



*A  
Short History  
of  
Cycling  
in  
Bedford*

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**June 2012**

# **CYCLING CAMPAIGN FOR NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE**

*Founded 1992*

*The short history of cycling in Bedford is taken from CCNB's  
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Anniversary of the campaign group.*

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# Short History of Cycling in Bedford

## Introduction

The bicycle that we know today started in the UK with the diamond shaped frame called the '**Rover Safety**' designed by John Kemp Starley in 1885 and manufactured in Coventry.



The bicycle featured two wheels of the same size and a chain drive to the rear wheel.

With the rider's centre of gravity over the centre of the frame it was possible to touch the ground with both feet making it extremely safe to ride.

Before then there had been the '**draisine**' invented in 1817 which consisted of two in-line wooden

carriage wheels held together by a wooden bench on which the rider straddled. It had a very basic steering mechanism and was ridden by paddling with the feet along the ground. This type was also known as the '**hobby horse**' or '**dandy horse**'.

During the 1860s, pedals and cranks were fitted to the front wheel and the '**velocipede**' was born. This evolved in 1870 into the fashionable '**ordinary**' or '**high-wheeler**' which later became known as the '**penny farthing**'.

In the 1880s Bedford was still only a small town with about 20,000 inhabitants and apart from carriers' carts and the occasional carriage and penny farthing the streets were extremely quiet. However it was in a period of rapid change with the introduction of the railways and the establishment of various industries.

The safety bicycle brought the prospect of everyday transport not only for men but also crucially for women of all ages where it had a huge impact on their independence.

This was particularly so for the younger female members of staff of the Girl's Modern School which had opened in Bromham Road, Bedford in 1882 and moved to St Paul's Square in 1892. The bicycle made their lives less restrictive and more joyful.

Dan Albone, a Biggleswade inventor, copied John Kemp Starley's idea and produced the Ivel Safety cycle in April 1886 and was one of the first to make a ladies version by replacing the straight front tube with a curve. Dan went on to develop a motor car and tractor. He was a founder member of the North Road Cycling Club devoted to cycle racing.

## Early 20th Century

The early 20th century saw the use of the bicycle multiply and the formation of a number of local cycling clubs - Ampthill Cycling Club, Biggleswade & District Cycling Club, Bedford Cycling and Athletic Club - although only two are still going strong, Bedfordshire Road Racing Club (BRCC) and the CTC Bedfordshire.

BRCC was founded in 1923 at the Sun Hotel, Biggleswade following an inaugural club run from the Town Hall, Bedford.

Although the Cyclist's Touring Club (CTC) was formed in 1878 to protect and promote the rights of cyclists it was not until a Council meeting held in Dublin on 10 July 1926 that a resolution was adopted to give permission for a District Association to be formed in Bedfordshire.

A racing offshoot of the CTC known as the Icknield Road Club and based in Ampthill was formed in 1933 but relinquished its formal ties with the CTC in 1959.



*Cyclists in the High Street, Bedford circa 1916*

World War I and the emergence of the motor car started to effect cycling and most cycle manufacturers turned to the design and manufacture of this type of vehicle.

However with its compact and relatively flat terrain, Bedford retained a significantly higher number of cyclists within its population compared to many other towns and cities.

## 1950s and 60s

The early 1950s in the UK were the heyday for cycling after World War II with more than 3.5 million bicycles manufactured per year but by 1958 had dropped to 2 million.

Although the car was still a luxury item and many people still relied on the bicycle, attitudes were changing and a family car became to be within the reach of a greater number of people. The use of the motor car increased significantly throughout the 50s and 60s and resulted in most main roads became increasingly busy and this inevitably led to a decline in cycling.

In Bedford coupled with the still rapid growth of the town, congestion particularly in the town centre became a major traffic problem.



*Home time in the 50s from WH Allen, coming over Ford End Road railway bridge into Midland Road.*

The Town and Country Planning Act was passed in 1947 and as a result Bedford Borough was required to prepare a comprehensive development plan.

### **Bedford by the River - A town planning report (1952)**

The plan outlined in a Bedford by the River report led to the construction in the 1950s of four cycle tracks to improve cross town communications for cyclists on the west and south of the town. These were:-

- Track alongside the then Bedford Town Football Ground in Queens Park, now known as The Slipe
- Track alongside Longholme Way
- Track linking Elstow Road and Ampthill Road
- Track linking Willow Road and Percy Road

and complemented a number of paths regularly used by cyclists including the Riverside path and Cemetery Hill path to give an off-road cycle network of 12 km throughout the area.



*Cemetery Path as it is today*

## **Bedford and Kempston Transport Survey (1965)** **The Bedford Study - Town Centre: Appraisal (1967)**

Private motor vehicle registrations had increased five fold to 91,000 between 1945 and 1965 and in the town's central area, there was significant conflict between the increasing level of traffic and the need to improve the walking and cycling environment.

The 1965 survey reported 13,000 cycle movements (12.4% of the total) between 6am and 10pm in the central area and 15,000 (11.9%) in all areas. Some 9% of commuters cycled to the railway station.

The 1967 study quoted 16,000 cyclists (12.4% of the total) accessing the town centre out of a total of 126,310 movements.

# 1970s

The 1970s saw a revival in cycling from the low levels of the previous two decades not least due to increasing public concern for the environment and the acknowledgment of its efficiency, cheapness, convenience for both children and adults. However many people considered cycling to be unsafe - vulnerable to the danger of conflict from motor vehicles.

