

**Greater Manchester
Cycling Campaign**
Autumn 2015 Newsletter



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more

cycling

benefits

everyone,

even people who

don't start cycling

Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign is a voluntary organisation funded by your donations and membership subscriptions - thanks all!

This publication is only possible with the hard work and time of several members, so we would like to thank all who have contributed towards this issue - without your time and effort it would not be possible.

Please send suggestions for future articles to the email address below.

Views expressed in this publication are those of the respective contributors only and do not necessarily represent the views or policy positions of Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign.

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**CAMPAIGN RIDE AROUND*
THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY
CONFERENCE**

**TUESDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2015
MEET FROM 6.00pm - RIDE AT 7.00pm**

(* road works permitting)

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20 - It's Miles Better

Vincent Walsh

It was irresistible - a chance to sample the cycling capital of the UK - Cambridge. In March the sixth annual 20's Plenty Conference came to the Fens with the strap line, '20 - its Miles Better - Towards a National 20mph Default Speed Limit'. I began my day on the guided busway linking St Ives with the city centre. Opened in 2011, at 25km it is the longest busway in the world. Unlike Greater Manchester's recent Metrolink extensions, Cambridge's new busway has a parallel wide cyclepath for much of the route. This carries some of the one third of city commuters who pedal to work - the highest in the UK and a 30 per cent increase in nine years. TfGM will open our first guided busway between Leigh and Ellenbrook later this year with a promised 4.5m wide shared cycle path.

Cambridge City Council is Labour controlled but there is cross party support for 20mph limits. £600,000 has been invested in the scheme with a focus on consultation before implementation - packs were delivered to 60,000 homes. Early evaluation shows speeds have fallen by 3mph as has the number of crashes. Manchester City Council committed to 20 mph in 2012. The following year's transfer of public health to local authority control facilitated £500K to pay for implementation across 20 per cent of the city, initially focusing on areas of deprivation and collision hot-spots. The strap line is a smiley '20 is Enough'. The community was engaged through schools, Roadpeace, Key 103 roadshows and student volunteers. By last autumn 46 per cent of the city roads were covered. Nicola Wass "trusts the wisdom of crowds." Liverpool Council hired her social motivation SoMo company to sell 'The 20 effect - slower speeds, safer streets', reaching parents through their children - the messenger reinforcing the message with great effect: "Do you realise you could have killed one of us?"

A quarter of Greater London's roads have 20mph limits - in Islington and the City of London it is 100 per cent. TfL's Roads Task Force is now planning trials on strategic routes. Bus speeds are controlled by on-board smart technology - how long before private cars follow suit?

Chris Boardman is a powerful voice and policy advisor for British Cycling but even he cannot persuade his local Wirral Council to spend £3,000 to reduce the speed limit near his family home to enable 10 year old daughter Agatha to cycle 800 metres to the traffic-free Wirral Way. "Inactivity is costing us billions, 20 mph is a statement of how we want our streets to look," he declared. Pedestrians also benefit from slower speeds, Joe Irvin reminded us. He is the chief executive of Living Streets. 20mph limits contribute to the urban renaissance, even New York City has become safer and more attractive.



Christian Wolmar is a veteran commentator on transport matters, “The way in which we think of cars has changed. In the 1970s the GLC was planning a series of orbital motorways now TfL is building Cycle Super Highways.” He highlighted the success of Seville which has increased cycle modal share from 0.7 to 10 per cent of all journeys in only five years. Christian wants to do the same for his home city of London, being on the shortlist for Labour’s mayoral candidate in 2016. He would get my vote (if I was a Party member) but he faces stiff opposition from four Labour MPs. Rod King is not standing as Mayor of Warrington but would probably win. In his closing remarks he took the perspective of all vulnerable road users, “Slower pace makes a better place.” Rod is sceptical of the fig leaf of English “localism” in our pursuit of lower limits. In the forthcoming election he called for a national lead with manifesto call for, “20 Default Speed by 2020.”

After our excitement at the Le Grand Depart from Yorkshire (and Lancs) Le Tour 2014 skipped to Cambridge for the third day’s ride to London. The start line is still painted on the road beside a counter recording the daily tally of cyclists crossing. In the evening we toured Cambridge cycle. In 12 weeks 150,000 cyclists had crossed the strip on target for over half a million by the end of the year.

Infrastructure comes in many shapes and sizes. My host for the conference was campaigner Jim Chisholm, co-designer of the CycleStreets app. His Edwardian terraced street is lined by cars with very limited access to back gardens. Many residents chain their bikes to drainpipes or park in the hall. After a two year struggle Jim and his neighbours persuaded the City and County Councils to convert an on-street car parking space into the location for four Sheffield stands. On the day of my visit the contractors were giving the finishing touches. As I arrived at the station to catch my homeward train I admired the double decker cycle park which will accommodate three thousand bikes. 20’s Plenty has come of age - from its 2005 origins as a workshop session at a Saturday campaigners’ gathering it has grown into a national movement, its annual conference sponsored by asset managers with an attendance fee of £100 (plus VAT). I managed to blag a free ticket. Of the 100 delegates most were council officers from as far as Edinburgh, with our patch represented by Rachel Christie of Manchester Council and Dominic Smith from TfGM. Other campaigners had travelled further than me, Dublin even Berlin.

Planning for cycling in Manchester city centre



The scribbles of a GMCC workshop as it tries to connect the city together for cyclists.

