

# Norwich Cycling Campaign

Newsletter 34  
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Free to members

**NORWICH CYCLING CAMPAIGN** was formed in 1990 to promote cycling in Norwich and to lobby for better cycle facilities. It is affiliated to the National Cycle Campaign Network.

## Lakenham gets its way!

On a beautiful sunny day on 30th July, Lakenham Way was officially opened by Charles Clarke MP. About 100 people came along, VIP's, Campaign members and local residents.

After years of planning the path took 3 months to construct and cost about £500,000. Although the path was behind schedule, the engineers decided to go ahead with the planned opening date to spur on the contractors, hence at the time of opening the work was not quite finished.

The embankments look a bit bleak and the recent heavy rain has washed quite a bit of soil down onto the track. Hopefully when the vegetation has grown both of these problems will be resolved. Curves and slight gradients make the path more interesting and don't present any problems to cyclists or wheelchair users.



Charles Clarke MP (right) with Claire Collen (left) at the Lakenham Way opening.

Within minutes of the opening local kids were belting up and down on their bikes and people were out walking their dogs - a valuable amenity for Lakenham.

No one has worked harder than Campaign member, Claire Collen. As Chair of the Lakenham Way Working Party, she has put in years of work and was over the moon to see the path completed!

*Mike Savage*  
Editor

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## Campaigning comment

Some members have made the comment recently that the Cycling Campaign seems to do very little actual campaigning. This is just not true. Writing to the local and national press, attending forums (or is it fora?), conferences, working parties, committees etc, publishing this newsletter, liaising with the city council, are all part of 'campaigning'. These activities, and more, are done by individuals or small groups - often the same ones. Why don't you come along to one of our meetings and get involved?

Here's an example of something to campaign for. Since last June, local authorities have had the right to impose new speed limits without permission from the Ministry of Transport. So how about some 20mph limits on busy streets in the city?

*Mike Savage*  
Editor

NB Closing date for items for the December newsletter is Wednesday 12th November 1999.

Fancy a visit to **Mike Burrows' workshop** at Rackheath? This brilliant engineer and cycle guru designed Olympic gold medallist, Chris Boardman's, bike. Provisional date and time is **Thursday 23rd September**, 7pm, with a pub stop on the ride back to Norwich. If you are interested, phone Pam on 01603 612014 by Friday 17th September.

And, don't forget the **Norwich 100km Bike Ride** on **Sunday 19th September**. This is an ideal opportunity for you to get out into the country AND raise funds for two worthwhile causes - the Greenhouse and us! See the enclosed leaflet for details.

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## \* Star letter \*

*Dear Mike,*

The great debate about who should use bus lanes continues as cyclists and bikers trade letters through the Evening News.

Doesn't it strike anyone else as odd that no-one seems to have had the common courtesy to ask bus drivers for their opinion? As a bus driver, cyclist and motorcyclist, I am in a virtually unique position of being able to see everyone's point of view. Let's face it, cyclists need cycle paths, pedestrians need proper pavements and pelican crossings. Motorbikes should be on the road. In an ideal world the only vehicles in the bus lanes would be buses.

Cycling is a brilliant means of transport, mainly because it's so cheap, but it's not suitable for everyone. Granny Smith, 85 years old, is not going to cycle to Sainsbury's get her week's supply of cat food and rich tea biscuits. The elderly, the blind, the less able - these people need buses.

There are no easy answers to the traffic and transport problem. There is certainly not a panacea. Cyclists, small motorcycle and moped riders and transport workers should be uniting to campaign for a truly sustainable transport system and not squabbling among themselves.

I am now doing some voluntary work for the Environmental Transport Association Trust, promoting public transport. If anyone would like to get in touch with me about anything relevant (including invitations to parties or orgies) you can contact me on:

leofric@clara.co.uk  
or phone / fax 01603 404381.