## The Association of Cyclists (1975)

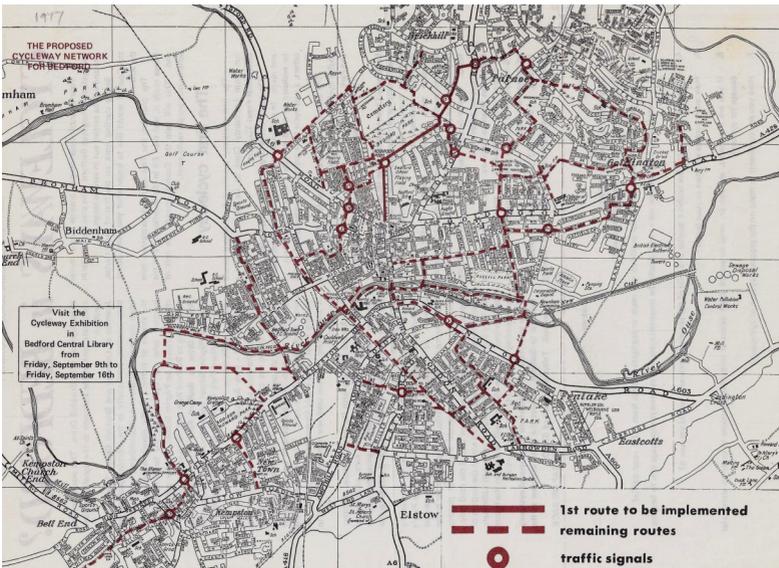
The Association of Cyclists (ABC) was formed in 1975 (page 29).

## Bedford Urban Transportation Study (BULTS) (1976)

Bedfordshire County Council following Local Government reorganisation in 1974 carried out a transportation study in 1976. This showed that as many people use a bicycle as public transport and that there were more bikes in the town than in any place of comparable size in the country.

The Council therefore put forward a plan in 1977 to provide (radial) special routes for cyclists throughout Bedford (into the town centre). This was to comprise some 39 km of cycle lanes and tracks and 19 signal controlled crossings costing £400,000. The plan was to be a long-term one and to be carried out in stages.

It was very radical for the time and was believed to be the only transportation study in the country which included cycling as a quantified mode of travel.



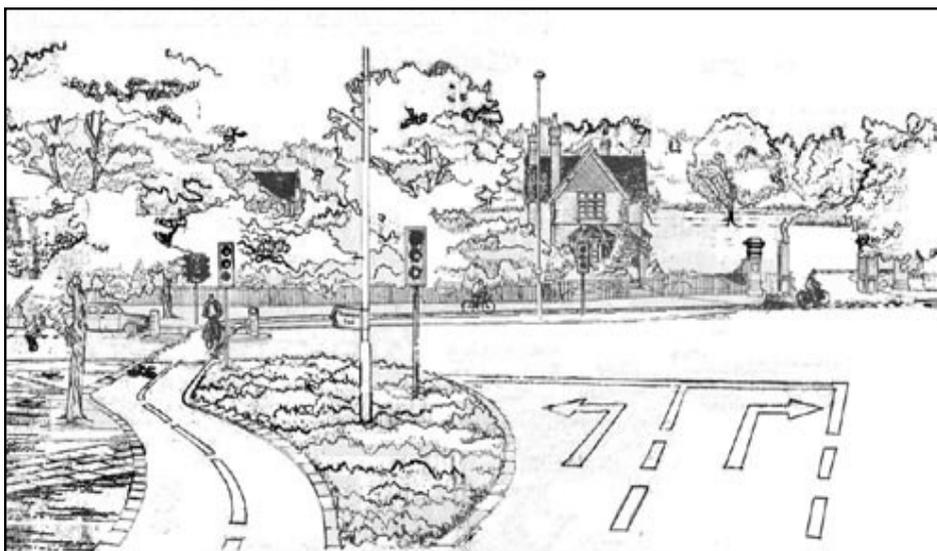
*Proposed  
cycle  
network -  
1977*

## First Scheme

The first cycleway proposed was to run from Lombardy Close in Hillfields to De Parys Avenue - a distance of about one and a half miles. It was ambitious and was to have activator cycle lights across Kimbolton Road, Brickhill Drive and Park Avenue with an off-road cycle track along Park Avenue and the west side of De Parys Avenue. Lockable racks were to be provided at the bottom of De Parys Avenue.

The scheme was to cost £42,000. The proposal provoked extreme opinions running from outraged drivers who felt that the traffic jams were intolerable enough already, without having to give way to bicycles, to residents who were worried about 'jobboes' using these routes as race tracks.

In the event loop controlled lights were installed only at the busy Brickhill Drive/Larkway junction where large numbers of children had to cross to go to the then Pilgrim School as well as cyclists/pedestrians proceeding to the Park and Town Centre. No separate tracks were built in Park Avenue or De Parys Avenue and a considerably slimmed down route opened in 1979 via Bedford Park.



*Sketch of the crossing which was to be provided at the junction of Park Avenue and De Parys Avenue*

Signalled crossings of Kimbolton Road from Lombardy Close to the track to Larkway and Park Avenue were not installed until 2002 and 2003 respectively. Both were of the toucan type. The Brickhill Drive crossing was converted from a looped type to a toucan in 2010.

## 1980s

The early 1980s saw a number of cycle routes promised in the 1977 plan steadily introduced, although in the majority of cases in only isolated sections, namely:

- 1980 - Fenlake to Town Centre
- 1980 - Bromham Road
- 1981 - Putnoe to Caves Lane
- 1982 - Clapham Road Cycle Track
- 1983-4 - Polhill Ave Cycle Tracks
- 1985 - Goldington Road Cycle Lanes
  - Brookfield Road to Polhill Avenue
  - Needwood Road to Edison Road

At this time the County Council was considered as one of the leading authorities on cycling in the country.

### Hastingsbury Cycle Route (1986)

This resulted in the Department of Transport jointly funding with the County Council an innovatory cycle scheme - The Kempston Urban Cycle Route (The Hastingsbury Route). This was designed and constructed by Bedford Borough Council and opened in June 1986 from Hastingsbury School to Bedford Town Centre (Horne Lane) via the Saxon Centre, Bedford Road, Addison Howard Park and then over the river at Queens Bridge to join the Riverside track.