The centre of Manchester is currently terrible for cycling.

To encourage cycling, reduce congestion and pollution and create a vibrant livable city we'll need a seamless grid network of high capacity cycle paths. These need to cross roughly North/South/East/West and be interconnected by smaller routes, making it possible to cycle across or about the city safely, without circuitous diversions, or gaps in the network.

Spend a little time looking at the street map, take into account the tram lines, one way systems, bus stations and key bus routes, and you'll find it hard to plan out a future network of cycle paths. As far as we can tell there is no governmental strategic plan designing this network. Without such a plan, seemingly minor general infrastructure decisions can make a cycling network impossible to ever achieve, as their future impact on cycling cannot be predicted. There only seems to be us trying to create one.

At a recent general meeting GMCC members brainstormed just where these routes need to be. A giant printout of central Manchester roads was stuck to the wall and everyone had the chance to gather

around and discuss the various options as we scribbled connecting lines in felt pen all over the map. There must have been thousands of hours of city centre cycling experience in that room.

We had to take into account practicalities but didn't limit ourselves. What was interesting was how close this short exercise matched a more sophisticated digital version that we have been working for some time. Currently we see new 'Vélocity 2025' routes bringing optimistic new cyclists in from the outskirts (in varying quality of provision) only to be dumped roughly around the inner ring road and left to fend for themselves.

What also became apparent quite quickly was how recent decisions like the remodelling of St Peter's Square have made the possibility of a good network far harder. This is a key crossroad for paths and rather than plan in improvements for cycle paths they have removed existing ones and created a space that makes adding good cycle infrastructure almost impossible.

We need two things:

- 1) A plan.
- 2) Commitment not to compromise the plan.

Without a plan it's impossible to imagine Manchester being capable of becoming a cycling city and impossible for authorities to make decisions without badly impacting any chance of bringing more people to cycling as a way of accessing the centre. What is surprising is that we seem to be the only people doing this...

Let's hope I'm wrong and let's hope that if/when the authorities do start they tap into the huge wealth of experience and knowledge that we can offer.

Meanwhile poor design, muddled planning, poor use of meagre funds and reluctance to innovate just makes the chances of Manchester ever being a cycling city get ever more remote.

Update: Manchester City Council have now announced they're holding a "City Centre Cycling Infrastructure Plan Stakeholder Workshop" on 23rd September from 1pm. Let us know your ideas or contact planningstrategy@manchester.gov.uk if you'd like to be involved directly.

September 2015

Secretary's Report

For this report I'll just re-use a comment I recently left on the Guardian website. Helen Pidd wrote an article containing many home truths about cycling in Manchester which you can read on their website here: theguardian.com/uk-news/the-northerner/2015/aug/18/why-manchester-is-a-terrible-cycling-city

This resulted in a follow-up piece by TfGM's Cllr Chris Paul, to which I responded:

I understand how hard it is to create cycle infrastructure in the current funding environment. I even understand that some Vélocity 2025 schemes had to go ahead at short notice as it was the only practical way to make use of what small funds were available, HOWEVER it's hard to see much committed involvement from within the authorities.

Infrastructure is piecemeal and often gives up when the solution gets difficult and/or expensive. New roads, rail and tramlines get planned without any apparent consideration for the impact on cyclists or desire to prioritise them. This newsletter deals with a couple of very relevant points; one section of nearly completed infrastructure and the need for a strategic plan for cycle infrastructure, without which every new development or remodelling makes the possibility of Manchester being a cycling city more and more remote.

Manchester needs more than a lone cycle tsar and a few cycle friendly councilors, it needs the whole organisation to understand what cycling could do to improve the liveability, health and environment of Greater Manchester. To understand that economic survival depends on generations of entrepreneurs, academics, inventors, students and workers choosing to stay or move to Manchester and that lifestyle is a large factor in this decision. To understand that major corporations came out in support of cycle infrastructure in London as their HR departments realised it's what their employees want, and an important way to be able to attract the best. To understand that millions can be saved in NHS budgets and lives improved with modest increases in active travel and that the competitiveness of our shopping and cultural centres can be assured by making it a place people are relaxed and enjoy just being in, away from pollution and the worry about traffic. Cycle infrastructure is cheap solution when viewed as part of a bigger picture. It takes more than just funding, it takes political will.

Jonathan Keenan

Secretary of GMCC, freelance photographer and map fan.

What we (and the powers-that-be) can learn from organised cycle rides

Nick Hubble

On 16 June this year I finally got round to entering an event that I'd known about for a couple of years but always managed to miss: Bury Clarion's annual hill-climb challenge. Apart from being a lot of fun (if you like that sort of thing), it was also impressively well attended: this year's turnout of 79 people was up 12% on last year's event and by almost double over 2013, much to the organisers' delight (and slight dismay at the prospect of a long evening dispatching this unprecedented number of riders up the one-kilometre course at one-minute intervals).

