



CYCLETALK

Produced by CTC Scotland

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Cycle Campaign Conference - change of emphasis

'We need more cycle lanes' used to be the message coming from the CCN Conferences, and the main topic of discussion. It was commented on by several delegates at the most recent conference in Liverpool in November that there is now a noticeable change in emphasis. There's much more about how cycling fits into the agenda of health, lifestyle and environment. Not that the infrastructure is perfect, but to a large extent the problems have been identified and mainly solved, all that's needed now is the will to implement them. The issues of lifestyle and mobility and the compulsion to travel have not been solved – many have not even realised that there are issues. Those who are CTC members are usually both recreational and utility cyclists and also probably generally healthier than the average, so we have a head start on several counts.

What's On in 2003

The 2003 'What's On' Guide is in final stages of preparation. If you hurry you may just get your events included in the printed version, but it's never too late for the web edition. Any events are eligible - CTC-organised ones, local groups, clubs, sponsored events, anything that gets people out on bikes together.

The way to submit an event is to fill in a simple form on the web.

Go to www.scottishcycling.org/events and do it NOW!

Cycle Tourism in Scotland

visit.scotland is keen to get more visitors to Scotland cycling. Their strategy consultation seems to think in terms of the 'average' family, staying in a B&B, wondering at breakfast one day how to spend the day. So their landlady says "How about hiring some bikes, and here's a route you could do?". The many foreign cyclists who arrive here complete with 4 panniers prepared to tackle Scotland's roads, mountains and weather don't seem to figure in the equation. There are a lot of them, and presumably quite a lot will now use the Superfast Ferry. What have we (we as in cyclists, local authorities, government, cycling organisations) done to help them when they put their tyres on the tarmac at Rosyth – which even its strongest supporter would agree is not the most welcoming place in Fife. (Are ANY ferry terminals welcoming? The usual immediate reaction is 'How do I get away from here?'). CTC appealed last year for 'Information Volunteers' to update the information they hold on each county (or district or region). So far I think that only 'Caithness & Sutherland' and 'Lothians' have been done. Any volunteers - especially among RtR people - for other areas? Greg Woodford at Godalming is the man to talk to, or liaise through Mike Harrison.

125 years old

Have you booked the weekend of May 3-5th yet? What for? Your local CTC group will be running an anniversary event. The aim is to have every member out riding at a local event sometime over that weekend. There will be routes ranging from 25 to 125 miles to suit all. Look out for details in the CTC magazine as well as your local DA newsheet. Keep the date free, and either ride or offer to help. Can we get 3500 riders out in Scotland over that weekend?

CTC Scotland

Chair: Ron Harrow, theharrows@lineone.net
Sec: Mike Harrison, Secretary@CTCScotland.org.uk
+44 (0)131 554 7773

Web Sites

CTCS: www.ctcscotland.org.uk
SCDP: www.scottishcycling.org

SUPERFAST re-visited

Well, Ron Stewart's report of his experiences with Superfast produced more reaction from readers than anything else we have ever published in Cycle Talk! In general they thought that he had been rather hard on the company, and had over-ambitious expectations, but the reports from others indicate that there are areas in which there are inconsistencies, and things which could probably very easily be improved. It seems to be the case that disembarking (provided you can find your bike) is not a problem, but that the procedures at Rosyth are far more unfriendly than at Zeebrugge. Who insists that this is the case? the company, the UK government? and does it need to be different.

There is a common concern about the stowage of bikes – one person did sneak into the vehicle deck just before take-off and saw his bike on top of a pile of other bikes (pity the ones at the bottom), other have found them unsecured but fortunately undamaged when they went to collect them. It looks as if the ferries need some Sheffield racks and straps and some instructions on how to use them!

All comment favourably on the food, the friendliness of the staff and the comfort of the journey. Cabin space for luggage is limited. Presumably the car passengers only take in their pyjamas and a toothbrush! But we probably can't expect much more – though perhaps they could put a lockable cage near the bike racks so people could leave their bags near the bikes securely; on second thoughts perhaps they could have bike-boxes like the ones at stations.

