Sustrans’ Bike It: U Can 2

Sustrans has built on its cycling to school project, Bike It, by developing Bike It U Can 2, which is helping parents get involved in cycling.

In a new angle for Sustrans’ Bike It project, cycle training and support has been offered to mums as well as the children at Cubitt Town Primary, one of the Bike It schools in Tower Hamlets.

Sustrans’ Bike It officer, James Scott, whose post is funded by Tower Hamlets Primary Care Trust, has been working with 3,000 pupils across the borough this year. He found increasingly that parents wanted to get involved and start cycling again but often did not have the confidence.

James said, “In response to that, myself and Sam Margolis, the Active Travel Officer at Tower Hamlets Council, started a cycle project for mums. In May and June, 16 women attended a six week training course that has given them the confidence and skills they need to get cycling again. It was so successful that two of the mums are going on to become cycling instructors.”

Sustrans believes that helping more women take up cycling, either for the first time or after a break, should be a priority. In London, approximately twice as many cycle journeys are made by men than women, and 82% of women never cycle at all. Women in the capital are missing out on the health benefits, convenience and fun of cycling.

One of the mums who took part in Sustrans’ Bike It U Can 2, Amina Saadani, said, “The more people who ride the better, the safer it will be. I was never interested in cycling, but now I want to do it; I felt I was missing something.”

The project is also part of a bigger campaign being spearheaded by Sustrans to get more women cycling, which includes the website bikebelles.org.uk offering advice and support to encourage women onto their bikes.

Want to see a safer cycling environment? Sign our Motion for Women petition.

Sustrans has launched the Motion for Women petition to ask local and national government to take action and make real changes so that cycling is safer for everyone. Last year we surveyed 1,000 women to find out what they believed would most persuade them, and other women, to cycle more. Overwhelmingly women wanted more cycle lanes separated from traffic, so the petition calls on governments to prioritise the creation of environments that encourage and support cycling, including cycle paths separated from traffic, as a way of enabling many more women to travel by bike. If you agree, sign the petition online at www.bikebelles.org.uk by 29 November 2009. We will present the petition to governments in December and ask them to extend the choice of cycling to millions of women by investing much more in making cycling safer.
Welcome to the London regional hub

We were so proud earlier in the year when Sustrans was honoured ahead of some 150 health organisations at the inaugural Chief Medical Officer’s Public Health Awards for its success in helping people to lead more active lives.

This was recognition that when it comes to public health, it’s the simple solutions that work best. Creating the environment and providing the skills and encouragement for people to walk or cycle for more of their regular journeys is the key.

That’s why it’s great that, with the help of our Supporters and partners, Sustrans’ programmes are now reaching more Londoners than ever before. This term, Bike It is in seven additional London boroughs, helping thousands of children to get an active start to their day.

The year will also see lots of changes on the ground, with our pilot DIY Streets projects being completed and key elements of Sustrans’ GOAL vision coming to fruition; new paths and bridges are being built which give people routes to the places that they want to go and a chance to be active and healthy at the same time.

Carl Pittam, Regional Director, London

Inspire mark awarded to GOAL programme

Sustrans’ GOAL has recently been acknowledged for its contribution to London’s Olympic legacy by being awarded the London 2012 Inspire mark. Inspire is a new programme for the Olympic and Paralympic Games which recognises a small number of outstanding projects and events which support the Games’ lasting legacy or Cultural Olympiad.

GOAL is one of the only environmental Inspire projects, whilst it also contributes to the intention to make 2012 the most inclusive Games ever.

Further expansion for London’s greenway network

As part of our role coordinating the delivery of greenways across London, we have been hard at work identifying routes in the few areas of London not already covered by greenways networks.

Two greenways area studies are currently being undertaken by the Sustrans London team – in southeast and central London – as well as an expansion of the network in southwest London. This builds on work previously carried out by Sustrans to scope and deliver a comprehensive pan-London greenways network.

Hundreds of local groups and individuals are being consulted on proposed routes which will link to parks and green spaces, schools, shops, local amenities and leisure facilities.

The central London area study, which covers the City, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham, Camden, Islington, Hackney and Tower Hamlets, includes proposed routes which connect between popular traffic-free paths in the central London Royal Parks.

What is GOAL?

Greenways for the Olympics And London (GOAL) is Sustrans’ vision for a coordinated city-wide network of good quality walking and cycling routes. We originally put forward the GOAL proposal in 2005, shortly following the announcement that London had been selected to host the 2012 Olympic Games, with the intention of tapping into the opportunities and energy that the Olympics would bring. We still use GOAL as an umbrella term and guiding principles for all of our route development work in London, which is delivered through a range of programmes and in partnership with many stakeholders, partners and funders.
Connect2

Major progress is being made on London’s Connect2 schemes this year. In August a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the Regent’s Canal was lifted into place, improving healthy travel options for people in this area of Tower Hamlets.