Now, whilst riding a bicycle (or in my case, a tricycle) as fast as you can up a hill in a mini-time trial may not be everyone's cup of tea, this is indicative of a broader trend. More and more people are (re-)discovering their love of the bicycle and are seeking out events in order to embrace their passion for pedalling. Shortly after the hill-climb event I rode through the Peak District with around 3,000 other riders on more-or-less rickety old bicycles at L'Eroica Britannia; I did a few 13-mile laps on closed roads with some 8,000 riders of all ages and abilities in the Greater Manchester Cycle; in July I cycled through the night from London to the Suffolk coast with an estimated 2,500 similarly romantic souls on the annual Dunwich Dynamo just for the sheer hell of it; and in August I cycled 100 miles on completely closed roads in London and Surrey in a field of some 25,000 riders at the Ride London event (selected by random ballot from a colossal 86,000 applicants). So, just counting this selection of five events I personally have ridden in so far this season, approximately 28,579 people will have got their rear ends on to a bicycle saddle and gone out for a ride by the end of the summer. Add to that the many other events both in the Greater Manchester region (Skyride Bolton, Manchester to Blackpool; Skyride Manchester and the Manchester 100 to name just a few) and across the country as a whole, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people in the UK will have taken part in at least one cycling event before the year is out.

So what's this got to with campaigning for better infrastructure? Well, to my mind it is a powerful indicator of a factor that is incredibly difficult to pinpoint, and one that is even harder to convince the powers-that-be of: latent demand, i.e. the number of people who would choose to cycle (more) if only the conditions were safe. What these organised events all have in common is an enhanced feeling of safety when you ride in them, be that by closing the roads (Skyrides, GM Cycle) or the safety-in-numbers effect due to the sheer volume of riders (Dunwich Dynamo, L'Eroica, Manchester-Blackpool). Which is why people like them. And, conversely, it's why cycling-as-transport levels outside such events are

so woefully low. For many people, mixing with motor traffic on the open road simply feels too dangerous, which perpetuates an all-too familiar vicious circle. Time and again we hear the argument that there simply aren't enough cycle commuters to justify lavish outlay on top-quality cycling provision. In an unhelpful inversion of the "build it and they will come" philosophy successfully adopted by cities around the world that have overhauled their transport networks, many UK planners and politicians are mired in a mindset of "come and we will build it". Get more people cycling and we'll think about catering for you. Well, I've got news for you: we're already here, you're just looking in the wrong place. If your only measure of cycling demand is derived from observing traffic flows along one of Manchester's busy arterial routes, of course you will consider cycling to be the preserve of a tiny group of battle-hardened commuters struggling to hold their own in an unending stream of motor vehicles.

However, stand at the start line of a mass cycling event and you get a very different picture: a lot of people really like riding bicycles, especially when they feel protected from motorised traffic. That's your demand right there: the thousands upon thousands of people who will only get on a bike when they feel safe – and in some cases they are even willing to pay for the privilege. I would therefore argue that the success of events like Skyrise is not something we should be proud of, it should be a source of deep shame.

We live in a city of almost permanent gridlock, its air thick with vehicle fumes, and barely a day goes by without a news story about the obesity/inactivity epidemic. Yet at the same time we have marginalised the most reliable, most enjoyable, cleanest, healthiest, most efficient form of urban transport to such a degree that the majority of the population will only countenance using it on designated days when motor vehicles are routed elsewhere. We need to keep hold of a vision where the experience of riding



Some vintage bikes ready for L'Eroica Britannia

safely in a flurry of people on bikes can be an everyday occurrence – after all, it is in many other European cities, and there is much political capital to be exploited by bold, visionary politicians willing to grasp the nettle and face up to the vested interests, the shouty media and public indifference with the aim of making our cities more liveable for everyone. There are few easy answers to the woes of modern day society, yet the bicycle is a very simple and elegant solution to a raft of very complex issues. Organised cycling events show us that there are a lot of people who would love to cycle more. And more cycling benefits everyone, whether you ride a bike yourself or not.



As part of Kidical Massive, a global event which will see family friendly bike-rides taking place all over the world, GMCC members have organised our very own Kidical Mass ride, as we felt Manchester shouldn't miss out on this, especially when we have the traffic-free Fallowfield Loop cycleway right on our doorstep!

Here are the details:

Kidical Massive Family ride - Saturday 19th September 2015
Start at 2pm from the Ladybarn entrance to the Fallowfield Loop (near the large Sainsbury's in Fallowfield) heading east towards Levenshulme. We'll stop for a picnic/pitstop before returning back.

It is a 1.5 mile ride each way which is suitable for children who may want to ride it on their own bike. The ride will have a theme of celebrating Autumn plants and animals, so feel free to dress-up accordingly! We aim to return to the start point by 4pm.

The barriers along the route will be opened for for the day, so anyone and everyone with bikes of all shapes and sizes will be able to join the ride or simply make use of the unobstructed route. Children, tag-alongs, trailers, trikes, big bikes, small bikes, tandems - all welcome!

Back to the Future, memories of Critical Massing from London 1975 to Manchester 2009 (via San Francisco 1992)

Where did it all begin... mass gatherings of cyclists reclaiming the streets from motor traffic? Most would have thought it was California but Ted Lawson & Vincent Walsh reflect on their own cycling histories to show how this movement has grown in the UK.

