tory councillors maintained the status quo despite an impassioned plea by Love Your Biker Pete Abel.

There was anger not only at the decision but the flawed and secretive processes underpinning it, particularly a GMPTE-commissioned report which ignored the 2002 GMCC study **Cycle Carriage on Metrolink**. Aware that consultants Mott Macdonald had completed their still-unpublished work in April 2009, Pete Abel submitted a Freedom of Information request on 15 September. This message disappeared into the black hole of the GMPTE website so he re-submitted the request by email on 28 October 2009. Public bodies have a statutory duty to respond to FoI requests within 20 working days, but it was a further 51 days before the full report, *The Implications of the Carriage of Bicycles on Trams* [www.gmpte.com/pdf/Bicycles\\_on\\_Trains.pdf](http://www.gmpte.com/pdf/Bicycles_on_Trains.pdf) was released on the

GMITA website three days after the critical vote on 15 January.

There was outrage with a flurry of press releases and letters culminating in the MEN headline, **GMPTE's 'dirty tricks' over bike ban on trams**. Love Your Bike distributed a detailed ten page rebuttal to the claims made in the Mott Macdonald report. Campaigners were

boards onto a tram followed by cameras from Channel M, BBC and the MEN. On the short trip to Cornbrook they engaged in *extreme ironing* which continued on the return journey. All this served to highlight the inconsistency of a policy that allowed some bulky items onto a tram but not bikes – even folding ones (unless encased in a bag).

Emboldened, a crease-free Pete Abel entered the lions' den of Manchester Town Hall. Initially it was feared the Capital Projects Committee decision would be rubber-stamped but two hours later Pete emerged with a statement from the Chair Cllr Richard Knowles. "The Authority, wishes to set up a working group of six members, two from each political party with advice from Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign, Love Your Bike, the ten district councils and local transport



user groups to discuss the contents of the Mott Macdonald report and examine any safe ways in which cycles can be carried on trams. An additional resolution from Labour's Andrew Fender instructed GMPTE to evaluate the experience of European Light Rail Systems which permit the carriage of bicycles, estimate the cost of providing facilities to enable the new M5000 trams to carry bicycles, cost the options for modifying the T68

encouraged to lobby their local councillors and the 33 members of GMITA who would attend the full meeting on 12 February. On the morning of the GMITA gathering GMCC Public Transport Facilitator Steve Bowater was interviewed on BBC Manchester then joined campaigners in St Peters Square to "iron the kinks out of the bikes-on-trams policy." Defying the cold they bared their knees and carried deckchairs and ironing

boards onto a tram followed by cameras from Channel M, BBC and the MEN. On the short trip to Cornbrook they engaged in *extreme ironing* which continued on the return journey. All this served to highlight the inconsistency of a policy that allowed some bulky items onto a tram but not bikes – even folding ones (unless encased in a bag).

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# .....Bikes on Trams

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and T68A trams to provide facilities to enable them to carry bicycles and plan for the experimental introduction of off-peak bicycle carriage. Appropriately, both groups are required to report back to the Policy and Resources, rather than the Capital Projects Committee. There was clear embarrassment with the process leading up to the Capital Projects Committee decision, described as "shoddy and shabby" by one councillor. The U turn provides a strong reminder to GMPTE to consult fully with cyclists and other interested parties. Hopefully it will be more meaningful than the last time. Forced by another Fol request (from Richard Alderson), GMPTE admitted, "There was a cycle carriage focus group consultation event on 1 March 2003. A report was due to go to elected members in April/May 2003. However we have been unable to find any report being made and there is no record of a report having been brought to the then Authority."