Yours sincerely,

*Flora Dowson*

### **EDITOR'S REPLY**

Mobility is of tremendous importance to the elderly and disabled. Let's hope that the converted delivery vans in service at present will eventually be replaced by proper low-loader buses - like those already in service on some city routes. Bus lanes are far from ideal as far as cyclists are concerned and will become more dangerous as the size and frequency of buses increase. In the meantime we shall continue to campaign for better conditions for cyclists of all ages.

# Keep off the cycle path?

.. Matthew Williams debates



It's fascinating to see how the arguments have developed over the years amongst cyclists concerning cycle paths - whether we should be asking for them, whether we should be thankful when we're given them, and whether we should be made to use them.

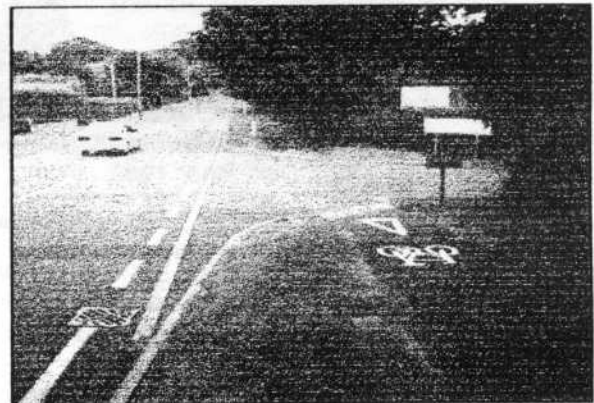
For many years Britain's top cycling organisation, the CTC, was hostile to the provision of off-road cycle paths because it was feared this would lead to the erosion of the cyclist's right to use the highway. In a way, that fear was borne out by the ban on bicycles on motorways and other major roads, some of which were built with cycle paths along the hard shoulder or verge: these inevitably became overgrown and/or covered in broken glass and other debris.

Then latterly came the rise of Sustrans, short for sustainable transport, a civil engineering charity dedicated to building traffic-free paths for people on bikes or using other environmentally friendly modes. These paths often follow disused railway lines or canal paths well away from busy traffic - very pleasant, but pooh-poohed by many 'serious' cyclists because of their lack of directness and clumsy access controls resulting in generally slow progress. It is still claimed that the paths do nothing to develop road sense or discipline and actually encourage pavement cycling elsewhere. Nevertheless, construction of the National Cycle Network received a major boost with the Millenium Lottery award, and these paths have proved to be very popular amongst leisure cyclists and those with young children.

Meanwhile the use of the bicycle for day-to-day transport in this country continued to fall away, and the vast bulk of the transport resources were poured into private motor travel.

In Norwich we have our fair share of purpose-built cycle 'facilities', installed in various places and at various times, each 'fossilising' the official thinking of the day, and most hardly touched since. From the 1970s we have the paths like that at Bluebell

Road, built primarily to get the pesky cyclists out of the way of fast-moving traffic on a narrow winding road. It is to the City Council's credit that from the same period some modest measures for cyclists were also put in off Unthank Road which were intended to be the start of an urban cycle network, but never completed after the council reorganisation in 1974. In the 1980s the vogue was for building-in cycle paths to new developments such as Bowthorpe, but there was an obsession with segregation from pedestrians and the paths came with ridiculous barriers and fearful kerb upstands at every road crossing.



Why should cyclists lose all their momentum and give way at this minor side turning?

The early 1990s saw the start of a more serious attempt to cater for cycling, but this was still in the form of an attempted 'retrofit' around existing road infrastructure often simply redesignating footways as 'shared use'. Such facilities were created only where they were cheap and/or highly visible to council officials as they drove past (the 'brownie points' effect), such as at Newmarket Road or Martineau Lane. In the late 1990s we finally have the recognition that people on bikes need convenient routes more than just facilities, and it is slowly beginning to dawn that a comprehensive network for the city will be achieved only by serious reallocation of road space currently commandeered by motorised vehicles.

Thankfully, at a national level, the attitudes of the CTC and Sustrans have converged, with general agreement that there is an important role to be played for high quality off road cycle paths, but that it is equally important to take radical steps to provide for safe cycling conditions on all roads, where cyclists have every right to be. In the last few months the best and the worst of cycle paths