Ted Lawson:

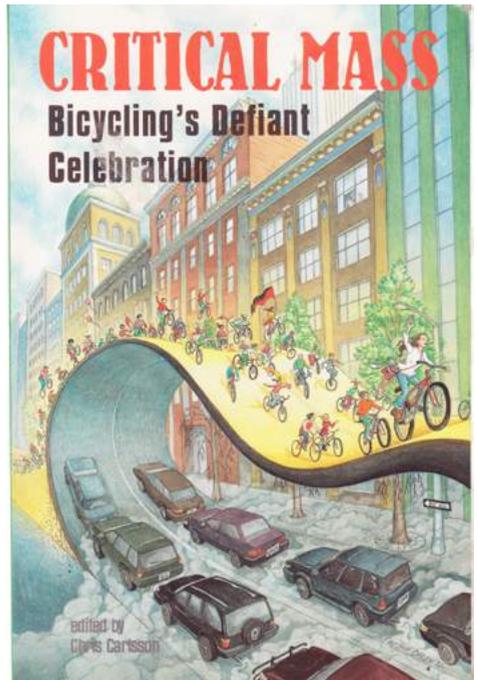
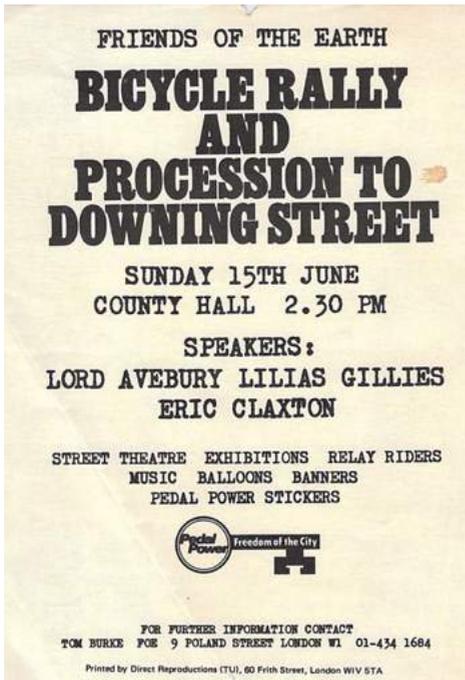
On Sunday 15 June 1975, I went on my very first Critical Mass - though that term had yet to be applied to this kind of event. It started at the Greater London Council HQ at County Hall, where there was a bicycle rally featuring anti-car street theatre, and speeches from people such as Eric Claxton who designed the Dutch cycling system in Stevenage New Town.

Three thousand of us turned up. The plan was to ride across Westminster Bridge and on to Downing Street (Harold Wilson was the incumbent). But the police wouldn't let us cycle "for safety reasons" - the irony was not lost. So we marched, past Downing Street and on to Trafalgar Square, and then we cycled, round and round and round, thousands of us, in true Critical Mass style.

The promotional leaflet resembles those produced on Gestetner Cyclograph (sic) machines by teachers at my secondary school in the 1970s. The glossy cover of Time Out (price 20p) cautiously declared, "There are signs that cycling is poised for a comeback....but not many."

There was a tremendous buzz of optimism. Cycling had been ignored by everyone throughout the 1960s, even by hippies. The first edition of Alternative London, an essential guide to "alternative" living in that era, promoted the moped as the transport mode of choice and didn't mention cycling at all. Then in 1973 came the Yom Kippur war, and the Arab oil embargo which saw the price of oil quadruple in two years. And suddenly cycling was the centre of attention.

Was the optimism misplaced? Well the changes we hoped for haven't come quite as fast as we expected, and there's so much still to come. But since then cycling has at least always had a profile. The following year saw the first annual London To Brighton bicycle ride. I could lie and say that I was on that too, but I wasn't because I had an exam the next day. But I did make it the 1977 one, when about fifty of us cycled the 60 odd miles, though not all by the same route! And I guess that June Sunday in 1975 was for me the start of cycle campaigning.



Above: 1975 Friend's of the Earth poster publicising the mass bicycle rally in London and cover of the book edited by Chris Carlsson charting the rise of the Critical Mass movement from San Francisco.

Vincent Walsh:

I first Critically Massed in Sheffield. When I moved to Manchester in 2001 I found a smaller affair. In those days we gathered at Whitworth Park and were often less than critical — more molecules than masses — sometimes abandoning the ride for lack of numbers. Since then a new wave of young radical bikers has energised CM which has moved on to the Central Library. One, Nes Brierley helped organise an early Velo Fest in April 2009. She invited Chris Carlsson, one of the San Francisco founders of the original 1992 Critical Mass. Chris was on a European Tour promoting his latest book. He was dismissive of the newly elected US President Obama, doubtful he would do much for world peace — or cycling. At the end of the talk he signed a copy of his work, Critical Mass - Bicycling Defiant Celebrations with the dedication, "To Vincent, roll on!"... a plea to use deodorant?

Finally Chris and Nes posed back to back, his T shirt celebrating hero Henri Desgrange, founder of the Tour de France, hers declaring "Two Wheels for Life". Chris is back on Frisco Bay, Nes was last heard of teaching in Cumbria."

Bridgewater Canal: Trafford Park to Manchester

Jonathan Keenan

What Manchester desperately needs is good quality commuter routes to encourage new people to cycle to work, school, shops and friends all year round, in safety. By 2015 Vélocity 2025 was promising to “generate 26,800 new cycle trips per day on these routes” (available online at http://cycling.tfgm.com/Pages/velocity/Velocity2025_Summary.pdf). The Bridgewater Canal was one of these routes and is nearing completion.

The Bridgewater canal was once my favourite secret route into work from Chorlton. It wasn't legal but you almost never saw another soul until deep into the heart of the city. In the summer here were only two dodgy bits; a narrow section near Old Trafford football ground featuring a permanent puddle, fixed by the occasional addition of a discarded pallet, and a rough cobbled section with deep mud to the side as you approach Castlefield.

