

East London Cyclist

www.wheelers.org.uk

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

THE NEWSLETTER FOR TOWER HAMLETS WHEELERS • LONDON CYCLING CAMPAIGN

Dear Boris...

The Mayor recently published his vision for transport in London. The shiny document, entitled "Way to Go" can be downloaded at:

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/publications

Amongst his intentions of course, are to scrap the bendy bus, allow motorbikes in bus lanes, scrap the bendy bus, give more cyclists a ticking off for going through red lights and cycling on pavements, a proposed cycle hire scheme, and oh... did I mention scrapping the bendy bus?

Bendy argument

I have to say, personally I am not against the bendy buses, and as a group, Wheelers have no particular stance on them. ➔



We have not heard of a single fatality involving a bendy bus and a cyclist. The fact is, that ANY long vehicle is a potential hazard to cyclists, not only bendy buses. (Arguably, the driver of the bendy bus has better visibility than a typical lorry driver, owing to a lower position and large glass doors.)

According to the Met's Central traffic unit, So far this year [2008] nine cyclists in London have been killed after collisions with lorries. While Boris is intent on doing away with the Bandy buses, I wouldn't like to see cyclists dragged into the debate on safety grounds without clear evidence.

The Mayor should be stepping up campaigns to make ALL long vehicles and HGVs safer, and raising awareness of this real danger, rather than twisting the arguments to make it look like removing the bendy buses will suddenly have a major safety gain for cyclists. The reality is it will probably have little impact.

Cyclists would be wise to stay clear - and stay where they can be seen - around ALL sorts of long vehicles, "bendy" or not. This is the vital message we need to get across. ➔

New cycle training

Anyone who works, studies or lives in Tower Hamlets will be able to take advantage of the council's new and improved free adult cycle training scheme.

The new scheme offers one-to-one sessions with a qualified cycle instructor rather than in a group, for both total beginners and experienced cyclists. Bicycles can be borrowed if needed.

Sessions last one hour and are available at a time and day of the week that suits you (within normal Monday - Saturday working hours). For those who would prefer a female cycling instructor, this can be arranged upon request.

More experienced cyclists can arrange sessions to start from a different location within Tower Hamlets to suit their requirements. To book a cycle training session email cycletraining@bikeworks.org.uk or call them directly on 020 8980 7998 ■

A healthy £4.68m...

Tower Hamlets has been chosen as one of nine Healthy Towns after successfully bidding for £4.68 million of funding to tackle the current 'obesity epidemic'.

As part of this funding, several 'Active Travel' schemes will be launched, working with local communities in Tower Hamlets to encourage increased walking and cycling levels as a means of fighting obesity. For more information, or to see how you might be involved, contact Sam Margolis at:

sam.margolis@towerhamlets.gov.uk ■



(continued from P.1)...

Hire scheme

The proposal to introduce a cycle hire scheme is encouraging, provided that this is not at the cost of cycle parking spaces, which are already pressured.

What's needed are effective measures to ensure that appropriate cycle parking is provided in new and existing developments, residential, retail and offices, in order to encourage and support more journeys by bicycle.

There have been problems also with inexperienced cyclists in the Paris Velib scheme, with accidents and at least one fatality.

We support the Mayor's desire to increase the number of journeys made by bicycle, but when coupled with motorbikes in bus lanes, while at the same time not completing many of the original LCN+ targets, and token strips of green paint that lure cyclists into a false sense of security (For example next to parked cars and taxis that open doors or pull out straight into cyclists, or across the mouth of a junction, between parked cars etc.) Many of these "cycle lanes" have been put in with little thought, and any input from cyclists has been mostly ignored.

As an experienced cyclist, I could probably cope with the motorbikes in bus lanes, however, if the Mayor is to encourage new and inexperienced cyclists, these people are surely going to be put off by motorbikes roaring past at close proximity, zipping in and out, left and right, especially given the lack of quieter alternative routes.

There have been many clampdowns on cyclists jumping red lights, which I agree is an issue, however, I see almost no enforcement of vehicles abusing the Advanced Stop Lines, which are there to protect cyclists. So the Mayor's sentiment of 'fairness to all' (p.26) I have yet to see.