The bridge is a key central element of a Connect2 network that will improve access to two schools, a new housing development and Mile End Park. It will also create a new link to National Route 1 and form part of a route to the Olympic Park.

The Connect2 scheme in the London borough of Havering will see completion of the first phase this year. This includes the construction of a new path on Ivy Lane and a new crossing of Shepherds Hill, which will greatly improve the connection between the Outer London town centres of Upminster and Harold Hill.

Connect2 is Sustrans’ nationwide Big Lottery Fund-supported route development programme, which is transforming local communities across the UK. People in Connect2 communities will be able to take pride in places that are benefiting from better walking and cycling links. Connect2 includes six schemes in London, which are all due to be completed by 2013.

Makeovers for three London streets – and maybe yours too?

DIY Streets is a project helping residents to redesign their own streets affordably, putting people at their heart, making them safer and more attractive places to live. The project aims to replicate the positive successes of home zones, creating more peaceful spaces where kids can play and neighbours can chat, at a lower cost and with communities driving the process.

The three projects in London taking part in the three year DIY Streets pilot (Monsell Road in Islington, Clapton Terrace and Brooke Road and Evering Road junction, both in Hackney), are all progressing nicely. Construction started in September and schemes are due to be completed by Christmas 2009.

After this, celebration and evaluation events will be organised in all DIY Streets to celebrate and enjoy the newly traffic calmed and more attractive streets and to use them (perhaps for the first time) as a social space. We will be asking residents to get involved in this by carrying out door to door surveys and helping with the organisation of the final events.

In addition to this we’ll be holding a final UK-wide conference for all our partners (both professionals and residents) to review the successes and challenges in each project, as well as to gather final evaluation of their involvement in the project.

As these pilot projects are in their last six months, the Sustrans DIY Streets team is looking towards the future and are presently seeking future partners to roll out the project on a wide-scale basis, ensuring this best value approach can help address the many traffic issues facing local communities across the UK.

If you are interested in finding out more about the benefits of the DIY Streets approach, please contact either Katherine Rooney on 0117 915 0244 or email katherine.rooney@sustrans.org.uk or Alexandra Allen on 0117 915 0320 or email alexandra.allen@sustrans.org.uk.

School news

Analysis of Bike It – Sustrans’ groundbreaking cycling to school project – shows that it is helping thousands of children to get on their bikes in London. In 2008-09, the programme achieved a doubling in the number of children cycling daily to participating schools. The number cycling regularly (once or twice a week or more) increased from 13% of pupils to 22%.

It’s because of results like these that Bike It is continuing to grow apace in London. We are currently working intensively in over 70 schools across 11 London boroughs. This will see Bike It actively engaging with over 20,000 pupils, parents and teachers during the year ahead, whilst our ever expanding and dedicated team of Bike It officers continue to support the programme in an additional eight boroughs carried over from the last school year. Read on for some recent Bike It highlights:

Wheel stories

Sustrans Bike It officer Owen Powell has developed Wheel Stories, a spin-off from the popular Bling Your Bike day. In the summer term pupils from four different primary schools were encouraged to decorate their bikes as though they were ridden by a character from a favourite story, and then ride them to school.

The events saw some great invention and creativity, with a bike covered in sweets and sporting a golden ticket to represent Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, a tinsel-covered Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer bike, and a papier-mache Donald Duck’s head that was almost as big as the year two pupil whose bike it was attached to.

Obviously this was a lot of fun, but it was also a very effective way of popularising cycling. In one school of 205 pupils, Weston Park in Haringey, 25% of the pupils cycled in for Wheel Stories. The events were popular with parents and teachers, and cycling themed lessons added to the fun.
Bike Against James

In June, youngsters from five Tower Hamlets schools (Arnhem Wharf, Seven Mills, Cubitt Town, Harbinger and St Lukes) were invited to compete in the summer term Bike Against James challenge.

Over one week, pupils were encouraged to cycle to school, and at the end the total mileage of all these cycle journeys was added up. Local Bike It officer, James Scott, then had to cycle the combined distance of all the winning schools’ journeys in one go!

There was a great deal of excitement around the event and a real challenge was set for James, with over 200 miles of school cycling trips being generated at Arnhem Wharf school. This meant that James had to complete a ride from Skegness back to London. He cycled through the night to be at the school in the morning in time for a celebration event.

Following the intensive Bike It work in the borough, Sam Margolis, Joint Active Travel Officer at the London borough of Tower Hamlets and NHS Tower Hamlets recently said, “I am now seeing real evidence of children regularly cycling to school on the Isle of Dogs - at a recent assembly that I attended, the deputy head asked how many children cycle every day and a host of hands shot up... our aim of more children regularly cycling to school in order to boost their health is well on the way to being met.”