My solution was to just fit bigger tyres. It was a nice summer route when not in a rush. I've now lost my secret route but what have we gained?

What it isn't is a commuter route designed with mass cycling in mind. In many places it's not even good for inexperienced cyclists and kids. There's number of reasons for this;

1) Under one bridge it takes reasonable low speed skill to continue riding and involves a very narrow blind corner and uneven surface, so care has to be taken. Amazingly there is no 'cyclists dismount' sign, which for once (and embarrassingly) may actually be needed.

2) It's unlit and isolated so once the evenings draw in it will not be an inviting place for most people.

3) Cobbles and narrow, steep bridges. They may look nice and historic but most cyclists are not looking to recreate the Paris-Roubaix everyday on their way to work. The width, surface and steepness on some of the bridges will not allow significant numbers to travel comfortably and creates conflict with pedestrians and other cyclists.

4) As the route gets into Castlefield there were long established and clear desire lines avoiding cobbles, creating deep muddy tracks. The fact people rode and walked there illustrates just how uninviting the cobbles are. This has been 'fixed' with a narrow section, one paving wide, where everyone wants to be.

5) Not yet tested but the chances are you can forget this route during an MUFC home game. The path becomes shared with Hotel Football in one place and the guess is this will be packed with supporters.

For a while at least you'll have to take your chances with a hazardous gravel covering that gathers quite deep in places. I think the idea is that foot and cycle traffic beds the gravel into the surface; like they do on cheap fixes on rural roads. After a few weeks a narrow 8" 'path' through the gravel develops so you're relatively fine until you have to overtake a pedestrian or pass by another cyclist; then you're in a very sketchy place that's at least as bad as the worst mud used to be and not a good place for kids or even experienced cyclists to ride.

It's not all bad. Obviously there are no cars, buses or HGV to worry about. The canal is a lovely place to be. You get a very different view of the city, and it's industrial heritage, and it feels surprisingly rural in places. The surface will eventually be better than the old dirt so will be passable in all weather and at all times of year. If you have decent infrastructure to get to the canal then it makes a fairly direct route and doesn't feel like you've been sent out on some circuitous diversion. I will use it occasionally as a summer route into the city with kids as the balance between it's bad points v's vehicle traffic on the alternatives means it's the best option, as long as care is taken at the bad bits.

There are already more people about but unfortunately, for the potential cyclist, many of them are joggers and strollers making the most of the path. A route created with cycling money.

Can it be fixed? Hmm... possibly to some extent.

The canal would have to be narrowed in some places so the path can be widened. This would be expensive and mean boats would have to wait to pass, which would be controversial. The obsession with 'heritage' cobbles would also have to go. They are already in a state our ancestors would be ashamed of, so even fixing to their standard would be a vast improvement, but it would be better to resurface all or part of it. They should also reconsider their use of gravel. It creates a dangerous surface and takes too long for users to bed it in, by which time most of it is in the canal anyway. There are reports of injury directly attributed to this. If a similar hazard was in a workplace the employer would be under investigation from Health and Safety officers.

Remember this is hard fought for and scarce 'cycling' money being used here. Any scandal?

If all the above is not enough it is worth noting that £70,000 of cycling money was used to shore up canal banks after moving gas pipes. Yet 100% was paid for with cycling money. Money that could have dealt with some of the other problems.

“26,800 new cycle trips per day”?

Not with this sort of infrastructure alone and looking at what’s happening in North Manchester then no chance. We need proper cycle ways to provide safe, fast, direct routes. Even if fixed these are narrow, shared use, secondary routes for leisure and for when time is less an issue. Lovely to have but not the way to create a mass modal shift to cycling.

This is not just my view. Here’s some that could easily fit into the target user group:

“We rode into Manchester along the Bridgewater Way one Saturday morning to do a small amount of shopping. Over the years I have ridden occasionally but have begun to ride more frequently in the last couple of months. Riding the Bridgewater Way on a touring bike was not pleasurable. The main issue was the surface, particularly the gravel which is uncomfortable and disconcerting. Where there isn’t gravel the large amount of cobbles are difficult to ride on and extremely uncomfortable. There are also issues with barriers at Throstle Bridge and severe narrowing of the towpath under one of the bridges, so narrow that two people can’t pass walking.”
Maggie Goodman



“This is what happens if you even touch the brakes on new towpath surface in traff park/salford #lethal”
Simon Burchell



The old 'No Cycling' sign makes sense here. Passable with care but it's a blind turn, narrow and the old rough cobbles on the very narrow path don't help. Nice to look at but not part of a serious cycleway for commuters.



The offending spot where some overflow or spring would create a year round muddy obstacle. Solved in the past by passers by chucking bits of old pallets across but now featuring drainage.



Presumably these new barriers are there to slow down riders before they get to the area the path shares with Hotel Football. It will be interesting to see if this remains passable on match days.



Just what you need. Some barriers at the bottom of a cobbled ramp. These are old ones, left in place. The new wood posts seen on the left create a tight turn into the barriers.

Impressions of Copenhagen

Nick Hubble

Whenever the discussion turns to best practice for urban-cycling infrastructure, two cities are cited as oases of good sense in transport planning: Amsterdam and Copenhagen. Having visited the Dutch bicycling Mecca a couple of times over recent years, we decided to head over to the Danish capital to see what all the fuss is about.