If cyclists are going to get busted for pavement riding and red light jumping, let's see equal clampdowns of vehicles abusing cycle lanes and ASLs at those same junctions, and vehicles - especially vans and contractors - using cycle lanes as parking spaces. (Cable Street, New Road, Vallance Road etc. etc.) Why do I never see these vans get a parking ticket, while cyclists have to squeeze through tiny gaps or dismount in order to get past them?

Filling the training gap

Occasionally, I still find it incredible that anyone can go and buy a bicycle (or hire one under the proposed scheme!) and without any form of training or safety awareness, just take to London's streets. A great sense of freedom on one hand, while being a potential danger on the other.

I would like to see the Mayor and TfL provide a more unified approach to Adult and Schools cycle training London-wide, ➔

instead of the haphazard and inconsistent "postcode lottery" we have at the moment across London, and to incentivise people to do the training, (i.e. a discount on the hire scheme, or discount on a new bicycle or some accessories. (Perhaps similar to the VAT free 'cycle to work' schemes).

While TfL has been providing funding for cycle training to local boroughs, many of them have not even bothered to apply for the funding, or set up an effective cycle training scheme.

Some boroughs are providing good cycle training, others token efforts, while others not at all. Most cyclists I ask, however, aren't even aware that adult cycle training exists!

Making cycle training more consistent and accessible, and publicising the fact that it exists, is vital if we are to overcome this barrier to cycling in London, as well as reduce the number of 'loony cyclists' and accidents, making everyone safer. ■

Robert Lister

Bike It comes to town

A 3-year schools cycling project, led by sustainable transport charity Sustrans in partnership between Tower Hamlets Council and the Tower Hamlets Primary Care Trust, has been launched in the Borough.

Called 'Bike It', the scheme will work with 10 schools in Tower Hamlets each year until 2011. We know that millions of children want to cycle to school in this country, yet only 1% do. Sustrans has stepped in to sort this out with Bike It, a groundbreaking project which has already quadrupled the number of children cycling to its target schools.

James Scott is our dedicated Bike It officer for this Borough. James is in charge of delivering the Bike It project and will be organising bike related events and activities. He has been working with his 10 schools for 3 months now and feels the potential for a cycling culture within the Borough is huge. So far James has organised Dr Bike visits for the schools and has set up a bike maintenance course at Docklands Education Centre.

James, who joined the Bike It project in September 2008, said: "I feel really privileged to be part of the Bike It team here in London. Cycling is such an exciting, cheap and accessible way to see the city! I am the first Primary Care Trust funded Bike It officer in London and can't wait to get my schools energised about cycling and helping them discover that it's a fun and effective way to exercise whilst doing your bit for the planet."

If you want to find out more, including how you can volunteer to help with the Bike It project, contact James at:

james.scott@sustrans.org.uk

www.sustrans.org.uk/bikeit ■

Yoga for cyclists

David Withington tried out Rebecca Bouge's Yoga for Cyclists, and sent us this review.

The main aim being that students learn how to strengthen and stretch mindfully in class, and apply these at any point pre or post ride and keep commonly developed cycle related injuries at bay.

No yoga experience is necessary, although if you have it helps with some of the sequences and you will be familiar with some of the positions. It won't necessarily make them any easier if like me you are useless, absolute beginners are well catered for. Rebecca has trained in various forms of Dance, Anatomy & Physiology and most recently Yoga Teacher Training with Edward Clark and Elizabeth Connolly.

It's a very good workout and as with all yoga you can push yourself with the moves or take it easier, but the whole idea for me was to try to overcome some of those physical constraints maybe brought about by years of bad posture and neglect. It seems to be working, even after the first session I felt more upright with better alignment and better breathing.

The descriptions of how your body is supposed to be working are informative and incredibly helpful in ensuring you get the best results.

Rebecca comes across in a very friendly relaxed way, making the classes hard work but fun and thoroughly enjoyable, especially as we all seem to suffer similar limitations. I thoroughly recommend.



Bodywise, Roman Road
January 8th – February 12th
February 26th – April 2nd
£51/£36 per course
£10/£7 drop-in

bodywisehealth.org/yogacourses.html
Tel: 020 8981 6938 ■

David Withington

10 for the road...