Bike maintenance training for Bike It school

In June, staff and parents from three former Bike It schools were given a day of bike maintenance training. This taught basic skills in bike fixing and how to ensure that children’s bikes are set up properly and are roadworthy.

This was provided as part of the Bike It School Mark scheme, which is a range of measures to sustain levels of cycling and a cycling culture after a school’s Bike It officer has moved on.

Policy Engagement

Mayoral Strategies

We are continuing input into the development of key Mayoral Strategies in London. The Mayor’s Transport Strategy and the London Plan are currently being rewritten and through the summer we advised the Mayor’s office and the London Assembly on how to ensure that the plans work for London.

We praised the Mayor for his stated commitments to cycling and walking in London, including the development of major schemes like the cycling superhighways and central London cycle hire. However, we are continuing to push for more priority to be given to supporting new and vulnerable cyclists and improving local environments.

For example, we are calling on the Mayor to set targets for equitable access to cycling to address the fact that roughly half as many cycle trips are made by women and girls than by men and boys.

Sustrans is also critical of some of the Mayor’s emerging policies. We called for the plans for additional airport runway capacity in the London area (potentially via a new airport in the Thames Estuary) to be dropped and for alternatives to air travel to be pursued instead.

We also criticised the priority being given to electric cars in the capital, since more electric cars will do little or nothing to tackle congestion, improve road safety or improve Londoners health or quality of life. These crossover benefits are best achieved through active travel.

Smoothing traffic flow

One of Mayor Boris Johnson’s priorities for transport in London is ‘smoothing’ the flow of traffic. This means improving the performance of the road network to create more predictable and less stop-start journeys. Sustrans has participated in a process of scoping how the Smoothing Traffic Flow programme should work.

We made the point that reducing congestion and smoothing the movement of people are laudable aims. Indeed, with London’s projected population growth over coming decades, serious policies are needed to keep people and goods moving on London’s streets efficiently. Sustrans believes that the most effective (and most cost effective) means of increasing London’s overall transport capacity is to strongly prioritise the modes that are the most efficient use of road space – walking, cycling and buses.

A large proportion of shorter journeys are still done by car in London; about half of journeys in the 1 to 2km range are by car, as are about 10% of journeys under 0.5km! More of these journeys being done on foot or by bike could make a major contribution to smoothing traffic flow.

London Car Free

Sustrans is supporting an initiative to develop car-free neighbourhoods in London. London Car Free is a new organisation which is asking people to imagine how life would improve if cars were removed from parts of the city, where people could live free from traffic and where children could play around their homes in fresher cleaner air.

Successful car free neighbourhoods already exist in several German cities and London Car Free draws inspiration from them. To find out more about traffic free developments and to support the idea for London, visit: London.carfree.org.uk
Sustrans participated in both of this year’s mass participation bike ride events. The Mayor of London’s Skyride in Hounslow in mid August attracted some 11,000 people and was considered by all to be a huge success. Many thanks to the Rangers that ably manned the Sustrans stand, particularly Peter Sandwell. As we go to press, we’re also looking forward to attending the central London Skyride on the 20th of September.

Sustrans staff and volunteers also made our first ever appearance at the London Triathlon on 1-2 August at the ExCel Centre. We were cheering on our competitors in the event and they all did fantastically well, raising over £2,000 in much needed funds for Sustrans as well as achieving impressive times in all their races. A special thank you goes to Gemma Slaven who raised the most money at over £600 and won a World Cup Helmet kindly donated by MaxGear. Well done Gemma!

Get involved with Fresh Air Miles

This summer saw some of the first ever Fresh Air Miles sponsored rides in London, organised by volunteer Rangers. We’d like to thank everyone who has organised or participated in any of the rides so far and a special thank you goes to Dan Rootham who raised over £200 for Sustrans on the Gatwick to Greenwich ride. Fresh Air Miles rides have been a great way to engage more people with Sustrans’ work and help them discover (or rediscover) the joy of cycling on their local traffic-free routes, potentially building their confidence to start cycling more of their daily journeys. We want to organise more sponsored rides all over the London area but we need volunteers to help us – whether or not you are already a Sustrans volunteer Ranger, if you’re interested in organising your own Fresh Air Miles fundraising ride then please get in touch! Email freshairmiles@sustrans.org.uk or call 0117 9150135.

New entrance opens new route to Finsbury Park Station

The northern entrance of Gillespie Park was opened to the public in June. As part of Islington’s Connect2 scheme this simple intervention has made a new, attractive route to and from Finsbury Park Station possible.

