

Your opinions

LETTERS

THIS MONTH THE OFF-ROAD TRANSPORT NETWORK, HOW THE CYCLE TO WORK SCHEME WORKS, BIKES ON TRAINS, A POINTED PROBLEM, AND MORE



Left: Roland Seber. Right: Timo Newton-Syms, Flickr



Letter
of the
month

Off-road access

TRAFFIC-FREE TRAILS

AN INTERESTING article about off-road access in the last edition of *Cycle*, and good to see that some progress is being made. But while we enjoy recreational riding, maybe we should be placing additional emphasis on off-road as a means of transport in rural areas? Most of our towns and villages are within cycling distance of each other, but people are understandably put off cycling on busy, high-speed rural roads. For cycling to be a practical rural alternative to driving, we need to use footpaths or trails not legitimately open to us. Bridleways alone do not form a coherent network, and on sandy or clay substrates are often too degraded by horse erosion for us to use.

While it requires major investment to create cycle routes in urban areas, they already exist outside of our cities, requiring only minor legislation to open up what could be one of the most comprehensive networks in the world.

As implied in the article, there does seem to be increasing harmony between different users, with pleasantries common and disputes rare. But those 'No Cycling' signs on trails remain a major cause of conflict.

John Johns

For more about this ultra-lightweight jacket, which comes in men's and women's designs, go online to altura.eu

Write to
Cycle

EMAIL: cyclinguk@jppublishing.co.uk **POST:** Cycle, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ.

The star letter wins a **£39.99** Altura Microlite, an ideal just-in-case jacket that's wind- and showerproof yet packs down into its own rear pocket.



ALTURA

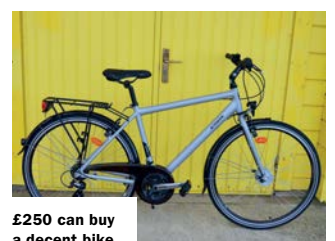
For more on erosion, see bit.ly/cyclinguk-beatentrack

BUDGET BIKES

The latest copy of *Cycle* reminded me of the Cycle to Work scheme. I wondered if you plan to have an article on any of these schemes, and the eligibility of applying for them? Last year, I was not eligible for my work's Cycle to Work scheme because any payments for being on the scheme would have brought me below the 'living wage'. Income from my external, secondary employment could not be taken into account.

Paul Fields

The Cycle to Work scheme works through salary sacrifice and you must earn at least the minimum wage after deductions. So if you earn just above the minimum wage, the value of your Cycle to Work package will need to be quite low. Let's say the bike you want costs £250 and that you work 37 hours a week. Over 12 months, the salary sacrifice would be £4.81 per week (£250 divided by 52). You would need



£250 can buy a decent bike



Is conflict under-reported?

OFF THE BEATEN PATHS

As a walker and a cyclist, I found the Track Changes article (Feb/Mar issue) one-sided. The survey found that 36% of cyclists admitted to being shouted at by walkers, but I think the true figure will be higher.

A survey of walkers is needed to understand how many have felt intimidated or resentful. Matthew Wright's Highland Crossing article (same issue) talks about walkers being alarmed by cyclists, and sometimes it being better for the cyclists to walk with their bikes. With England being more densely populated, that will be more frequently the case.

Another factor to be included is the potential for erosion in some areas. On a wet day, the rut from a single bike on a soft slope will create an immediate water channel, thus causing more erosion than many walkers. On firmer ground this is not an issue.

The challenge is to find the best accommodation for all. Blanket widening of access rights for cyclists might not be the best answer.

Chris Hesketh

to earn £4.81 per week more than the national minimum wage to get this bike through Cycle to Work. Assuming a 37 hour week, you would need to earn just 13 pence per hour more than the minimum wage.

BETTER CYCLE CARRIAGE

In response to the short piece 'Bike-rail back on track' (Feb/Mar, p12): I would have no objection to having a mandatory booking system for cycle carriage, or even to paying a nominal fee for the bicycle, if it meant that I could put my bike in the space reserved for it. The cycle space is always filled with luggage and pushchairs. In one instance, a passenger put her heavy suitcase on top of my bike! Alternatively, I have to lift my bike up to a great height to hang it up, which I need help to do.

Cycling UK could address this problem as well as giving awards for cycle-friendly stations, which you have done in the past, and perhaps are still doing.

Mrs Barbara Boyd



Bookable bike spaces are best

The National Cycle-Rail Awards do still exist and Cycling UK is one of their supporters. See bit.ly/cyclinguk-cycleraill

SOMETIMES MORE IS MORE

Regarding the 'Less is more' letter last issue: it is probably self-evident that trying to travel as lightly as possible is generally beneficial, but it's all relative. It depends on your type of tour, the terrain, climate, and personal needs.

