

Increasing Cycle Use

The aim of the Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy is to create a cycle friendly road network and increase cycling. It has been circulated widely, including distribution in the form of a specially prepared Teachers' Resource Pack to every educational establishment and library in the province.

An electronic version has also been placed on Roads Service's cycling website at www.drdni.gov.uk/roads/cycling where a large range of information about cycling in Northern Ireland can be found.

A wide and varied range of groups now exist to look at ways of developing local cycle targets and strategies aimed at encouraging people to cycle more. These include:

- Derry Cycling Forum
- Belfast Cycling Promotions Group
- Ballymoney Cycle Group
- Loughshore Trail Co-ordination Committee



Creating a Cycle-friendly Infrastructure

The long-term infrastructure objective remains that of creating a network of high quality, coherent and safe cycle routes in each of the major urban areas and linking to some 850km of National Cycle Network (NCN), public transport interchanges, residential, shopping and leisure facilities, schools and the countryside. Since the launch of the Strategy, work has been completed on a number of cycle routes, including:

- A2 Tillysburn Road to Holywood
- A2 Belfast Road, Bangor
- Bushmills Road, Coleraine
- Moneymore Road, Magherafelt

and on the NCN:

- Gortin Road, Omagh
- Ardhowen Theatre, Enniskillen
- Whiteabbey to Lisburn

Two impressive civil engineering features on the NCN have been designed to make cycling easier and safer:



The Governor's Bridge cycle underpass in Belfast, opened in summer 2001, enables pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely under a heavily trafficked bridge and is only the second of its type in Europe.



The Millennium foot and cycle bridge in Coleraine was opened in summer 2001. It has been designed to match the profile of the existing Town Bridge and allow maximum visibility of the listed structure.

In partnership with relevant District Councils, Environment and Heritage Service, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Northern Ireland Tourist Board, the Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network is developing the Loughshore Trail cycle route around Lough Neagh. As part of this, a new bridge has been constructed over the mouth of the Blackwater River.

Health

The health sector has been working with other Government departments and organisations to improve adult health in Northern Ireland through the Northern Ireland Physical Activity Strategy

The Strategy Implementation Group has recognised cycling as an important and appropriate activity for people to build into their daily lives. The Health Promotion Agency operates a community grant scheme which gives priority to walking and cycling and has also developed the following publications to promote cycling in its public information campaign:

- leaflets promoting the health benefits of cycling and the NCN
- an events booklet containing information on walking and cycling opportunities
- an advice booklet with information on organising walking or cycling events for community groups
- cycling posters, certificates, T-shirts and other promotional materials



Cyclists and walkers enjoying a day out on part of the Foyle Valley Cycle Route.

Improving Safety for Cyclists

Preventing death and injury to cyclists remains an objective of the education, engineering and enforcement agencies. Concerns have been expressed that an increase in cycling may result in more cyclist injuries. If these concerns are to be allayed, improvements will be required to parts of the road infrastructure.

Engineering contributions involve reallocating road space from the motorist, including cycle provision in traffic calming schemes and 20mph zones, and developing urban cycle networks in town centres across Northern Ireland. Additionally, cycle-specific safety features have begun to appear on roads, including seven Toucan crossings and two advanced stop lines at traffic signals.



Toucan crossing, Queen Elizabeth Bridge, Belfast.

www.drdni.gov.uk/roads/cycling



Planning for Cycling

Cycling continues to be an integral part of sustainable transport and planning strategies. The Regional Development Strategy 2025 recognises the contribution of cycling as an alternative mode of transport to the private car.

The Department of the Environment Planning Service has published two documents which recognise the importance of cycling:

- Planning Policy Statement 7: 'Quality Residential Environments'
- Consultation Document: Planning Policy Statement 8: 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation'

Cycling will be further addressed where appropriate in forthcoming Planning Policy Statements.

PEDAL CYCLE CASUALTIES

SEVERITY	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
KILLED	6	4	5	4	7	1	4
INJURED	306	381	349	335	318	268	262
TOTAL	312	385	354	339	325	269	266

Data supplied by PSNI

Integration with Other Modes

Translink has produced a customer information leaflet highlighting the benefits of public transport and cycling as a competitive alternative to the car. It encourages cycle-commuters to park and ride and tourists and recreational cyclists to carry their cycles in the space provided on public transport.