One writer commented very unfavourably about signage for cyclists at both ends – it's not clear whether you follow the directions for cars or foot passengers, and at the Fife end the link to and from Rosyth Station is not obvious. A separate issue was a family with three bikes arriving by train. Anyone who knows ScotRail's rules does not need the scenario expanded!

Some of the writers have already contacted Superfast directly about some of these issues, and I will be compiling a composite critique based on what I have been told.

Extracts from some of the letters received are quoted below:

"Meeting with Freight Director of Superfast: He was very receptive toward the notion of more formalised cycle storage, but was still edgy about the security (and safety?) implications of allowing cyclists to take their bikes on themselves."

"I don't think Superfast is necessarily the culprit, but the Rosyth Terminal / H&S. The letter in Cycle Talk brought out another point. Cyclists don't expect to have to unload bikes on ferries - I normally leave my bike loaded and take just an overnight bag of preselected stuff. It is truly dreadful to carry in your arms luggage designed for bike carriage, for a month's camping trip. You could actually injure your back, as bikes can carry a lot. A properly planned cyclists embarcation, maybe after the heavy goods and before the cars, is surely a better solution."

"..... As for fuel (and I suppress the urge to ask here if Ronald Stewart planned to drum up in his cabin!) I have encountered similar rules in other countries (eg with bottled gas at left-luggage in Poland)."

"I was sufficiently concerned about the wellbeing of our relatively expensive bikes, that after stowing our luggage, I ventured down to the vehicle deck to find the bikes on top of others, leaning against a rope barrier.

I was approached by the Superfast Greek security officer, who, realising my concerns, helpfully instructed a crew member (accompanied by some appropriate Greek swear words!), to secure the bikes in a more satisfactory fashion."

"It was surprising when travelling by Superfast Ferries not to be allowed to cycle on to the ferry. I have been on 6 ferries this summer with my bike and cycled on to them all. As a Health and Safety officer in my last job, I was encouraged to look at whole systems not just bits of them. I was also encouraged to consult with others when appropriate.

Because we did not cycle on to the ferry, we did not know where the bikes were, to cycle off. 6 cyclists were running about a very big ferry looking for their bikes while drivers were getting

ready to drive off. ANY CYCLIST on the ferry will be experienced and impatient to be on their way. NO CYCLIST would regard waiting for the bus as a sensible or reasonable option, but as an unreasonable and imposed delay.”

“Cycling into the Rosyth port seemed reasonably safe and unconfusing. Cycling into the ferry terminal at Zeebrugge was intimidating, even dangerous in one place, as the roads are poorly laid out, and there are no cycle lanes or instructions. When I spoke to Superfast staff there, to say we had not known whether to follow “Car” or Passenger” signs, to reach the check-in, the answer was “It’s because cyclists are not allowed to cycle onto the ferry in Rosyth”. This was arrant nonsense, and was simply being used as an excuse for non-existent signposting. But that is what I was told.”

“I realise the Rosyth terminal may not be finished. But I strongly recommend you consult CTC Scotland or perhaps Fife Council or the Sustrans office, to get other views on this. I am convinced that it would be safer overall to have proper procedures and controls to allow cyclists to ride onto the ferry, so they know where their bikes are to cycle off. At least then Zeebrugge would not have a readymade excuse for their poor system for bikes.”

Keeping in Touch

The suggestions of getting information to members via email made two issues ago seems to have fallen on deaf ears. Only about 10 out of some 3500 members have responded, so no viable list has been set up yet. It would be an easy way to get urgent news out between issues of Cycletalk, and would not have the 5-week lead time of the printed leaflet. If you want to be added to the list, please send an email to E-CTCS@CTCSScotland.org.uk giving your name, membership number and email address.

KM rally – planned for the last weekend in May, Book the date now.

Juniper Green Path Clean-up

This article appeared in a local newspaper. In the light of all the Access discussions, perhaps it is important that cyclists are seen to work together with other users and to be prepared to get their hands dirty

Volunteers from Spokes, the local Cycle Campaign, have cleaned up a section of path near Woodhall Farm. The path leads from the footbridge over the river, to the cottages below the Farm, and is located near Woodhall Court.