Our campaign has been closely followed by CTC. Their Public Transport Campaign Co-ordinator, Dave Holladay noted that 6 of 14 references in the consultants' report made the case for cycle carriage, one recommending the Croydon Tramlink system open up to carry cycles outside peak times for a small additional fare. "I'm also amazed key work by the US Transportation Research Board and the CTC study with Allot & Lomax escaped the scrutiny of the consultants," says Dave. "Since this debacle I have assisted initiatives to implement the Croydon report and provide information to Sheffield and

Newcastle for developing cycle carriage trials on their networks. This has been reinforced by Manchester Withington MP John Leech asking Transport Secretary Lord Adonis to provide details of the advice the DfT gives to tram operators on cycle carriage. A 2004 National Audit Office report indicated that the light rail systems were failing to perform to projected levels with much spare capacity." Roger Geffen, CTC Campaigns and Policy Director is cautiously optimistic, "The GMITA committee words do give some hope for progress but they really need a commitment to a timetable for delivery. It was 2002 that GMCC was promised a review of cycle carriage in time for the Oldham-Manchester reopening but this was parked in the sidings until 2010." Sentiments echoed by Pete Abel, "GMPTE should have consulted on this a long time ago but we look forward to working with the GMITA to help develop a progressive, integrated and sustainable transport network for Greater Manchester in the 21st century."

Pete is taking no chances, he continues to expose the secretive workings of GMPTE with the help of the Fol Act. His latest request is for "the terms of reference provided by GMPTE to Mott Macdonald for the consultancy work which culminated in their April 2009 report and the total value of the contract for the provision of that report."

## Footnote.....

Back in 1897 San Francisco Trams courted cycling customers. Each tramcar carried 10 bikes earning the company the equivalent of \$23,000 additional revenue each month.

## Cycling as a Solution GMCC hosts Cyclenation Conference

Cyclists from around the country converged upon Manchester in late May for a weekend of presentation, discussion, cycling and socialising. Friday saw the Cycling Futures Seminar taking place in Manchester Town Hall followed next day by the GMCC-hosted Spring 2009 Cyclenation conference.

Saturday saw a flurry of cyclists arriving on their de rigueur Brompton folders. Once breakfast had been demolished, a series of keynote speakers took the stage touting the benefits of cycling on our Health, Wealth, Environment and Community. There was even a fashion talk.



First up was Koy Thompson (pictured) of London Cycling Campaign who proposed the notion that our streets and open spaces form the public realm which should be held in higher regard and shared more equitably. CTC's Roger Geffen then outlined the new *Safety in Numbers* campaign, its theme, *more people cycling makes cycling safer*.

Joe Mellor, NHS consultant and chair of SPOKES (NHS network devoted to cycling)

outlined the impact of cardiovascular disease and cancer. He described how regular exercise like cycling can reduce the risks of succumbing to these life-threatening illnesses.

Bruce Macdonald, an analyst for SQW Consulting presented the findings of research conducted on behalf of Cycling England. He revealed that a 50 per cent increase in the number of cycle trips by 2015 will save the economy £1.3 billion NHS expenditure, productivity gains, less pollution and reduced congestion.

CTC Cycling Champions, Juliet Jardine and Mark Gumbs gave insightful updates on their community projects, working with schools, young people, women, the elderly, disabled and minority groups.

Amy Fleuriot founder of Cyclodelic, a manufacturer of stylish cycling clothing and accessories, related the history of women and cycling, stressing the importance of fashion and marketing in mobilising a new generation of women on two wheels.

In the afternoon delegates attended workshops on topics ranging from communication and fundraising to shaping Local Transport Plans and web-based mapping.

## Future Cycling Cities

Portsmouth will play host to the Spring 2010 CTC/Cyclenation conference. It will take place on **17th April** at Portland Building, Portsmouth University. Theme of the conference **Future Cycling Cities**, focusing on how to put cycling at the heart of town and city life: <http://conference.pompeybug.co.uk/>

# Rod King founder of Twenty's Plenty For Us talks to Dan Cadden

**Is campaigning in your blood or have circumstances drawn you to it?**

It was circumstances. Mind you Warrington New (Motor) Town certainly helped - with their vehicle-fixated road planning in the 70s and 80s. When I joined Warrington Cycle Campaign in 2000 we were focussing on facilities to protect cyclists from vehicles. In 2004 I cycled to Warrington's German twin town Hilden and found poor quality facilities yet 23 per cent of in-town trips being made by bicycle - all on the foundation of 30 kph speed limits. I realised our quest for better cycle facilities was not making any difference to cycle safety but simply maintaining high motor vehicle speeds. That visit changed me from a cycle campaigner to a road danger-reduction advocate. Society desperately needs to normalise its relationship with the motor vehicle. Once this is done cycling will naturally increase and become an important part of our transport solution.