The final stage of the project was only completed in 1993 due to objections. In 1997 the last on-road section was converted to an off-road route.

Evidence showed that where radial cycle routes had been completed throughout to a good standard a cycling increase had occurred. A count over a 12 hour day following completion showed an increase of 30%.

Apart from the above (Kempston Cycle Project Phase 1) no cycle route has been fully completed until recently. This has been due to the problem of finding schemes which are easy to implement and avoiding the additional costs of acquiring land, etc., especially the nearer the route reaches the Town Centre.



Department of  
**Transport**

TRAFFIC ADVISORY UNIT LEAFLET 3/86



*Councillor Bill Astle, Mayor; Nick Lyall MP, Peter Bottomley MP and Councillor Audrey Cowell at the opening on 20 June 1986*

## **Bedford Passenger Transport Study - Cycling (1989)**

On behalf of North Bedfordshire District Council consultants undertook a study of passenger transport covering the urban area of Bedford one of which was on cycling.

The study looked at:

- the range of facilities currently in operation or committed, and the extent to which these elements combine to form a rational and integrated network
- issues and problems associated with cycling, such as attitudes, the maintenance of cycle facilities, safety, security and town centre access
- cycle usage
- policy towards cycling at a national and local level
- the opportunities for further provision for cyclists

Each area of the town was examined in detail and it was noted that only 50% of the work proposed in 1977 had in fact been completed. The study concluded that if cycling was to become safer and more prolific, further facilities would be necessary. It then went on to explore the possibilities examining the extension and provision of more cycle routes, traffic management measures, and other means to achieve the Borough's desired policy objectives.

## 1990s

Bedford, like many other towns and cities was facing more and more the problems of increasing levels of road congestion and its associated economic, social and environmental costs.

### Bedford to Sandy Country Way (1992)

A cycle track along the disused Bedford to Sandy railway line was opened in April 1992 from Priory Park to Willington and beyond as far as the underbridge of the C56 Barford Road between Great Barford and Willington.

Apart from the construction of the underbridge of the C56 Barford Road between Great Barford and Willington in the mid 90s no further work was carried out for a number of years. The link to Blunham originally proposed for 1993 was finally completed in March 2003 and the extension to Sandy in late 2004.

The route is now part of Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 51 which connects Oxford with Colchester via Milton Keynes, Bedford, Cambridge, Ipswich and Harwich.



*.Councillors Keith White, Malcolm Evans and Derek Jones leading a ride after the opening ceremony*

### Cycling Campaign for Bedfordshire (1992)

The Cycling Campaign for Bedfordshire (CCB), later to become the Cycling Campaign for North Bedfordshire (CCNB), was formed in 1992.

## State of the Environment Report (1992)

A Borough Council environmental report issued in 1992 noted that in Kempston over 60% of households owned cycles with just 26% of these using them at least once per week. It stated that the principal restriction for cycling was that it was dangerous, particularly at junctions.

## The Great Race (1994)

In 1994 there was the Great Race where three of the town's finest took to the streets in a challenge called 'The Citizen Race of Bedford' involving a car, bus and bicycle. The rules were to leave Clapham High Street shops at 8.15am and travel into town, buy a copy of the Bedfordshire Times from their High Street offices and deliver it to the Citizen and Times editor Mark Edwards.



Eddie\* 'The Eagle' Edwards was in the saddle, Bedford mayor Derek Jones in the ceremonial motor while the Citizen's features editor Penny Bowden travelled by bus.

The result for the run in school term time was Eddie 12 minutes, Derek 13 (but did not park the car) and Penny 17.

The exercise has been repeated twice since then; in 2010 starting from Kempston and in 2011 from Brickhill. On both occasions there was the addition of a motor cycle as a fourth mode of transport and the motorist had to park the car. As expected with more congestion on the roads the cyclist easily came first on both occasions.

The conclusion was - If you want to beat the traffic - **GET ON YER BIKE.**

*\*Eddie was the only British ski jumper to take part in the 1988 Winter Olympics ski jumping competition.*

## **Cycling in the Town Centre (1994)**

Whilst a joint County and Borough Transport Strategy had said improving access for cyclists (and for walkers and buses) would improve the economic vitality of the town centre, cycling was prohibited with the pedestrianisation of Allhallows, Thurlow Street, Greenhill Street, Church Square and Silver Street. This was also temporarily extended to Midland Road (east) and Harpur Street (south) when these two streets were pedestrianised in 1998.

Numerous discussions took place over the following four years agreeing and not agreeing to allow cyclists to use the area in off-peak times but on 17 June 2002, a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) finally came in force to allow only the pushing of cycles at all times. When the Harpur Street (central), Lime Street and St Loyes improvements were completed in 2003, the TCO was amended to include Harpur Street (central).

In October 2006 the then Borough Portfolio Holder for Transport asked the County Council to review again whether cycling in the town centre could be allowed outside of the core hours. This is still outstanding but now with the Borough as being responsible for highways and cycling.

## **National Cycle Strategy (1996)**

The Department of Transport put forward a National Cycling Strategy (NCS) in July 1996. In the foreword it stated 'it was crystal clear that the bicycle had been underrated and underused in the UK for many years. This was especially true when one looked at other European countries where cycle use had been increased and maintained by deliberate action at both local and national level.'

The NCS represented a major breakthrough in transport thinking in the UK at the time by saying that promoting cycling priority on the highway, in the centre of towns, at the workplace and in new developments would generate a culture change for cycling. Most people wanted to cycle, especially for local trips and with safer conditions on the road a 'critical mass' of cyclists would be encouraged. Cycling would then feed on its success and make our streets safer and cleaner for everyone. A target was set to double cycling use in the UK by 2002 and to double it again by 2012. Unfortunately the targets were later abandoned.