The path had been getting worse every year. A local resident had put some slabs down to form stepping stones, but these quickly disappeared into the mud below.

Peter Hawkins, former resident of Woodhall Terrace, who co-ordinated the volunteers, said: “under the mud there was a perfectly sound stone surface. But every year the trees drop their leaves, and it gradually builds up into a mulch. In the 24 years I’ve lived here, I don’t think the path has ever been cleaned! The mud was 6” deep in places. Along the edge we discovered a row of yellow bricks, which might have been a pavement in the days when horses used the path, or they might have been used as an edging.”

“A path like this needs to be cleaned every three or four years. The Victorians who presumably built it, knew a lot about drainage and had road-making skills which have now been largely lost. Now that the path has been cleaned, the water should drain off it quite quickly. It’s already a popular route but if anyone has been put off using it because of its condition, I hope they’ll find it much better.”

“It’s not much use asking the Council to do jobs like this - it would be too expensive. The only way to get these jobs done is to do it yourself. Access is being widely discussed at the moment, but for us, access is about action - doing paths up, and making the best of what we have”.

Peter believes there are paths all over the city which need work done. He has recently been working with groups of volunteers on the ‘Christian’ path in Portobello, the Water of Leith path at Saughton, and the path beside the River Almond, between Cramond Brig and the airport.

In Town Without My Car 22 September

Every year on the same day. In 2002 it happened to be a Sunday, and the first time Scottish cities had made any attempt to support the concept.

In Edinburgh the west end of George Street was cordoned off, and thanks to a sunny day there was a large turn-out of the public to stroll along the street, shop at the Farmer's Market as well as the George Street shops, sit on the pavement or the road and eat and drink. Environmental groups had a stall area of their own - Friends of the Earth, Transform Scotland, Living Streets, Spokes, and of course CTC Scotland among them.

The Edinburgh papers reported next day that 'about 2000' of the public had been there. The Council had employed a security firm to help with keeping the traffic out and they also counted heads coming in (basically there were only 4 entry points) and I believe they counted many, many more than 2 thousand.

The real test comes next year when the event will be on a Monday. How will the carnival atmosphere work on a Monday in September?

Scottish Cycling Development Project

The Development Officers:

Michael Addiscott has been a cyclist all his life, and has a background in sales and promotions. He is based in Glasgow at a desk within Glasgow City Council's cycling unit.

Gary Willis prior to joining SCDP had just completed a Sports Science degree. He is a former member of the Scottish cycling squad and has a keen interest in coaching and cycle training. Gary is based in Edinburgh with a desk in the office of the Scottish Cyclists Union.

Contact details:

Michael: 0141 287 9374;
michaeladdiscott@scottishcycling.co.uk

Gary: 0131 652 0895;
garywillis@scottishcycling.co.uk

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District Associations Tourist Competition (DATC)

The Scottish winners in 2002 with 58 points (gained in 6 events) were Duncan Peet and John Connaughtan, both from the Lothians DA. Congratulations! There was no award to a Scottish Lady for 2002.



Scottish Cycling

Progress since the last issue of Cyclotalk:

The Scottish Executive has agreed to the main points of the proposals, and currently Erl Wilkie is seconded part-time to develop a business plan. By the time you read this, the plan should have been completed and it is hoped that implementation will follow rapidly.

East Lothian News

Mark James writes that the Hallhill Healthy Living Centre in Dunbar is planning to start up a family cycling group with a regular monthly ride.

The East Lothian Spokes cycle map is now in preparation. This will complete the set of 4 covering the Lothians, but the work of the map-makers is not finished as they need constant updating as paths suitable for cycling come and go under both rural and urban 'development'.

Next Issue:

What happened at the CTC Scotland AGM

125th Anniversary Events

Do you have any 'bikes on trains' stories, or any positive suggestions? Please write to the Editor.

TALK TO US!!!

Comments on any issues raised in this newsletter are welcomed.

Email: editor@CTCScotland.org.uk

Mail: **Mike Harrison 11 Stead's Place, Edinburgh, EH6 5DY**

Talk to someone live!: **0131 554 7773**

Post a message on our bulletin board:

www.CTCScotland.org.uk/mwforum/