**In one sentence describe your experience of cycle campaigning?**

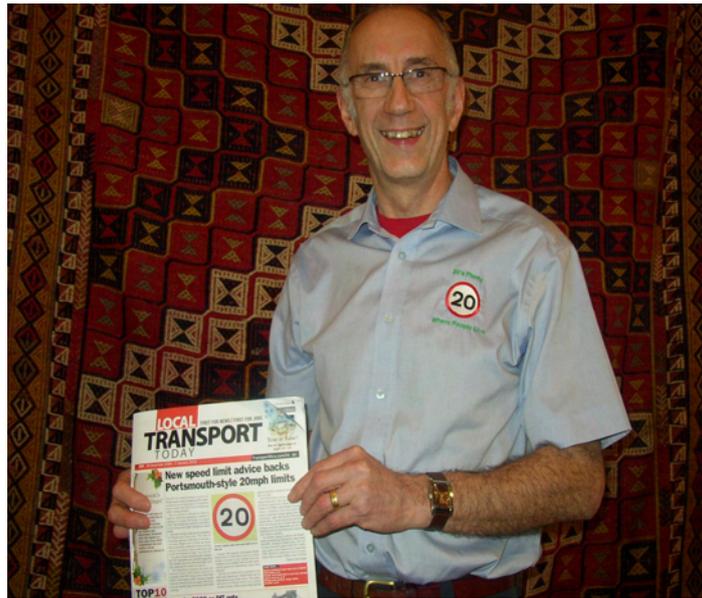
The challenge of explaining the counter-intuitive.

**What are the most rewarding aspects of cycle campaigning?**

Empowering pedestrians and cyclists. Our culture has already changed but the establishment takes time to recognise and react to that change. As Gandhi said "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." And on 20's Plenty we are winning.

**And what are the least?**

Seeing campaigners bogged down in detail on localised schemes. Our real strength is representing everyone who wishes to cycle rather



than merely those who do. We underestimate our ability to act as a catalyst for social change.

**How does being a cycle campaigner affect the rest of your life?**

Since founding 20's Plenty for Us I get emails from around the country every day: national campaigners, local activists and simply members of the public wanting a better quality of life in their street for their children. Speaking at 20's Plenty meetings, the support and enthusiasm of so many has provided much personal inspiration.

**What one thing could most effectively improve campaigning?**

Recognition the space between houses *aka* streets is the most extensive and valuable public space we have. It should be equally and safely enjoyed by all regardless of their chosen method of moving.

**What is the most surprising thing you have learnt about people from your experience as a campaigner?**

That most local politicians are trying hard to get a better quality of life for their

constituents. I've met some ignorant ones and some with faulty logic but most will listen and respond to community aspirations for better sharing of the roads. It's our role to convert those aspirations into reality.

**What do you consider the most inventive campaign you have been involved with to date?**

Founding 20's Plenty for Us in 2007 when many cycle campaigners considered it an unobtainable Holy Grail, collaborating on the Crap Cycle Lanes book and working with Chris Mayes of WCC bringing together cyclists and pedestrians for the Warrington 2008 Streets Ahead conference. Oh, and saying "yes" when David Byrne of Talking Heads asked WCC to speak at the 2007 New Yorker Festival.