## **Transport White Paper - 'A New Deal for Transport' (1998)**

The National Cycling Strategy was followed by the government in 1998 publishing a White Paper on a New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone. This document planted the seed for a more sustainable integrated transport network by encouraging local authorities to increase the level of cycling by developing cycling strategies. The aims of the strategy were implemented through the Transport Act (2000).

## **Cycleway Design & Maintenance guide (1996)**

A Cycleway Design & Maintenance Guide was produced by Bedfordshire County Council in 1996 to ensure that all new cycleways were constructed to best practice. Unfortunately it was not adhered to and was soon out of date. It has never been updated but there are many new guides available today from the DfT, Sustrans and Transport for London.

## **BCC 'Cycle Stand' (1998)**

A draft Cycling Strategy 'Cycle Stand' had been produced by Bedfordshire County Council in 1995 for consultation among the public, District Councils and cycling groups. It received wide support and was adopted in 1998 following its updating to take account of comments and the initiatives contained in the National Cycling Strategy and the White Paper.

It identified the development of a network of major cycle routes to provide a cycle route from each major residential area to the Bedford Town Centre, railway and bus stations. A target for completing the strategic routes was 2011 but depended on significant resources from both the Government and the County Council.

The strategy developed the overall policy statements in the County Structure Plan and other policy documents, and helped the preparation of detailed transport investment proposals, particularly for bids to the Government for finance.

A travel to work by bicycle target was set at 10% of all journeys by 2011. The figures for Bedfordshire had been 3.6% in the 1991 census and 6.2% in the 1981 census.

## **New Cycling and Walking Officer (1999)**

To support the increased level of implementation of both cycling and walking schemes the County Council appointed a dedicated Cycling and Walking Officer, Christine Warren, during 1999 to co-ordinate the work. Catherine Ferris replaced her in 2001 and Patrick Lingwood in 2006.

## **Bedfordshire TPP (1999/2000)**

In 1992 the government issued Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 12 confirming its plan to integrate transport and planning policies (TPPs).

Bedfordshire issued a TPP every year from 1995/96 and in the 1999/2000 document prioritized 20 potential cycling schemes totalling £1.74m (£0.55m by the Highways Agency). A number of the smaller ones have been completed but the two most expensive ones which would make an enormous difference to the town's cycle network - Ford End Road and Bromham Road railway bridges - are still outstanding.

## 2000s

Bedford as in the 1990s continued at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to progressively suffering from problems of transport congestion and delay, particularly at peak periods, arising from the growing use and inefficiency of single or low occupancy private vehicles. By the middle of the decade this caused pollution levels in at least two streets to exceed national standards for nitrogen dioxide.

National and Local Planning policy and development plan documents were more and more being developed which discriminated in favour of other modes such as public transport, walking and cycling.

Numerous improvements were made to the cycle network in the first decade. This included signalled controlled crossing points (Toucan, etc) and additional off-road routes such as Norse Road (2006), Wilstead Road and the old A6 including underpasses of the new A6 (2008) and on-road cycle lanes - De Parys Avenue (2005) and Polhill Avenue - north side (2007). Many development briefs and planning applications were also approved incorporating cycle schemes for future developments including The Wixams, Kempston West and Biddenham Loop.

### Cycling Champion (2001)

To give cycling weight in discussions with top executives in the County Council, Mike Kenworthy, Strategic Director of Environment, was made Cycling Champion in 2001. Tim Malynn took over the position in 2004 and Richard Watts in 2006.

Councillor Phil Merryman became member cycling champion when Bedford Borough Council took over responsibility for cycling in 2009.

### Best Value Review of Cycling and Walking (2000/01)

Bedfordshire County Council's Select Committee on Community and Environment undertook a review on cycling and walking to support central Government's approach towards an integrated transport policy and sustainable development. The review made 31 recommendations which were subsequently adopted by the full council.

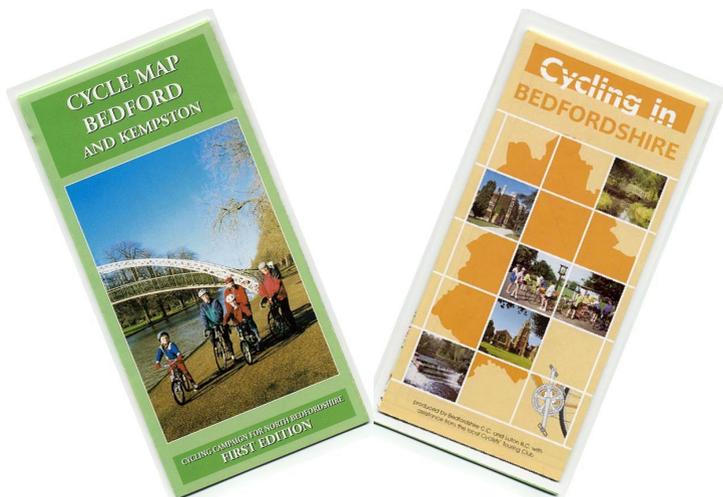
Following a light touch inspection by a Government Inspector who concluded that increased resources and a more focused strategy was required, funding was made available for an additional officer for walking and cycling schemes, a project officer for the Safer Routes to schools project and another officer to promote green travel plans with businesses.

Expenditure on cycling and walking schemes for 2001/02 was to be £0.76m, similar to the previous year, but to be increased to £1.68m for 2002/03.

## Cycle Maps (2001)

Two cycle maps were produced;

one by CCNB showing routes that connect residential areas to all the main destinations, avoiding busy and difficult roads and one by the County Council showing the main cycle routes in Bedfordshire.



## National Cycle Strategy Update (2001)

The Department for Transport ‘kick started’ the National Cycling Strategy (NCS) in October 2001 by announcing a board chaired by Steven Norris to co-ordinate the implementation of the strategy.