Most railway and bus stations are already equipped with secure cycle parking facilities. As part of on-going improvements, pilot covered cycle parking is currently being installed at Antrim, Bangor and Coleraine Bus and Rail Centres and Lisburn Rail Station, with more being planned for other key stations, including Armagh and Belfast Central.



Cycle parking at Botanic Avenue, Belfast.

Cycle parking at Lisburn Rail Station.

Reducing Cycle Theft

The police Crime Prevention Unit continues to work with local retailers and others to promote the use of security devices. Appropriate cycle security literature has been designed, produced and issued to cycle distributors.

Work has also continued with various recognised property marking registration and electronic tagging companies and Crime Prevention Officers disseminate the information where appropriate to cycle retailers and the public.



Road Safety Education Officer Service continually promotes the importance of offering cycle training to children and adults. Each year approximately 10,000 children are trained in cycle proficiency and efforts are continually made to encourage adults to participate.

Cycle Parking

As well as any provision made for cycle parking in new developments, Roads Service is implementing a programme to introduce urban cycle parking facilities and there is now parking provision for over 200 cycles.

District Councils are also supporting this initiative by carrying out and acting upon cycle parking audits. Similarly, Forest Service and Environment and Heritage Service are making cycle parking available at many of their country parks.

Travel Plans

Awareness seminars were held in mid-2001 for a number of public and private sector organisations and included a section promoting more work-related cycling.

The Northern Ireland School Travel Advisory Group meets quarterly to co-ordinate school travel activity and, as a result, nine schools across Northern Ireland are now committed to participating in pilot Safer Routes to Schools projects. Consultants are assisting in the development of School Travel Plans at the participating schools.



Roads Service endeavours to ensure that best practice is followed during the construction of cycling facilities. This will be further enhanced when its new cycle audit and cycle review policy is introduced.

Tourism

Following market research, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) reported an increase in cycling for the period 1999/2000. With ongoing cycle route development and an increase in promotional activity, further increases in cycling are confidently expected.

The NITB co-ordinates a Cycling Product Marketing Group comprised of public and private sector representatives, tour operators and advisory bodies. This group implements an annual promotional activities plan that includes generic advertising, attendance at domestic and international exhibitions, familiarisation trips for journalists and tour operators and the implementation of a Cyclists Welcome Scheme.

Sport and Leisure

Twenty-one competitive cyclists have been included in the Lottery Sports Fund's Talented Athlete and Talented Athlete: Next Generation programmes. Most of these are preparing for the Commonwealth Games in Manchester in July and August 2002. The Ulster Cycling Federation and the Northern Ireland Cycling Federation are working together in development of the riders' programmes and on the recommendations for Games selection.

The Countryside Access and Activities Network appointed consultants to undertake a strategic review entitled 'Off-Road Cycling in Northern Ireland'. Forest Service, Environment and Heritage Service, and District Councils have all worked closely with the consultants during the preparation of this Strategy. It is anticipated that this Strategy will lead to a variety of new off-road cycling facilities being developed at countryside recreation sites.

Raising Public Awareness

District Councils are affording cycling a higher profile in event planning and in forming partnerships to run promotional events. Voluntary organisations such as the Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative, Pedal Power, Sustrans and CTC also play a vital role in generating positive interest and have been working in partnership with Roads Service to take forward a number of successful initiatives, namely:

- Festival of Cycling
- energy efficiency in transport
- green transport conferences
- schools events
- Green Living Fair

Photograph acknowledgements include :
Sustrans,
Road Safety Education Officer Service
and Jim Lavery (WJL Photography)



Northern Ireland currently boasts a range of top quality cycling guides. NITB produces an annual information guide to "Cycling in Northern Ireland" giving information on NCN routes, local cycle routes, fully inclusive cycling holidays, bike hire outlets and mountain biking. This guide is distributed in both domestic and international markets. Most of this information is available to view on the internet at www.discovernorthernireland.com and www.sustrans.org.uk



Racers climbing the "Deer's Leap", Dundrod, Co. Antrim during the Irish Road Race Championship, July 2001.

Community Participation and Consultation

Keeping local people informed of cycle schemes and events through notices and mail drops is regarded as a valuable way to involve the community and Roads Service continually liaises with various bodies, including District Councils, Translink, Sustrans and local cycle groups in the preparation of cycle routes.

The Department for Social Development has part-funded a Cycling Development Officer in Londonderry whose responsibilities include working with community groups to involve them in the development of the Derry Cycling Strategy.