**What type of cycling do you mainly engage in?**

Before 20's Plenty for Us I managed a two week tour each year - I can recommend travelling down the River Duero from Spain to Portugal. But now it tends to be cycling to work or the Tuesday night blast around the Cheshire lanes with friends.

**If you weren't taking part in this interview, what would you be doing instead?**

If not doing the day job, probably answering emails or updating our website.

**Cycling aside, what else is important to you?**

Family, especially grandchildren.

**Finally, describe your ideal Sunday afternoon.**

Doing something different from the previous Sunday afternoon.

## DfT keener on 20s Plenty

In December the DfT issued a circular proposing to relax its conditions for creating *area-wide* limits rather than zones. <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speed-limits/> If average speed is >24 mph councils are no longer required to install traffic calming measures. Routine police enforcement is acceptable rather than additional policing resources. The DfT letter notes the "lower risk of fatal injury at lower speeds" and "further benefits of 20 mph schemes include encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling." This mirrors the call by CTC to "Make 20 mph the default urban speed limit on most roads and streets" - a key component of its **Safety in Numbers** campaign to reduce the danger and fear of cycling.

[http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/CTC\\_SafetyinNumbers.pdf](http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/CTC_SafetyinNumbers.pdf) GMCC wrote to all 10 councils urging a positive response to the circular. Our transport planners remain unconvinced. David Maloney of GM Transportation Unit re-stated "We do not support making 20 mph zones the default limit."

## Bike Friday

Critical Commute has been re-launched as **Bike Friday**. Initially following the same format with rides beginning on the last Friday every month in various locations across Greater Manchester and converging on Exchange Square in the City Centre by 8.30 am. It's an opportunity for cycle commuters to tag along for a chat or gain confidence cycling on city streets.

Rides commence from the following locations at 8 am:

- Stretford Mall (next to Chester Road bus stop)
- Chorlton Library
- Withington Library
- Levenshulme Station
- Prestwich Pizza (junction of Bury New Road & Scholes Lane)

Once all the radial rides have checked in at Exchange Square a further ride is led out to Salford Quays. Employers are being asked to get in the action, by pledging their support to Bike Friday. For more information have a look at <http://tinyurl.com/frycle>.

## Bike Loving Bobby is Scourge of Thieves

The Manchester Evening News reports that a police officer patrolling one of the city's crime hotspots has become the scourge of bike thieves and the guardian angel of cycle owners. In the past six months, PC Le Cheminant has seized 55 stolen bikes and arrested 15 people for theft and handling stolen goods. He caught one thief after he spotted him



riding a £1500 road bike and steering another just five minutes after breaking into a garage. PC Le Cheminant, who has served for 29 years said: "Sometimes searches of the offenders' properties lead to more stolen goods, drugs and weapons. We can trace the bike owners through crime reports on the police computers. It is very satisfying returning them to their owners, they can't thank you enough." The 55-year-old officer has even returned bikes before they have been reported stolen, after tracking down their owners through manufacturers and retailers. Bike theft is not uncommon in Manchester. Help prevent your bike being stolen by:

- Using a decent lock, usually one that is worth at least ten percent of the bike's total value
- Locking your bike to a secure immovable object, preferably

- purpose-built cycle parking - and in view of CCTV cameras
- Remembering to lock the bike through the frame and secure *both* wheels if they are quick release - flexible cables that work with most D locks can help
- Noting down your bikes serial number and keep it somewhere safe. If your bike is stolen, the serial number may be the only way of identifying it as yours. Remember to report your stolen bike to the police.

## (Almost) Free Cycle Training

Until now Greater Manchester cyclists had to be under 11 years of age to access free cycle training, delivered to Y6 pupils at school. Now that has changed with the launch of the **GMCC Adult Cycle**

**Training Pilot.** Three GMCC members, nationally accredited **Bikeability** instructors have volunteered to offer training to small groups or even one-to-one. Bikeability is the new national standard, the Cycling Proficiency Test for the 21st century: <http://www.bikeability.org.uk/>.