As the 2002 target for doubling the number of cycle trips over that of 1996 was likely to be missed, a £2m cycling project fund was announced in April 2001. A bid submitted by Bedfordshire County Council was not one of the 138 successful ones (September 2002) out of 567 applications submitted.

An English Regions Cycling Development Team was recruited in 2002 to support the board with responsibility for assessing each area’s Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Annual Progress Reports (APR). The eastern region (including Bedfordshire) team member was Robert Marshall.

The board announced a further £1 million cycling fund in January 2003. Bids were submitted by De Montfort University, Bedford Hospital, Borough Council and Bedfordshire Parish Partnership but the only successful one was for cycle stands in Russell Park to encourage cycling to the park.

## 2001 Census

The 2001 Census Returns showed that the Bedford/Kempston urban area had 5.8% of its residents travelled to work by bicycle putting it in the upper quartile of cycling towns. Bedfordshire as a whole had 3.8%.

## Local Transport Plan 2001/02-2005/06

Five year Local Transport Plans starting from 2001/02 replaced the previous annual Transport Planning Policies (TPPs). The plan put forward detailed actions and investment proposals for bids to the Government for finance with the outcomes being to promote sustainable transport and provide safe, integrated transport networks which encourage people to choose alternatives to the car.

At the end of the five years 67 cycle schemes had been delivered throughout Bedfordshire at a cost of £6m increasing the completion of the strategic cycle network from 41% to 75% to give a total of 146km. Towards the end of the period, £25k had been spent on additional signing in Bedford and £25k on additional schemes.

## Town Centre Transportation Studies (2002/2004/2008)

Three studies were carried to investigate the potential for improving traffic flow and the environment in the town centre area; two by Faber Maunsell in 2002 and 2008 and another by GVA Grimley in 2004. All the reports had a high cycle input with the 2008 final report specially mentioning the need to improve cycling routes in the town centre as the current connectivity was not good.

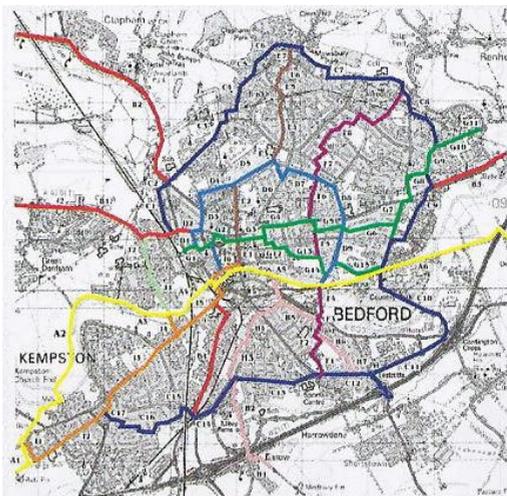
## Desk Study of Strategic Routes (2003)

In early 2003 Bedfordshire County Council carried out a desk study of strategic cycle routes in the major conurbations.

Its aims were to review existing strategic routes and to identify significant gaps in the provision in town networks, to provide a ball park figure of the costs of schemes to complete the strategic network, to prioritise and develop a programme for the next LTP period.

Nine strategic routes were identified for Bedford and Kempston including four trunk road routes to give a total network of 63km.

The network consisted of 48% on cycle tracks, 2% on cycle lanes, 31% on quiet roads and 19% still to complete.



## **Showcase Transport Town (2003)**

A £7.5m initiative aimed at establishing a showcase sustainable travel town was announced by the Government in June 2003. The idea was for one or two Local Authority partners to implement measures to promote cycling, walking and public transport in towns to show what could be done when 'packages' of initiatives are delivered together.

CCNB tried to persuade Bedfordshire County Council to put in a bid with Bedford Borough Council but as neither authority had agreed the way forward for the town centre it was not possible to put in a coherent bid.

What a difference this could have made to cycling if Bedford had been selected.

## **Bedford Borough Community Plan (2004-2010)**

The plan stressed the need to improve the pedestrian and cycle networks throughout the Borough and to make them attractive to encourage sustainable transport.

## **White Paper - 'The Future of Transport' (2004)**

A further White Paper 'The Future of Transport: A Network for 2030' was published in 2004. The paper said the Government is committed to encourage more people to choose to walk and cycle more often. The strategy outlined was said to give transport authorities the information and funding that they need to deliver real improvements.

## **Policy, Planning and Design for Walking and Cycling (2004)**

The Department for Transport in April 2004 produced a draft Policy, Planning and Design for Walking and Cycling for public consultation as a Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/04. The document provided National Policy Context detailing the importance of land use planning to enable cycling, and considered the cyclist as a priority within the demands of other users in carriageway space. Five core principles were reinforced including convenience, accessibility, safety, comfort and attractiveness,

A further Local Transport Note, LTN 2/04 was issued on Adjacent and Shared Use Facilities for Pedestrians and Cyclists and a third one, LTN 3/04, on Signs and Markings for Cycle Routes.

## **Walking and Cycling: an action plan (2004)**

Two months later in June 2004 the Department for Transport published a booklet 'Walking and cycling: an action plan' which outlined best practice with respect to planning, infrastructure, safety and travel behaviour, and was intended to be used by various organisations in promoting cycling.

## Cycling England (2005-2011)

Cycling England was founded in 2005 as an independent body funded by the Department for Transport to replace the National Cycling Strategy Board. It ceased to exist on 1 April 2011 following the 2010 Comprehensive Spending review.

In 2005 six towns were selected as Cycling Demonstration Towns to receive European levels of funding (£14m over three years) to significantly increase their cycling levels and in 2008 a further 11 towns/cities were given a further £140m over three years.

Unfortunately Bedford did not put in a bid in either year.

During this period Cycling England administered the new cycle training programme which became 'Bikeability'.

One of its last acts of Cycling England was to publish a report in 2010 on 'Making a Cycling Town', a compilation of practitioners' experiences from the Cycling Demonstration Towns programme.



