

Pedal for the planet

CTC is drawing up a policy on climate change and wants your input. Campaigns Manager Roger Geffen explains why

It's been almost a year since CTC's Cyclehero film hit cinemas across the country, talking to cyclists about climate change and the part they played in tackling it. In the months that followed climate change has skyrocketed up the agenda, with a Climate Change Bill before Parliament – the first efforts by a country to introduce binding national targets for reducing CO2 emissions.

The Government is starting to take climate change seriously, but is confused about the best way to handle emissions from transport. On the one hand it wants us all to get out of our cars and on to public transport; on the other it's building new roads and runways, locking us into unsustainable lifestyles. Despite CTC's best efforts, ministers still haven't picked up on the role cycling has to play in keeping emissions down.

Two thirds of car journeys are less than five miles, which is perfectly suitable for cycling. The Government says it wants to promote cycling as a solution to both obesity and climate change. But it fails to see it is undermining these very same objectives by continuing to pursue car-dependent transport policies and development patterns. If we keep on building hospitals, superstores and business parks remote from where people live, then people are bound to drive more often, further and faster. This not only increases the dangers cyclists face but also makes it harder to encourage cycling for short local journeys.

Scientists believe that we may have as little as 100 months to halt and reverse the effects of climate change. CTC continues to work with other environmental groups in calling for a shift to lower-carbon and more cycle-friendly solutions.

Last year we calculated that each person who left their car at home and cycled to work would save around half a tonne of CO2 each year.

Despite many local authorities' obsession with costly cycle tracks, cycling needs no special infrastructure to make it viable: we'd be fine simply with fewer cars and more sensible driving! This would bring wider benefits for society: slowing cars to sensible speeds would also reduce congestion and promote walking, making our neighbourhoods nicer places to live and work. And all these measures would help people reduce their carbon footprint too.



WHAT'S NEXT?

CTC's campaigning is governed by our Policy Handbook. Currently it doesn't include a policy on climate change. To help inform CTC Council in drawing one up, we would like to know how strongly you agree or disagree with the following five statements:

1. Climate change threatens the future of our way of life and economy, as well as our health and the natural environment so greatly treasured by cyclists.
2. Cycling should be encouraged as one of the simplest lifestyle changes that individuals can make to reduce their carbon footprint.
3. The need to halt and reverse the growth of greenhouse emissions should be a central aim of wider transport, planning and economic policies.
4. CTC should support the campaigning of other environmental organisations and coalitions on wider climate change issues.
5. CTC should seek progressively to reduce the climate impacts of its operations and activities.

We have set up an easy-to-use online survey to allow you answer these questions quickly and efficiently. You can do this by going to www.ctc.org.uk/survey. To respond by post, write to Climate Consultation, CTC, Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, GU2 9JX. For each of the five statements above, please say whether you: (a) strongly agree, (b) agree, (c) neither agree nor disagree, (d) disagree, (e) strongly disagree or (f) don't know. Please feel free to add your own comments as well.

FROM THE TOURING DEPT MARK WATERS



Thanks to Roger Codling for sending an account of his efforts at keeping his carbon footprint small by taking the train from London to Malaga to go on Chris Juden's Spanish tour last year. It makes

interesting reading. He writes:

'It cost a total of £328 from London to

Malaga return. Would I do it again? Not this route or combination of bike and luggage. (He used a Airnimal folding bike with standard panniers, while his companion took a Moulton.) The bicycle and luggage must be pared down to the minimum to reduce the burden on one's shoulders. The Eurostar is okay when less than full. The Talgo sleeper is too cramped with a bike, likewise the normal Talgos. The TGV/AVE combination from Paris to Madrid and Malaga via Barcelona should be more comfortable when the new lines are fully open.

'My conclusion is that it's too much hassle as it stands. The only really trouble-free way is to handle your own bike, as is the practice in the UK and often on local and regional trains in Europe.'

For Roger's full account, email me at national office: mark.waters@ctc.org.uk.

For cyclists touring at home, we have a new information sheet: 'Finding Somewhere to Stay in the UK' (INF44). Also new is 'Planning a Cycle Route' (INF36), which lists numerous websites relating to mapping your own routes and reading about other people's.