So whether you are returning to a bike after many years away or would like to increase your confidence cycling in traffic we will tailor our sessions to suit your needs.

All we ask in return is that you make a small contribution (£10) equal to a year's membership of GMCC and give us post training feedback. Positive response so far: "As someone who has been cycling to work for the last six years, I was initially sceptical about cycle training, believing I knew it all. However, as with an advanced driving course for people who have been driving for years, it was definitely of benefit to me. I'd definitely recommend it to anyone, no matter how long they have been cycling." Log onto: <http://www.gmcc.org.uk/main/>, download the application form and email it to [training@gmcc.org.uk](mailto:training@gmcc.org.uk) and we will be in touch.

**Remember,** "Dense traffic tends to be slower traffic, and heavily-used urban roads can be quite safe for cycling so long as you ride sensibly and assertively. Assertiveness is key. You don't have to get out of the way for the traffic: **you are the traffic.** If you hide in the gutter and ride submissively, you're less safe than if you're out there in the traffic stream, integrating with other road users" (The CTC Guide to Family Cycling).

In November 2008 Warrington Cycle Campaign celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday with its second Cycle Campaign Network conference in three years. Early arrivals were welcomed with bacon butties. I breakfasted with Koy Thompson, chief executive of London Cycle Campaign. Koy spent the previous day touring the capital with Mayor Boris and is less gloomy than some about the post-Ken future of London cycling. In 2005 we gathered in the same light airy Gateway Centre to hear Rod King urge cyclists to come out of the closet, bond with pedestrians and demand **20s Plenty where People Live**. This time Rod exhorted us to broaden the church to include horses. WCC Chair Chris Mayes opened the day, dedicated to the memory of Warrington cyclist, Sharon Corless, killed in a collision in September.

CCN is Dead, Long Live Cyclenation! Simon Geller displayed his PowerPoint prowess in transforming CCN to Cyclenation, a national brand of cycle friendly communities, *Urban utility cycling where you live*, modelled on the success of the London Cycle Campaign. Cyclenation aspires to have a presence in all towns larger than 50,000, strengthening its influence over local and national government. Its aims are threefold: a 20 mph residential speed limit, no fault liability and a rise in the share of total trips by bike to 10% in 2012 and 20% by 2015. Our very own Alex Bailey will help to deliver the vision as editor of Cyclenation News.

The name on the tin may have changed but no campaign conference is complete without the big

hands and big specs of Roger Geffen who outlined the CTC three year strategy to radically overhaul road traffic law. Current law, enforcement and sentencing fail to stress the unacceptability of bad driving. Children and pedestrians - particularly



children - are worse affected. Roger gave us a reality check - at present there is no political or public support for **strict liability**. The concept, widely accepted throughout Europe, tipping the balance of any accident responsibility towards the *motorist* must remain a *long term* goal. Roger welcomed the new law of "causing death by careless driving."

Lunchtime was frantic, grabbing a carrot while strolling through the street market where various organisations sought to offload DVDs and leaflets. I caught Adrian Lord, author of the innovative Manual for Streets. His central theme - reducing the sources of

danger negates the requirement for discrete cycling facilities. Adrian outlined a hierarchy of priorities: reduce traffic speed, reduce traffic volume, treat junctions, reallocate carriageway space, create cycle tracks, lastly - convert paths to shared use.

The afternoon belonged to Twenty's Plenty. Paul Cullen described how Oxford walkers and cyclists united in a *people not transport* campaign for civilised, human streets under the banner **Life Begins at 20**. Tactics included letter writing, firing a speed gun, lobbying MPs, petitions to councils. Paul's message was clear: know what you want, know why you want it, understand the barriers, have a marketable product, spread the word, keep the topic aired. With such pressure even the police softened their resistance. In Norwich the Greens have 13 seats, forming the official opposition to Labour's 16.