*Opening by Tim Malynn, BCC's Strategic Director (Environment) of improved Route 51 alongside Hastingbury Upper School on 2 April 2005 as part of Cyclothon 51 Charity Cycle Run*

## **Bedfordshire Outdoor Access Improvement Plan 2006-2011**

As part of the plan the Local Access Forum had agreed a vision to improve access to the countryside by bike. It was stated that 26% of residents cycle in the local countryside for recreation, that is, an estimated 100,000 residents cycle on a regular basis.

## **Local Transport Plan 2006/07-2010/11**

The second 5 year Local Transport Plan this time had to meet the requirement of the Transport Act (2004) and cover congestion, accessibility, safer roads and air quality. Many cycle schemes were again completed over the five year period including two underpasses of the new A6 bypass at the Wixams new development, one due to a grant of £200,000 awarded under GAF2 (the Government's Growth Area Fund).

## **The National Byway (2005)**

The National Byway is a 3,500 mile (5,632km) long network of leisure cycle routes signposted around Britain on lightly trafficked country lanes. In Spring 2005 after consultation with the County Council and CCNB signs were erected in Bedfordshire to link with the route in Buckinghamshire at Woburn and the one in Cambridgeshire at Gamlingay.

## **Bedford Local Development Framework (2005)**

Changes to the planning legislation in 2004 resulted in the introduction of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. Under the act local authorities had to prepare Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) which set out the Council's policies for meeting community, environmental and social aims for the future. The LDFs will eventually replace all the policies of the adopted Local Plan 2002.

Two initial documents; the Core and Rural Issues Plan (adopted 2008) and Bedford Town Centre Area Action Plan (adopted 2008) both contain a number of policies involving cycling. A further document, the Allocations and Designations Plan containing a chapter on the Cycle Network and the Green Wheel was submitted to the government for examination in June 2012.

## **Bedfordshire Cycling Parking Guidance (2006)**

In response to a policy in the County Council's 'Cycle Stand' cycle strategy document, a cycling parking guidance document was published to ensure that stands of an appropriate type and number were made a condition, where relevant, of all future planning applications.

The Borough are currently updating this guidance.

## **National Standard for Cycle Training (2007)**

The new national standard for cycle training, developed by over 20 organisations, and branded 'Bikeability' was officially launched in March 2007 by the Department for Transport. It consists of three levels:

- Level One teaches basic skills and bicycle handling
- Level Two gives children the skills they need to cycle safely to school on quiet roads
- Level Three covers more complicated traffic environments

The County Council started to provide 'Bikeability' training for middle school children in 2007 and this is now run through Bedford Borough Council with grants from the government.

## **Manual for Streets (2007/2010)**

The aim of the document published on behalf of the Department for Transport was to bring about a transformation in the quality of streets by bringing about a fundamental culture change in which streets are designed and adopted to make them easier and safer for people to walk, cycle and use public transport.

An updated version was launched in 2010 which showed how the original guidance could be extended beyond residential streets to encompass both urban and rural situations.

## **Sustrans Connect2 Project (2007/08)**

In 'The People's Millions' competition, Sustrans won a grant of £50m from the Big Lottery Living Landmarks fund for their Connect 2 project. Three local bridge schemes were put forward; Clapham Ford, Beeston Bridge and St Neots Bridge.

From the final list of 79 schemes only the St Neots Bridge scheme was successful. The new bridge between Eaton Ford and Eynesbury opened in 2011.

## **Bike It (2007)**

Bike It, a nationwide scheme managed by Sustrans aimed at increasing the number of young people cycling to school started as a pilot trial in 2003 where it was found that at the end of the school year, it had increased on average to 10% compared to the national average of 2%.

A Bike It Officer for Bedford, Luton and St Albans, Jason Falconer, was appointed in 2007 to work with three Middle Schools in Bedford and within three months the number of pupils cycling to school had doubled.

Jason was replaced in October 2008 by Richard Noon who carried on the work with four middle schools. Unfortunately his contract was terminated in June 2011 due to budget cuts .

## **Bedford Green Wheel (2007)**

One of the principle themes and policies of the Borough's 2007 Greenspace Strategy, the Green Wheel, will create a 25-30km continuous circuit of cycling and walking routes around the town connecting to routes into the town centre with links to rural villages.

Links were constructed in north east Bedford during 2011 to give a continuous off-road route from Brickhill and Putnoe to Route 51 near Willington.

## **Bromham Bridge Cycle Path (2007)**

Due to continual damage to Bromham Bridge, a scheduled ancient monument, a proposal was put forward in 2007 to close the bridge to two way traffic and to use one carriageway for a pedestrian/cycle path. Non-vehicular movements increased significantly in trial closures but due to the car lobby and the near demise of the County Council the scheme was eventually rejected in 2009.

## **Cycling Infrastructure Design Guide (2008)**

A document to replace original 1996 Institution of Highways & Transportation document 'Cycle Friendly Infrastructure' was issued by the Department for Transport as Local Transport Note 2/08 and was intended to be the primary source of cycle friendly guidance and was to compliment the recently published 'Manual for Streets'.

## **Grange Estate Cycle Route (2008)**

As part of the Bedford River Valley Park a 3km riverside track was constructed through the Grange Estate by the Marston Valley Trust linking up, via a new bridge across Elstow Brook, two points of the Bedford to Sandy section of the National Cycle Network Route 51 near Willington.

## **Bedford Stations Travel Plan (2008)**

The 2007 White Paper 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' suggested that travel plans could be introduced at national railway stations with the aim of improving station access and reducing traffic on the road network.

The County Council in conjunction with the Borough Council and other organisations including CCNB put together the required documentation for submission to the Association of Train Operating Companies for insertion in the pilot scheme. Unfortunately it was not approved.