Wheelers catch up with Joe Hipkin, Cycle Training Coordinator at Bikeworks, who shares his top ten tips for on-road cycling.

1. Basics first! Your bike needs to be mechanically sound with two working brakes, air in the tyres and a tight secure stem. Also, your riding control skills need to be solid with you not wobbling when starting/stopping, looking behind and signalling. If you can you should try to learn standing up and a front wheel hop (for unexpected bumps, pot holes and kerbs)... oh and please, **lights** for night time!
2. Remember to ride with your first two fingers covering the brakes, set your pedal every time you start/stop and try to keep up with the flow of the traffic.
3. Ride confidently and assertively but never aggressively. You have equal rights to be on the road on your vehicle, but remember you are an ambassador for cyclists!
4. Take the lane when there is no reason not to, you will have more time and space to react. Stay out of the door zone! This is the area a door can open into and something you want to stay out of!
5. Give yourself plenty of time to signal and manoeuvre, in other words, you should be looking over your shoulder a lot and fitting in with the traffic flow! Signalling does not give you right of way but rather displays your intentions.
6. Try not to 'dip in' to the space at T junctions, instead, continue in the straight line you have been in (out of the door zone!), glance up the side road as you pass it and keep pedalling.
7. Be very careful passing large vehicles on the left hand side! This is a high-risk move and large lorries/trucks have a potential of crushing you as they turn left.
8. Before turning from a side road into a major road, take the lane to prevent cars from behind overtaking and side-swiping you. You may need to roll forward over the give way lines a little bit to see past cars parked either side of the junction. When it is clear, turn into your lane as quickly as possible.
9. At roundabouts, signal if you are turning left or right in advance, slow down, take the lane and give way to the right. When travelling around the roundabout give a signal to indicate which exit you are taking and check over your shoulder as you exit.
10. Aim to travel in a smooth, predictable and predictive way and enjoy being a member of the best club in the world!

If you'd like to know more, get in touch: Bikeworks, Unit 8, Gun Wharf, 241 Old Ford Rd. Tel: 020 8980 7998. (Bikeworks is a not for profit community interest company dedicated to cycle training.) ■

Joe Hipkin

Rides and events

Please check our web site, or call the ride leader in advance, as times/details sometimes change!

January 2009

Wednesday, 14th January

MONTHLY WHEELERS MEETING

Meet at St Margaret's House, 21 Old Ford Road. 7.30-9.00pm - everyone welcome. Followed by a visit to a local pub from 9.15pm. Contact: Owen.

Sunday, 18th January

WATERLINK WAY AND DARENTH VALLEY

Moderate ride: Traffic free cycle route and the nearest country lanes to Central London. Features a straw bale cafe (the building, not the food!). This ride will include train out and/or back from Lewisham/Greenwich - exact route and details TBA. Start 9.00am Green Bridge, Mile End Park. Contact: Caroline

Saturday, 31st January

BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Monthly Workshop – 11am-3.00pm at Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road.

February

Sunday, 1st February

BREAKFAST RIDE

Easy ride. Café Breakfast at about 9.15am, destination will be along the Lee Valley or along the Thames, to be announced on the day. 15-20 miles in total. Meet 8.00am on top of the Green Bridge, Mile End Park. Contact: Caroline

Wednesday, 11th February

MONTHLY WHEELERS MEETING

- As 14th January

Sunday, 15th February

HEADCORN LOOPS

Moderate/Hard ride, One and half or two country lane loops from Headcorn. Some steep hills but two drop out points. Between 35 and 65 miles depending on option chosen. Train out from London Bridge. (Meeting place TBA.) Contact: Dave

www.wheelers.org.uk

Saturday, 28th February

BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Monthly Workshop – 11am-3.00pm at Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road.

March

Sunday, 1st March

BREAKFAST RIDE - AS 1ST FEBRUARY.

Wednesday, 11th March

MONTHLY WHEELERS MEETING

- As 14th January.

Sunday, 22nd March

WETLANDS RIDE

Easy/Moderate ride along Thames to Wetlands centre at Barnes. Meet TBA. Contact: Caroline

Saturday, 28th March

BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Monthly Workshop – 11am-3.00pm at Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road.

Sunday 29th March

BREAKFAST RIDE - As 1st February.

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www.bicyclemagic.com

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