Naturally there are similarities and differences between Amsterdam, Copenhagen and indeed Manchester, so comparisons will be drawn where relevant. The article makes no claim to be a scientific evaluation, but merely comprises the observations of someone who does a lot of city cycling.

The first overall impression of Copenhagen is that it's a very different kind of city from Amsterdam. The layout of the Dutch capital almost seemed predestined for the bicycle before it was even invented, its narrow lanes and canal bridges being fundamentally unsuited to heavy volumes of fast-moving motorised transport. Amsterdam is a brash, obsessive cycling city: the first thing most visitors see on arriving at the Central Station is the multi-storey bike park groaning under the weight of thousands of bikes; there is not an inch of railing without a bike chained to it, and indeed the urgent lack of bike-parking is currently a pressing municipal issue (a nice problem to have).

Copenhagen has a very different vibe. It seems to have a more businesslike, less ostentatious approach to cycling than Amsterdam. It is a city that does not have Amsterdam's unique layout and is thus arguably a better blueprint for cycleproofing an urban area (such as Manchester) than its Dutch counterpart. So, rather than being a "city of bikes", as Amsterdam describes itself, I'd say Copenhagen is a city where lots of people cycle.

Bikes and bike security

The standard Copenhagen bike is a step-through, heavy-framed bike, usually with hub gears and two rim brakes (although the brakes are the opposite way round to what we're used to here). Most have a basket for carrying bits and pieces around the place. That said, the range of bikes is broader than you see in Amsterdam (where most cycles are variations on a basic theme), with a reasonable proportion of fixies, roadsters, (often old steel-framed) road bikes and other smart city bikes on display. They also have a surprising fondness for Raleighs, and indeed the brand markets a range of utility models in Denmark that are unavailable in the UK.

Compared to Manchester, and indeed Amsterdam, Copenhageners are relatively relaxed when it comes to bike security. City bikes are generally fitted with a nurse's lock, which is fixed to the seat stays and locks through

the back wheel, and for most this is adequate security: most bikes will simply be parked on their stand with just the back wheel locked in this way. There is of course a certain level of bike crime there, but we were told that it tends to be the high-end, more desirable models that are targeted.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure is naturally rather splendid. Copenhagen boasts 390km of designated bike lanes which are wide, well-surfaced, properly maintained and are even cleared of snow before the roads in winter. The lanes are usually segregated by kerbs both from the footway and the road. They run behind parking bays and also behind bus lanes. Unlike Amsterdam, mopeds aren't allowed on bike lanes, so you're usually only riding with other bicyclists. The city's main arterial routes are wide boulevards that can easily accommodate different road users in the generous space available. Vehicle lanes tend to be much narrower compared to many we see in the UK, often being just as wide as a car. The effect of this is to free up more space for cycle lanes and also keep traffic speeds low.

Where there isn't space for separate bike lanes, slower speeds and greater driver awareness provide for a safe cycling environment. We didn't see any drivers impatiently forcing their way past a group of riders (because you're generally in a group, given the density of bike users), nor for that matter any riders squeezing into dangerous gaps between vehicles. Of course, the widespread use of bikes has drastically cut traffic volumes, and with it the impatience and aggression caused by getting nowhere fast in an expensive car we know all too well in our own city.

The cycling population in Copenhagen is exactly that: a population that cycles. Mothers ferrying their children about in Christiania cargo cycles, people in business dress on their way to a meeting by bike, pensioners bringing their shopping home on the front of a trike. We even went to a gig one evening where not a single one of the several hundred fans appeared to arrive by car. Hard to imagine in the UK.

As well as the many dedicated bike lanes, there are also dedicated bike-free zones, which appear to be largely observed. This is an interesting by-product of the comprehensive and well-planned infrastructure: if people on bikes have useful and sensible routes to get them to their destination, they are much less likely to "improvise" with short-cuts across pedestrianised areas.

Junction treatment in Copenhagen is worth mentioning. The principle is simple in that you never actually cross in front of the traffic, unlike the bizarre ASL system we have in the UK. Instead a left turn (equivalent to a right turn over here) is completed in two movements: first you cross the road perpendicular to your original direction of travel staying on the



An ensemble of bikes in Copenhagen.

right (left in the UK). You then wait at the opposite side of that road for the green light and do the 90-degree turn across the road you were just travelling on. Now, whilst this means that you cannot perform a left turn (right turn in the UK) in a single move, it a) obviates the need for the complexity of separate bike phases at lights and b) means that you are never forced to cycle in or between lanes of motorised traffic.

The city authorities have also developed a number of innovations to make cyclists' life easier: litter bins at an angle so you can deposit your banana skins and other refuse without stopping (or missing the bin), tools and pumps on stands in the street, traffic lights phased so that you will always have a green light if you are averaging 20 kph (12.4 mph) and a bike counter on City Hall Square that shows how many people have ridden past that day (we passed it in the evening rush hour and it was well above 8,000 on that route alone. Incidentally, rush hour there was much more redolent of a Critical Mass than the daily struggle on inadequate, vehicle-choked roads we are used to in Manchester). In 2014 the city inaugurated the Bike Snake, a four-metre-wide, 190-metre-long winding red bicycle bridge over the harbour basin. It is a pleasure to behold and an even greater joy to ride, and I may have gone up and down it rather more times than strictly necessary...