Nevertheless it was agreed to carry on and develop a travel plan and this was adopted by the Borough in 2011.

## **2009 - Present (2012)**

Bedfordshire County Council was replaced by two Unitary Authorities from 1 April 2009, Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council and as a result, apart from trunk roads and motorways, took over highway responsibilities for their respective areas.

### **Bedford Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy (2009-21)**

The document put together the sustainable community strategy for the Borough for the period of 2009-21. The strategy consists of seven themes, two of which – 'A Greener Borough' and 'A Growing Borough' mention cycling and walking after taking into account responses from CCNB and others.

### **Road Safety Strategy - A Safer Way (2009)**

The earlier white paper's targets for 2010 of a 40% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured was achieved but this still left almost 3000 deaths on the roads each year and 28,000 seriously injured.

Under the new strategy funds guidance on lowering speed limits to 20mph where people live was to be introduced as well as funds being made available to give an extra 500,000 children cycle training.

### **Bedford Cycling Strategy Report (2009)**

A cycling strategy report was presented to a Borough Council committee meeting in October 2009 outlining the benefits of cycling and how its promotion fitted in with both national and local policy objectives. It proposed that a new strategy should be produced to replace the one inherited from the former County Council as part of the preparatory work for the new LTP3. This has not been done to date.

The Council's aim was to participate in any future awards for Cycle Demonstration Town status for Bedford. Since the change in government awards of this type have been replaced by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and other bid streams.

### **Cycle to Work Scheme (2009/2010)**

The Department for Transport published an updated document in both 2009 and 2010 to clarify how organisations can take advantage of the exemption to implement a Cycle to Work scheme introduced under the 1999 Financial Act. This allowed employers to loan cycles and cyclists' safety equipment to employees as a tax benefit and resulted from one of the measures introduced under the Government's Green Transport Plan to reduce commuting by car through making cycling more attractive.

A number of Bedford employers have signed up to the scheme.

## Cycle to Work Guarantee (2009)

The DfT also launched a Cycle to Work Guarantee to encourage more employers to overcome barriers by signing up to a number of facilities to help employees make the choice to cycle to work. The Borough Council have signed up to the Guarantee.



No longer used for cycle parking  
'Not fit for purpose'  
concrete slots still alongside the BT office in Harpur Street

## Low Carbon Transport - A Greener Future (2009)

This DfT report had the sub-title 'A carbon reduction for transport'. It spoke about the enormous growth potential that cycling had as a healthy, convenient and green transport option and the reason it was promoting cycling demonstration towns. It also mentioned commitment to developing a National Cycle Plan and a new Active Transport Strategy.

## Borough's Transport Vision (2010)

The Borough's Environment and Sustainable Communities - Highways and Transport Team have recently introduced their vision and objective for sustainable transport:

**Vision** - *We have a vision of enabling the people of Bedford, visitors and businesses to benefit from the considerable opportunities that Bedford has to offer by working together to create a transport system which positions walking, cycling and public transport as the natural choices of travel for the majority of journeys because they are an affordable, healthy, convenient and safe alternative to the private car.*

**Objective** - *With walking and cycling schemes it is to create affordable, attractive, safe and direct routes for cyclists, off carriageway and linking to existing facilities and major 'generators' wherever possible.*

## **Borough's Green Office Guide (2010)**

The cycling section of the Borough's Green Office Guide details the cost savings that can be achieved by cycling to work, the Borough's Cycle to Work Guarantee, its Bicycle User Group (BUG), the CCNB Town Cycle Map, the mileage allowance of using your own bike to meetings and visits, how to borrow a bike from Borough Hall or Town Hall or to obtain a bike through the Cycle2Work Scheme as well as staff discounts.

## **White Paper - Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon (2011)**

Making sustainable local transport happen was the sub heading of the latest transport white paper from the DfT in January 2011. This also included an associated Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) in which £560m over four years had been set aside to help local authorities encourage sustainable travel choices. It was stated that around two out of every three trips we make are less than 5 miles in length, many of which could be easily cycled, walked or undertaken by public transport.

## **Local Transport Plan (2011-2021)**

This third LTP was the first for the Borough Council as the new highways authority and linked with the Local Development Framework and Sustainable Community Strategy. The plan had to be set within the dual framework of Government guidance on Active Travel and Low Carbon Transport and to meet the DfT's overarching policy 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' which had set out five transport goals. Instead of being static as previous LTPs this new one has to be alive with a series of three year implementation plans under continual review.

The document included eight key supporting strategies. Active Travel Strategy, the main one for cycling has three approaches to encourage more people to walk and cycle; promotion, marketing and information, getting the built environment right and integration of active travel with community and public transport services.

## **Local Sustainable Transport Fund (2011/2012)**

Bedford Borough Council submitted a bid in April 2011 for a £5m grant from Tranche 1 under the name 'Access to Bedford' to transform Bedford's public transport and sustainable travel facilities. Unfortunately it was learnt in July 2011 that the bid was not one of the 39 successful projects out of the 73 submitted.

A themed bid for improving access to a number of railway stations, put together by Sustrans with Bedford Borough Council as the coordinating local authority was submitted in February 2012 for funds from Tranche 2. Results are expected by July 2012. If successful, Bedford's share will be used to deliver the action plan of the Bedford Stations Travel Plan.

## Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2012-2017)

Bedford Borough Council issued this draft document in January 2012 which when adopted will replace the old County Council's Bedfordshire Outdoor Access Improvement Plan (2006-2011). The Borough is now responsible for 984 kilometres of Public Rights of Way which link Bedford and Kempston to the villages and the countryside. In this there are 350 kilometres of Public Bridleways and 34 kilometres of Public Byways (BOATS) which cyclists can use although a number of sections may only be suitable for mountain bikes and even then not in the wet winter months.

The document contains an action plan to improve access to the rights of way network as well as sections of the Bedford Green Wheel.