Party Chair Richard Bearman described how the council agreed to a 20 mph limit in 2006. In September 2008 it was piloted in 30 per cent of the urban area. £350K has been agreed to sign the whole city over the next two years. Campaigners need to understand council decision making processes, time frames and budget constraints.

Many of us are constituents of Lib Dem MP John Leech who snatched the Withington seat from Labour in the 2005 election. He sits on the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee and introduced a Private Members Bill in 2007 to reduce the default speed limit from 30 to 20 mph. John reminded us that 95% of us will survive being struck by a car travelling at 20 mph, only 32% at 30 mph, "Lower speeds make roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists and increase the confidence of parents." His bill had support from both sides of the House but not the government, therefore was doomed to fail. The conference fittingly ended with the King of Warrington, Rod sending us forth, cyclists, pedestrians and horses with the rallying cry, **Twenty's Plenty by 2010**.

We dispersed to our trains, I shared my carriage with Liverpool radiologist, Derek Gould, en route to a Mancunian bar mitzvah, yes we are truly a broad synagogue.

Thanks you WCC for an excellent conference which attracted a larger than usual attendance, a tribute to a small town with a big campaign, enjoying international fame through **Crap Cycle Lanes** which has raised over £2K for the Cyclists Defence Fund.



Following a cautious quarter mile ride from Evans along Deansgate towards Victoria, the Dahon MU P8 (above) received a proper inaugural pootle along Bury's streets. Or rather, while I was expecting it to pootle this thing went like the proverbial excrement departing a stick. Since having my Kalkhoff Pro Connect stolen on bonfire night '07, the replacement finally came through in March in the form of this roughly equivalent folder. On paper they're near enough the same. Aesthetically the Kalkhoff (below) was more appealing with its dark grey paint and black wheelset. Kalk lived in my lounge most days and the mere sight of it enticed me to ride it in preference to the road bike tucked away at the back of the house. The Kalkhoff however provided an unforgiving ride and once I was three quarters of a mile down the road I regretted choosing the cute eye candy over the utilitarian but oh-so-comfy 531C 700c machine in the

utility room. After some firework-throwing scrote relieved me of the Kalkhoff I had time to consider how useful it had been. Comparisons with a steel road bike were entirely unfair, I reflected magnanimously. By riding it too often I failed to appreciate its benefits; it should have been let out only when I was catching a train or bus. I missed it. Its replacement, the MU P8, exploded an urban myth. I had assumed that aluminium bikes necessarily gave a harsh ride, having tried a 1980s Ammaco Tony Doyle and then the Kalkhoff. The MU P8 is more rideable than either and is very forgiving of bumps in the road despite being made of 7005. Shifting on the P8 is pleasantly efficient, with none of the clankiness you sometimes get with derailleurs on bikes with short stays. The 1:1 der means a light touch is plenty for a gear change. The single grip shift has positive clicks to prevent accidental shifting. The

fact that it is entirely pleasant to change to a smaller rear sprocket combined with the ease of accelerating on 20" wheels, leads to far hastier acceleration than I get on the 531 700c bike, though it takes some energy to keep it rolling when you're past 20 mph. Perhaps the multi speed Dahon costing more than £550 would accelerate faster still, I have yet to try one. Reassuringly the P8 lacks the bendiness of other folding bikes. Pushing hard on the pedals the saddle and handlebars stay the same distance from each other, as they should, not true of the Kalkhoff, which had a creaky frame hinge after 400 miles together with the slightly flexy seatpost it always had. Sure, the P8 comes with a cushion-like Biologic saddle and El Cheapo plastic folding pedals - which are just nasty, but I guess saddle and pedals are the usual upgrades. Also on the minus side, the handlebar arrangement is convoluted, involving two QR cams, the lower interface allowing the stem to rotate a few