Hotdogs

No report on Copenhagen would be complete without mentioning the ubiquitous hotdog stands placed every few metres around the city

and offering a dizzying number of variants of the humble sausage in some bread. An ideal source of sustenance for the eager pootler.

Summary

If you like bikes, Copenhagen is definitely worth a visit. From a cycling-campaigning perspective, it is extremely instructive to see how a city has adapted its transport networks to accommodate the bicycle, and has reaped the rewards in terms of lower traffic, cleaner air, a fitter population and a generally more pleasant ambience. That aside, it is great city worth visiting in its own right, with a wealth of cultural offerings and without the hordes of often drug-addled tourists you find in Amsterdam. British transport planners seem intent on scratching their heads trying to reinvent the wheel when it comes to putting in useable bike infrastructure. A weekend in Copenhagen would give them plenty of food for thought. And the odd hotdog.

Nick Hubble is a freelance translator and rider of bikes based in Prestwich. He co-runs the Prestwich Pootlers ([@pootlers](#) on Twitter) group promoting social bike rides in north and central Manchester. He is also the Press Officer for GMCC. A video of the trip can be found on the [Prestwich Pootlers' YouTube channel](#).

Beer by Bike

Steve Bowater

People who don't cycle are often surprised by what you can do on a bike.

I always remember when the company I worked for moved into a newly built warehouse, but without any cycle parking, and when the builder came round to do his snag check, I questioned this and was told the local authority never required them to install any. However, what struck me more was the comment he made as he was walking out of the door, in that he said he'd just done a development for B & Q and "what made him laugh was that they had asked for cycle parking to be included, yet he'd never seen anyone carry an 8' x 4' piece of wood on a bike". Unfortunately I never got the chance to respond, because I could have explained that when I was building some fitted wardrobes, I had to transport some 8' x 4' conti-board the mile from my local B & Q, and I could guarantee that you cannot transport it in the Vauxhall Nova we had then, but you can balance it on a push bike and walk home with it, which is what I had to do. And since then I've transported all sorts of items on a bike, from decking to compost bins, that were either too big for a car or too heavy to carry.



It therefore came as a natural progression for my business, that when I had an order for a case of beer to get into Manchester, using a bike was an obvious choice. Fortunately I have one of those Dutch “sit up and beg” style bikes which are common in the Netherlands, and although not light, they are a brilliant and sturdy workhorse. So armed with a drill, a plastic box and some cable ties, I simply made some holes in the box and secured it to the cycle carrier.

Although there are some practical limitations where a van will be necessary, such as large orders and for long distances, for the inner city it’s brilliant, as I can go along the canal, missing all the traffic, and there’s no problem finding a parking space (or paying parking fees).

It also turns a job into a pleasant journey. Last week I delivered to Droylsden, and on the way back took a fact finding detour via Manchester City’s new ground to look at the cycle parking (which is infinitely better than the rubbish provided by their red neighbours), then onto the peaceful Mancunian Way to have a nosey at the “infamous hole” that is causing all the traffic congestion, followed by a trip to the new cycle parking hub at Oxford Road station, which I am less enthusiastic about (a 33cm gap between each space is totally impractical). Using the bike to transport goods is nothing new, but with our towns and cities becoming increasingly gridlocked, hopefully more businesses will make use of this unsung and frequently overlooked form of transport.

Steve Bowater is a GMCC member and runs the Artisan Real Ale Company [@ArtisanRealAle](https://twitter.com/ArtisanRealAle) and [@BikesOnTrams](https://twitter.com/BikesOnTrams) on Twitter.
www.ArtisanRealAle.co.uk

Review: Tandem Coffee House, Stockport

As a relative newcomer to Stockport, I was dismayed to find a lack of good quality coffee in the city centre. Finding Tandem was a revelation as not only do they serve artisan roasted coffee, but their cycling theme fits perfectly with my interests. Indeed, Tandem is starting to become known as the place for riders to take a breather, grab a brew, have a chat and gain useful information and advice about cycling in the area.

Opening in October 2014, the friendly Alison presides over the coffee and cake, while husband Seb is the professional bike fiend who's behind the two-wheeled theme of the coffee house. It serves Coffee Circle's espresso blend (fantastic for your flat whites, long blacks and latte needs) based at the Salford's Heart and Graft roastery. There is an array of sandwiches (bread by Trove), soup of the day and cake (gluten free and vegan options). Tandem has loads of magazines available for all your cycling needs, to enjoy over your flat white. They also have bike-related gifts and treats, such as prints, postcards, Pro-Cycling Trumps and greeting cards by Artist on a Bike. Locks are available to borrow and Stockport Council have recently installed several Sheffield stands pretty much outside the coffee house.

As a bike hub, Tandem is becoming the place to go for cyclists in Stockport with the Guvnors' Assembly having met here for one of their rides this year and different cycling clubs and groups showing up for the bimonthly bike quizzes. And it's not a surprise to see why with all the information and advice on offer at Tandem, whether it's technical issues answered by Seb when he is in, with his bicycle mechanic background, or information about what groups and resources are out there in Stockport and beyond. This allows Tandem to be an ideal place for community focused groups to hold events in Stockport, such as Sustrans holding volunteer events and the Breeze network and previously Cera Cycloan doing social rides. Tandem is also very close to the Trans Pennine Trail running through Stockport and is one of the stamping stations for the trail.