The feature 'Women on Tour' in the same issue shows both Josie Dew and Laura Moss with



Four panniers often beats two

what can be described as typical-sized loads and typical numbers of bags for touring. Two front and two larger rear panniers plus a bar bag are the norm, but the weight you carry in them is critical. The lists of 'Don't leave home without it' items in the same article exemplifies this point – each to their own preference.

Let's celebrate cycle touring, in all its myriad forms, because frequently it's the best way to travel and see places. It's not some kind of badge of honour to travel with as little (or as much) as you can.

Robin Bevis

KNIFE POINTS

In the 'Woman on Tour' article (Feb/Mar), two of the ladies say they always carry Leathermans, and there is a picture of a Leatherman Wave.

I feel it would be wise to point out that the tool shown has a locking blade, which makes it illegal to carry in the UK, without a good reason. The law does not distinguish between a multi-tool with a locking blade and fixed-bladed 'Rambo' knife. In theory, a blunt butter knife comes under the same legislation.

Here is the guidance from the Crown Prosecution Service: bit.ly/cyclinguk-knives.

Whilst the chances of being stopped by police may be small in the countryside, urban cyclists who sometimes have heated exchanges with drivers should seriously consider the consequences of carrying such a device. Also, the law is different in almost every country, so it would be best to check before travelling.

Tom Loader

Left: Tim Moss

See also gov.uk/buying-carrying-knives. Context is important. If you're cycle-camping and have one in your bag, that should be a sufficiently good reason. But if you brandish one in the street...

EASIER GEARS

The cycle industry is shooting itself in the foot by offering cycles, especially entry-level hybrids, with gears that are far too high. This makes cycling hard work and puts off newcomers. A friend of mine bought a hybrid bike and couldn't cycle home on it up a moderate (1-in-10) hill. The 25kg Elephant Bike featured last issue has a



Low gears: not just for tourers

OBITUARIES
Are now being published online at cyclinguk.org/obituaries. Send obituaries to publicity@cyclinguk.org. You can include a digital photo if you wish.

40in bottom gear. Try loading its ample carriers and riding that up a hill!

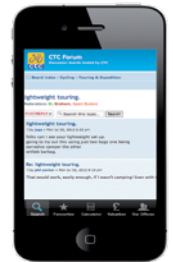
I'm an average touring cyclist and use a triple chainset with ratios from the low 20s to around 90in. I rarely use the outer chainring, though I regularly cycle up to 100 hilly miles in a day. I also have a Brompton with the 'extra low' gearing, yet the higher ratios allow me to pedal at up to 35mph. The only things I need at 35mph on 16in wheels are a steady nerve and a good set of brakes!

Peter Koch-Osborne

Join the conversation

CYCLING UK FORUM

Get immediate feedback from other Cycling UK members on the Cycling UK forum: forum.cyclinguk.org. Here's an abridged extract from one recent thread: bit.ly/cyclinguk-cameras



BIKE CAMERAS

Colgrenfell: I'm considering a bike camera to use whilst commuting. It feels like cycling has become more unsafe over the last 20 years commuting in London and Edinburgh.
landsurfer: Bike cameras, like CCTV, will not make you safer. It may well allow your loved ones to see how the accident happened, but will not stop it happening.

jatindersangha: I use the Cycliq Fly6 (rear) and Fly12 (front). They function as bike lights as well as

cameras so you may end up with less clutter on the bike. They automatically overwrite the memory card when it becomes full.

BakfietsUK: I use a Garmin Virb, which has been excellent. It is quite expensive and you have to have some basic computer skills – plus a computer, of course.

murphy195: The reason I have one is quite simple. Having been knocked off the bike by a person who subsequently lied about the facts – in this case, claiming I rode off the pavement in

front of him – the camera would have proved he was lying at the outset. Even if I hadn't survived to contradict him.

Annoying Twit: If car drivers become more aware that cyclists often have cameras, then they may choose to be more careful around cyclists, as in the event of an accident there may be evidence. Hence, it won't be a case of an individual camera making the rider who uses it safer. But there may be an effect where widespread camera use makes cyclists overall safer.

How to contact Cycle

LETTERS are edited for space (if above 150 words), clarity and, if necessary, legality. Please note that if you have specific complaint or query about Cycling UK policy, you should address it to the relevant national office staff member. Letters & emails for the June/July issue must arrive by 28 April. Write to: cyclinguk@jppublishing.co.uk or Cycle Letters, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ

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