The former Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Sammy Wilson and local cycling enthusiast Tracey McClelland doing their bit to promote the Belfast Week of Cycling in June 2001.

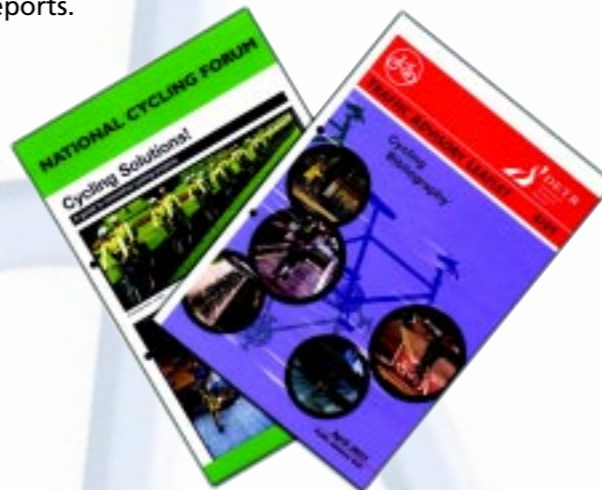
The Voluntary Sector

Pedal Power, CTC, Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative and Sustrans represent the voluntary sector on the Northern Ireland Cycling Forum and work hard to raise the profile of cycling by lobbying for better and safer cycling provision. They also support organisations such as the Voluntary Service Belfast, which arranged a successful cycle ride for senior citizens during the Belfast Week of Cycling.

The Health Promotion Agency's 'Get Active in the Community' awards scheme was developed in collaboration with Disability Action and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action. It aims to increase opportunities within communities for participation in health enhancing physical activity, by providing financial support to enable community and voluntary groups to develop a wide range of initiatives targeted at the sedentary population.

Research

By attendance at appropriate conferences and through good practice publications, Roads Service keeps abreast of current thinking in the provision of a safe and cycle friendly infrastructure. Examples include "Cycle Friendly Infrastructure - Guidelines for Planning & Design," (produced by the Institution of Highways & Transportation and The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR)), and Transport Research Laboratory reports.



DTLR Traffic Advisory Leaflets and National Cycle Forum publications are available to view on the Internet at www.dtlr.gov.uk and www.nationalcyclingstrategy.org.uk

Roads Service is involved in a European funded project aimed at raising travel awareness and changing travel behaviour through effective communication campaigns. This 'Travel Awareness Publicity and Education supporting a Sustainable Transport strategy' (TAPESTRY) project will include undertaking research into specific case studies in relation to cycling to school at one school in Belfast and one in Newry.

www.drdni.gov.uk/roads/cycling

Resources

The first phase of the NCN in Northern Ireland comprised some 850km of cycle network. £3.5 M of the total £14.4 M project came from the National Lottery via the Millennium Commission. Most of the remainder came from the European Peace and Reconciliation Programme, District Councils and Roads Service.

In partnership with others, Roads Service continually seeks to put funding thresholds in place, such as the joint financing of Safer Routes to Schools projects by Translink, Roads Service, Department of Education for NI and Education and Library Boards.



Representatives from the main funders of the NCN at its launch in June 2000.

Monitoring Progress

To help monitor progress towards the Strategy's targets, an ongoing usage survey has been established across Northern Ireland. The first annual report of the survey contains information on cycle usage in year 2000, the base year from which we shall measure future trends. The report is available to view at libraries and on the cycling website. In future reports we shall be able to highlight progress towards the targets.

The NITB appointed consultants to complete a survey during August 2001 to establish both the number of cyclists and the purpose of their journey along the newly developed NCN routes. The results of this survey are available from the NITB library.

Looking Forward

Many of the Strategy's outputs extend over a number of years, but all are presently on course for completion as planned.



Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy

First Report: End 2001

The Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy was launched in June 2000. It raised considerably the profile of cycling in Northern Ireland and initiated a range of measures aimed at improving conditions for cyclists and making cycling a more attractive travel option. Government, District Councils and voluntary sector organisations have all made significant commitments that contribute to the Strategy's targets to:

- double the number of trips by cycle (on 2000 figures) by the end of 2005; and
- quadruple the number of trips by cycle (on 2000 figures) by the end of 2015

This First Report describes many of the activities undertaken towards that end.

Peter D Robinson
Minister for
Regional Development



Department for
Regional Development