degrees within the steerer. This means I have to align the bars each time I unfold, a problem that did not exist with the Kalkhoff's combined bar-stem. Disappointingly the post pump was damaged on this particular bike, which Evans will replace but this is a removable component and now it's removed I realise it's surprisingly heavy so I carry a mini pump instead. The less weight on the bike, the more portable it is when folded. By the same token, the prop stand is unnecessary. I still have hang ups about folding bikes generally. I recognise I've spent the cost of a half decent road bike on a cycle that would look at home in Zippo's circus. As such it will attract shouts of *Get-off-the-road* along with some unnecessary overtaking manoeuvres but it can pass for luggage on a bus and it handles far better than a Brompton S. I'd be happy to do 12 miles on it, perhaps *too happy* given that this is my commute and I have far more suitable bikes. I'll try and use it sparingly.





Some of our members met up with London Cycling Campaign ([www.lcc.org.uk](http://www.lcc.org.uk)) at the Cycle Show. We asked the team at LCC to give us some tips on riding in traffic. One of the key principles of safe cycling is to ride in a prominent position on the road where you can be clearly seen. By avoiding cycling close to the kerb or edge of the road, you give yourself more room to manoeuvre. This not only makes you more visible to drivers, but also makes it less likely you will hit drain covers or potholes. It is advisable to ride at least one metre away from the edge of the road.

Wearing suitable, comfortable clothing and using front and back lights also increases your visibility to other road users. By showing general awareness of the vehicles around you, and your position on the road, your cycling experience should be safe and trouble-free.

### **Cycling with pedestrians**

If you are cycling on a path signposted for shared use with pedestrians, you should show consideration by cycling at an appropriate speed and giving way at all times.

You should alert pedestrians

to your presence if there is any risk of a collision by sounding your bell or giving a polite verbal warning. Pedestrians can feel threatened when people cycle close to them. Some parks and open spaces have segregated cycle and pedestrian paths. Some pedestrians may not understand this and walk on the cycle path. Cycle with consideration and be prepared to slow down.

### **Overtaking motor vehicles**

It is often necessary to overtake stationary or slow-moving vehicles in traffic. Whatever the circumstances, watch for pedestrians stepping through lanes of traffic or car doors opening as you pass. When you overtake it is important to be aware of what is around you.

When overtaking parked vehicles, take a look behind you (over your right shoulder). If it is clear, signal and pull out towards the middle of the road. Leave at least one metre between yourself and the parked vehicle to allow for the hazard of an opening door. If you are not crossing over a lane marking during the manoeuvre, you have right

of way over the vehicles behind you.

When overtaking a slow-moving vehicle, you should again take a look over your right shoulder before signalling and pulling out. You should also check for oncoming traffic to ensure there is no risk of collision.

### **Cycling near lorries and HGVs**

The draught of a large vehicle such as an articulated lorry can be a hazard for a cyclist if it passes too close. Positioning yourself well out from the kerb and taking the centre of the lane where necessary will leave you more room for manoeuvre.

Lorries turning left are the most dangerous hazard to cyclists. Remember that large lorries may move out to the right before they

unexpectedly turn left at a junction.

Never edge forward alongside a long vehicle, even if there is a cycle lane, as you may be trapped when it turns, leaving you no escape route. The presence of pedestrian guard railings increases the danger by blocking your escape route.

Remember that it is also difficult for drivers of larger vehicles to see cyclists. With this in mind, keep well behind a lorry in front and position yourself so that you can be seen in its side mirrors - if you can't see its mirrors, its driver cannot see you. It is particularly easy for your presence to go unnoticed at busy junctions and gyratory systems.



## Tracknut's Tavern

### Get a Life, Get a Bike, Get an Insurance Policy? "oui! oui! oui!".. "market! market! market!"

These are strap lines from two advertising campaigns featuring furry televised characters and string puppets. One peddles car insurance and the other a comparison website which helps consumers buy insurance products. These computer generated images have captured the minds of the public and become cultural phenomena. Some people find them patronising but I would bring a more serious charge. I find these adverts perverse and sickening because they trivialise the entire insurance/litigation industry. Behind the façade of damaged cars getting kissed better and courtesy vehicles materialising out of nowhere is the grim reality of motor accident victims suffering loss and personal injury exacerbated by the inhumane practices of motor insurers.