Volunteers

We have recently developed a volunteer project with Transport for London and the London Borough of Waltham Forest to maintain the route around Banbury Reservoir, which has links to the Lee Valley Park and National Route 1.

Monthly workdays, which started in September, involve litter and vegetation clearing, protecting 120 fruit trees which have recently been planted and generally making the routes more attractive to get more people using them. If you would like to get involved, please contact: volunteers-london@sustrans.org.uk

Other volunteer developments include: a reinvigorated Ranger group on National Route 13 in east London, a new partnership with British Waterways London to help look after routes along the canals, including opportunities to get involved and assist British Waterways Ranger, Joe Young, with towpath patrols and Two Tings campaign events, and new opportunities for office volunteers, with volunteers now giving invaluable help with greenways area studies, events, and the DIY Streets programme.

As Greenways Manager, Matt oversees our route development in London. He leads a team of three people that are working on a wide range of projects to identify and deliver walking and cycling routes that are helping London become a better place to get around on foot and bike.

Matt’s first professional experience of sustainable transport was in the USA, where he lived for several years. He worked for the League of American Bicyclists, campaigning for more cycle facilities in US cities… a challenging task if ever there was one!

When Matt returned to the UK in 2006, he chose Sustrans as the best place to continue his career. He started as Area Manager for North London, but quickly moved on to have London-wide responsibility.

In his time at Sustrans, Matt has taken London’s route development forward significantly. He has consolidated Sustrans position as a key player in London, and has a central role in running the capital’s greenways programme.

Matt and his team work closely with Transport for London, London’s local authorities and a host of other key partners, including British Waterways and the Royal Parks.
Between Uxbridge and Rickmansworth, Route 61 passes through the Colne Valley, largely following the Grand Union Canal. The route provides excellent views of the River Colne and numerous lakes. In its entirety the Colne Valley Regional Park runs from Staines to Rickmansworth and provides the first real taste of countryside at the edge of north west London.

Unfortunately, Sustrans signing is not scheduled to be completed until 2010, so it’s important to take either the TfL or Colne Valley Trail cycle maps mentioned above, Also, look out for the Colne Valley Trail waymarkers which sign the route quite well north of Denham Lock.

To get on the right track at the south end of the route there is a half mile road section from Uxbridge Station via the High Street and Oxford Road to the Grand Union Canal towpath. The towpath itself can be reached via the car park of the Swan and Bottle Pub. If you’re cycling, it may be easier to push your bike the 200 metres or so along the pavement over the canal bridge after the Sanderson Road traffic lights to avoid crossing the busy Oxford Road twice.

At eight miles long, the route is perfect for a long walk or a comfortable bike ride. It’s flat, comfortable and suitable for children and there are plenty of stopping points and places of interest along the way. For refreshments, look out for Fran’s Tea Room at Denham Lock, the Horse and Barge Pub where Moorhall Road meets the Grand Union Canal and the Coy Carp Pub at Coppermill Lane. The Colne Valley Park Visitor Centre, Rickmansworth Aquadrome, and Ann’s Cafe and Canal Information Centre at Rickmansworth Lock all make great destinations for a car free family day out. Plus you can explore the nature reserves adjacent to the route at Springwell and Stocker’s Lakes (although cycling is not allowed in these areas) and watch various watersports activities on some of the other lakes that the route passes by.

There can be quite heavy traffic where the route crosses the canal at Moorhall Road so if you’re cycling with children or are not very confident on roads you may prefer to push along the pavement for this short stretch. Also, be particularly careful at bridges and locks and at sections of path around the middle of the route where there are sections of quite narrow path.

Rickmansworth Station is accessible from London Marylebone Station in only about 20 minutes and the Metropolitan Line goes to both Rickmansworth and Uxbridge. Bikes can be taken on the Underground free of charge, but only certain sections of lines and outside peak times. Check tfl.gov.uk for details.

From Rickmansworth, you can continue traffic-free on National Routes 61 and 6 to Watford and from there the route is open and predominantly traffic-free as far as St Albans, Hatfield, Welwyn and Hertford, with the exception of one gap south west of St Albans.

Date for your diary
Join The Wave to Stop Climate Chaos
On 5 December, days ahead of the UN’s climate summit in Copenhagen, thousands of people from across the UK will flow through the streets of London as part of The Wave.

The Wave will be the UK’s biggest ever demonstration in support of action on climate change and will demand that the UK government quits using dirty coal, protects the world’s poorest, and acts fairly and quickly. The Wave is being organised by Stop Climate Chaos, a coalition including Sustrans and more than 100 organisations and their 11 million supporters, who are working together for positive action against climate change.

Find out how you can take part in The Wave at: www.stopclimatechaos.org/the-wave

www.sustrans.org.uk