Tandem has held coffee tasting sessions (with Q&A and free bag of beans) and kitchen takeovers by Nasi Lemak Malay street food. Tandem are also branching out with different coffee making processes as weekend special events – this includes Aeropresses with Heart and Graft single origin beans (The Costa Rican, is a lovely smooth brew, kind of goes down like a tea, with hints of brown sugar and a nectarine sparkle). Pour overs are also on the way as are special events.

So get yourself down there, GMCC card carrying members get a 10% discount, so what have you got to lose.



Tandem Coffee House, 47 Lower Hillgate, Stockport, SK1 1JQ

<http://www.tandemcoffeehouse.co.uk/>

Search Tandem Coffee on Facebook or [@TandemCoffeeSK1](#) on Twitter.

Check online for opening times as they vary Tuesday to Sunday.

Review by Nick Harris - Freelance National Standard Cycle Instructor, MSc, trainee barista and bass guitarist. [@cyclewysse](#) on Twitter.

GMCC Monthly Meetings

Meetings to organise campaigns are held at 7:00pm on the second Monday of every month. Everyone is welcome to attend and contribute to the meeting, whether you are a member or not. Meetings finish by 9:00pm when the group usually heads for refreshments at a nearby pub.

Friends Meeting House, Mount St, Manchester M2 5NS
(Bicycle parking located to the left of the building's front door)

Upcoming meeting dates:

12th October 2015

9th November 2015

14th December 2015

11th January 2016

GMCC Membership

Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign (GMCC) works to represent cycling interests with local authorities and other organisations. We are run entirely by volunteers, so we can campaign without fear or favour. If you live, work, or travel in Greater Manchester and want to support what we do or if you want to add your voice to our campaigns then you can become a member. As a member you get the following rights and benefits:

- your interests represented with local authorities and other relevant organisations
- voting rights at meetings
- quarterly publication delivered to your door complimentary
- mailing list opportunities to keep up to date
- volunteering opportunities

In addition to this a number of bike shops and retailers in Greater Manchester offer discounts between 5% and 10% to GMCC members. To receive the discount you must hold a valid membership card.

[A1 Cycle Spares](#), 414-416 Palatine Rd, Northenden

[A6 Cycle Warehouse](#), 752-762 Stockport Rd, Longsight

[Altrincham Bike Shak](#), 10 Oakfield Trading Estate, Oakfield Rd, Altrincham

[Bennetts](#), 72-174 Northenden Rd, Sale Moor

[Bicycle Doctor](#), 68-70 Dickenson Rd, Rusholme

[Biking Factory Shop](#), 424 Bury New Rd, Prestwich

[Bolton Alternative Transport bike recycling](#), 65 Knowsley Street, Bolton

[Coffee Cranks Cooperative](#), (07599 088 816) Central and South Manchester

NEW: [Cycle Republic](#), 4-10 London Road, Piccadilly, Manchester

[Cycle Tech Oldham](#), (07504 954 249) covers Oldham, Rochdale, Bury & Bolton

[Devereux Cycles](#), 45 Green Lane, Sale

[Eddie McGrath Cycles](#), 31 Station Road, Urmston

[Harry Hall Cycles](#), 67 Whitworth St, Manchester

[Keep Pedalling](#), 23 Hilton Street M1 1EL

[Ken Foster's Cycle Logic](#), 374-376 Barlow Moor Rd, Chorlton-cum-Hardy

[Lane End Cycles](#), 5 Lane End Rd, Burnage, M19 1WA

[Leisure Lakes Bury](#), 124 Rochdale Road, Bury, Lancashire, BL9 7AY

[Manchester Cycle Exchange](#), 1 Brook Terrace, Barton Rd, Davyhulme

[NW Mountain Bike Centre](#), 249 Stockport Rd, Cheadle

[Popup Bikes](#), Arch 5, Corporation Street, M4 4DG

[revolveMCR mobile cycle repairs](#), (07939 062 600) Manchester

[Skidmores Cycles](#), 37 Union St, Oldham

NEW: [Tandem Coffee House](#), Lower Hillgate, Stockport

[Withington Cycles](#), 26 Burton Rd, Withington

NEW: [Woodson](#), Edgeley 85C Castle St, Edgeley, Stockport

Full details of these of discounts are online at: <http://www.gmcc.org.uk/>

Do you believe that cycling in Greater Manchester should be quicker, safer, easier and more enjoyable than it is currently?

Yes? Then join us and help our campaign.

There are many ways you can help the campaign:

Become a member.

Cycling is stronger when we campaign together, joining our growing membership gives more leverage with policy makers. For new members the first year is free. Please sign up online at <http://www.gmcc.org.uk/join>

Spread our message.

Don't only tell your cycling family, friend and colleagues about GMCC, but those who'd love to cycle but currently don't feel safe to. We campaign for them too. Safer streets where all can cycle and feel safe is our goal.

Get involved.

This is a voluntary organisation. We have no staff, nobody gets paid. The vitality of the organisation depends on the dedication of active members, and all are welcome to take part. So whether you have 5 minutes to distribute some handlebar flyers before work, want to write for our website or get involved with the campaign's administration let us know.

Stay up to date.

Following us on Twitter or Facebook is a good way to find out what's going on around Greater Manchester and what we are doing too.

Facebook: /GMcycling

Twitter: @GMcycling

www.gmcc.org.uk