Vulnerable road users, especially cyclists, invariably come off worse in accidents involving motor vehicles. That is one of the reasons drivers are obliged to have insurance. Remember, sharing the road with many millions of cars is not necessarily dangerous - statistically there is only one death for every 18 million miles cycled. When, very occasionally, one of us gets caught up in an accident, insurance companies are there to pick up the pieces, but will give genuine victims

a tough time even when the insured party, the driver, was at fault. It is not uncommon to hear a cyclist getting a raw deal after an incident with a motorist. Typically, inattentive driver hits cyclist, who is injured, their bike turned into a crumpled heap. If the cyclist is lucky, the driver stays at the scene and gives their details. Cyclist writes to the driver's insurer with an injury/damages claim, then insurer refuses to pay, even threatening to counter-sue for a damaged bumper/wing mirror and the driver's post-traumatic stress. At this point the cyclist usually forgets any idea of recouping their losses. Worse still, insurers will try and mitigate claims for injury. A cyclist without a helmet or hi-viz tabard (even in optimum conditions) could be fair game for a reduced payout. For these reasons many cyclists are frightened to leave the house without their helmet and day-glow armour, though the real protection they offer is questionable. Furthermore, many cyclists now seek to ensure they have their own insurance. Fortunately such cover is still relatively cheap. This could be an argument for compulsory cyclist insurance. But the law is there to protect the vulnerable not discriminate against those (economically disadvantaged) who rely on a bike to meet their personal transport needs. And where

do you draw the line? Would little Tommy need cover to ride his tricycle across the quiet cul-de-sac outside his parents home? What about the countless pedestrians killed each year by motorists? The young and the old? By logical extension, all should have their own insurance. No, I am not in favour of more insurance. Instead UK law should be changed to protect cyclists and prevent insurance companies limiting compensation unless it can be proven the cyclist was directly responsible for their own injuries. The burden of proof should be placed upon the motorist. This is not only in tune with many of our European neighbours but also the hierarchy of road users reflected in our own highway code. Pedestrians have a duty to look out for each other. Cyclists have a duty to look out for other cyclists and pedestrians. Motorists have the biggest responsibility of them all, and rightly so.

Next time you see that indignant old man prancing around telling us all he doesn't waste time choosing his insurance, please spare a thought for the insurer's victims and the unjust ways in which they are sometimes treated.

*For free help if you are involved in a collision join CTC [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk) or Contact Cycle Aid 0800 387 815 [www.cycleaid.co.uk](http://www.cycleaid.co.uk)*

#### GMCC Bike Shop Discounts:

- A1 Cycle Spares -**  
0161 998 2882  
414-416 Palatine Road,  
Northenden
- A6 Cycle Warehouse,**  
0161 248 5400  
752-762 Stockport Road,  
Longsight
- Altrincham Bike Shak**  
0161 929 9355  
10 Oakfield Trading Estate,  
Oakfield Rd
- Bardsleys Cycles**  
0161 432 4936  
482 Manchester Road, Stockport
- Bicycle Doctor**  
0161 224 1303  
68-70 Dickenson Road,  
Rusholme  
[www.bicycledoctor.co.uk](http://www.bicycledoctor.co.uk)
- Cyclelife**  
0161 962 3031  
67 Cross Street, Sale
- Eddie McGrath Cycles,**  
0161 748 2733  
31 Station Road, Urmston,  
Trafford
- Ken Foster's Cycle Logic**  
0161 881 7160  
374-6 Barlow Moor Road,  
Chorlton  
[www.kenfosterscyclelogic.co.uk](http://www.kenfosterscyclelogic.co.uk)
- Manchester Cycle Exchange**  
0161 748 2532  
1 Brook Terrace Barton Road,  
Davyhulme
- Bennetts**  
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

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