## Current Government Cycling Grants (2012)

In March 2012 as part of a package of developments to connect communities, reduce carbon emissions, get people active and make cycling safer and more convenient, the DfT announced a £30m to help install new cycle spaces at railway stations and new and improved cycle routes. The schemes will also promote economic growth by providing commuters with improved sustainable travel options.

The train operator First Capital Connect was awarded £20,000 for an additional 100 cycle parking spaces at Bedford station and Sustrans in conjunction with the Borough for £150,000 to improve the riverside routes to the west of the town centre.



*Cycle lane leading to new (May 2012) Dame Alice Street contraflow*

# The Future

What of the future?

There is the growing problem of inactivity and obesity of the population, particularly of young children. Cycling can help reduce this as well as giving a host of other health benefits.

There is also the threat of global warming and the need to reduce emissions of which transport is a major contributor. The use of vehicles powered by sustainable sources can only go so far in reducing emissions. It will not reduce the increasing congestion seen in our town. People will have to start to use more sustainable modes of transport; walking and cycling for short distances and buses and trains for medium to long distances.

Our use of motor vehicles will soon reach a critical point as oil and other resources become scarcer. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recently stated that there could be a permanent doubling of oil prices over the next decade. It has also been reported that if China reaches the level of car ownership as it is in the USA then they would have to import more oil than is currently produced in the rest of the world.

As has been said earlier, Bedford is already a cycling town and it is estimated that within the Borough 7% of residents already cycling to the shops, work, school, railway station or leisure facilities on a daily basis and 33% at least once per month.

The level of cycling has been increasing by approximately 8% per year over the last few years and this has been helped by the installation over the past two decades of more than 76 signalled crossings within the Bedford/Kempston urban area to make cycling (and walking) safer.

However to encourage Bedford borough residents to consider cycling or cycling more often the cycle network has to be of high quality and based on best practice. Unfortunately this has not always been the case.

The Campaign Group CCNB would expect to see in the future:

Completion of the urban cycle network with more cycle friendly junctions and roundabouts including links to all the new and future housing and business developments. In particular:

- 20mph limits in all residential areas and the town centre
- Out of hours cycling north/south and east/west through the town centre
- Improved access over the main railway line south and north of the station
- Completion of the Bedford Green Wheel with links to rural villages
- Cycle training for all school children

# Association of Bedford Cyclists (1975-78)

An association of Friends of the Earth (FoE) and Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) in Bedford began in 1975 when it was agreed to draw attention to cycling in National Bike Week. On Saturday 21 June 1975 masses of cyclists rode around Bedford to hold a rally in Church Square, handing out leaflets and collecting 250 signatures for a petition to give to Bedfordshire County Council.



*The wheelers take a rest in Church Square*

At the time the Council was making proposals for a cycleway scheme in Bedford and wanted views on their plan. This was considered carefully and commented on at length.

It was agreed to form a new body called the **Association of Bedford Cyclists** (ABC) at a meeting on 30 December 1977 attended by Gwen Baker, Veronica Brown, Jeff Hall, Richard Hutchins, Terry Newholm and Don Perkins. Its aims were:

- (a) to ensure safer cycling in Bedford and District, and
- (b) to promote cycling in all its aspects.

A further petition of 400 people was collected and presented to the then Mayor, Mrs Norah Polhill, in January 1978 with copies to Borough and County officers and Trevor Skeet MP.

At a public meeting held on 23 February 1978 Peter Snelson, an Assistant Engineer at the County Council, gave a presentation on the proposed cycleway system and the first cycle route - De Parys Avenue to Lombardy Close.

With the ball rolling after attending a number of meetings it was agreed to go to future meetings on cycling as members of CTC or FoE.

Veronica Brown (Edited version)

# Cycle Infrastructure in Numbers - 2012

Signalled Crossings - 56

installed over the last two decades in urban area to improve cyclists' safety in crossing busy main roads

Pegasus - 2

Toucan - 54

This is in addition to many underpasses and central reservations and also Puffin/Pelican and Zebra crossings which cyclists can use to safely walk across.

Advanced Stop Line (ASL) sets - 10

installed at junctions

Cycle Parking Spaces - 1775+

'Sheffield' type around Borough

Town Centre - 375

Railway Station - 400

another 148 to arrive shortly

Rest of Borough - 1000+

public and private

Cycle Network - 136 km

based on CCNB's Bedford & Kempston Cycle Map

Off-Road - 71 km

plus 14 km unsurfaced track/bridleway

Quiet Roads - 61 km

On-Road Cycle Lanes - 4 km

plus 6 km one way/bus lane

Within Bedford Borough there are also a total of 350 kilometres of Bridleways and 34 kilometres of Public Byways (BOATS) which can be used by cyclists.

# Cycling, cycling

*Cycling, cycling - just amazing,  
Get on your bike and don't be lazy.  
Cycling to work or school is very quick,  
Do you see why cycling is so fantastic?*

*Cycling, cycling - just the best!  
Get on your bike - don't have a rest.  
Cycling has no carbon footprint -  
Do you see why cycling's so brilliant?*

*Cycling, cycling - just magnificent,  
Get on your bike - don't be indolent!  
Cycling's good exercise and good for healthiness,  
Do you see why cycling is all awesomeness?*

Emma Wood

# Cycling Campaign for North Bedfordshire



## Our Vision

To see Bedford as a

**‘Town of Cyclists’  
&  
‘Cycle Friendly Communities’**

## Objectives

- ♦ To promote, encourage and support cycling as an important means of transport and recreation.
- ♦ To encourage consideration of the needs of cyclists in all aspects of transport planning and management, access issues and recreational use.

E-mail: [ccnb@ccnb.org.uk](mailto:ccnb@ccnb.org.uk)

Website: <http://www.ccnb.org.uk>

Promotional website: <http://www.cyclebedford.org.uk>