

09 Cycling to Work

Key Principle

Companies and organisations should be encouraged to make workplaces cycle-friendly, as part of a travel plan to reduce single-occupancy car trips for commuting and business. Local authorities have an important role to play in encouraging businesses to become cycle-friendly as part of workplace travel plans. A strategy which targets a limited number of large companies and organisations, and offers an attractive package of advice, grants and services, is likely to be the most effective approach.

Encouraging cycling to work

Background

Employers can take a variety of steps to make it easy and attractive for their staff to travel to work by bike, or to use a bike for business travel. These are most likely to succeed if implemented in the context of a workplace travel plan.

This section describes:

- Steps that can be taken by **individual employers** to encourage their staff to cycle
- Strategies and actions **local authorities** should adopt to persuade businesses to become bike-friendly.

Cycle-friendly employers

Employers should begin by surveying staff and auditing the work-site to find out what changes to facilities would most encourage people to cycle. Guidance on suitable survey methods is available in *The Essential Guide to Travel Planning* (2007).

The Essential Guide explains how a company can go about implementing a travel plan for its staff. The overall aim of a travel plan is to reduce car use and encourage sustainable travel – with benefits ranging from fitter, healthier employees to lower business travel costs.

For cycling, the guide includes the following checklist of improvements that employers could consider:

- Secure and sheltered cycle parking;
- Facilities for showers, changing and storage of personal gear;
- Improved cycle routes to (and on) the site;
- Maps and other information about local cycle routes;
- Provision of, or payment for, bike maintenance;
- Cut-price or free staff bikes;
- Training for those who are not confident cyclists;

- A staff bicycle user group – a BUG;
- Incentives to cycle;
- Events to encourage cycling;
- Pool bikes for business journeys.

Cycle parking

Cycle parking should be located close to building entrances, where new users can find it. It should be well-lit, sheltered from rain, secure and overlooked by nearby offices or passers-by. Access should be level, so cyclists do not have to carry their bicycle down steps. Possible options include a lockable compound (accessed by a swipe card or key), or a transparent shelter. Users should be able to lock the frame of their bicycle to a stand which supports the bike. 'Butterfly' racks to which only a wheel can be locked are not suitable.

Showers, changing facilities and storage

Showers, changing areas and luggage lockers should ideally be close to the point of arrival in office buildings, particularly in 'formal' working environments, so that workers do not have to walk through their work area before they get changed into work clothes. Most people prefer not to draw attention to themselves and the thought of having to wear brightly coloured safety gear in the office may be sufficient to deter some potential cyclists! There should be space to dry coats for people who walk or cycle to work, such as a drying room or well ventilated cloakroom and lockers for storing panniers, cycle helmet and other cycling gear. As well as showers, companies are increasingly providing 'extras' to make it easy for staff to freshen up after cycling to work. These include towels, shampoo, hair driers, irons and ironing boards.

Cycle routes

A map of the home addresses of employees will help identify residential areas with high concentrations of employees within cycling distance of the workplace. The data for the mapping exercise can be drawn from payroll or personnel records, which are a more complete source than a staff travel survey. The map can be used to identify the main routes cyclists are likely to take to a particular worksite, while the staff survey can help pinpoint places where such routes require improvement.

Companies should discuss with their local council's cycling officer the routes and locations where their survey suggests changes are needed. In some cases, the company might make a contribution to the cost of improvements. The local authority should in any case give a high priority to improving cycle routes that serve companies or groups of companies such as business parks with active travel plans. These may also be places to target particular routes by providing specific marketing (see [targeted marketing](#)).

Maps and information

For new cyclists and visitors, a route map centred on the site and showing the best cycle routes and location of cycle parking will be helpful. This should be downloadable from the organisation's website. Copies of the map should be made available to staff who live within cycling distance.

Bike maintenance

Larger companies and organisations may arrange for a mechanic from a local bike shop to visit once a week or month, to offer bike servicing and repairs. Labour charges might be met by the company, with staff paying the cost of any parts. Similarly, the local cycle shops may wish to offer bicycle maintenance courses to company employees as part of an ongoing customer relationship.

Cut-price bikes and equipment

The government's [Cycle to Work](#) tax incentive scheme enables employers to purchase bicycles and safety equipment for long-term loan and then sale to their employees, at attractive terms. The only condition is that the bike should mainly be used for journeys to and from work. The cost to the employer is treated as capital expenditure and capital allowances and VAT can be reclaimed. No income tax is payable by the employee for the bicycle. If it wishes, the employer may recover the cost of providing the bike through a 'salary sacrifice' scheme, in which a sum is deducted from the employee's gross pay (before tax) in monthly instalments. The scheme is usually administered by Human Resource departments.

A typical salary sacrifice scheme would enable an employee to obtain a bicycle worth £450 for about £307 – that is, for about two-thirds of the retail price.

Cycle training

Employers may choose to offer free cycle training to their staff. Specialist cyclist training companies will provide the necessary range of bikes and safety equipment, and will take care of insurance and liability issues (see [CTC page of training providers](#) and [cycle training](#)).

Bicycle User Groups

A staff bicycle user group, or BUG, can play a valuable role in promoting cycling to colleagues, for example by providing cycling 'buddies' to show new cyclists the back-road routes and cycle lanes to work.

Incentives

Some companies offer incentives for their staff to cycle – for example payments for each day cycled, entry into prize-draws, or 'bike miles' schemes where staff collect a voucher each day they cycle and can redeem full voucher-books for cycle equipment or other benefits. In companies which operate clocking-in and flexi-time systems, cyclists may be offered shorter hours – e.g. 10 minutes per day.

Promotional events

Events such as Bike to Work days and cyclists' breakfasts provide a focus to encourage employees to give cycling a go.

Pool bikes

Employers with several fairly close sites, or organisations where staff need to make regular, short, off-site trips, can provide pool bicycles. Folding bicycles may be useful for staff who need to make business trips by public transport. In London, Southwark Council set up a 'Pool Bikes for Business' scheme which offered pool bikes to 24 organisations on a six month trial period. Employees could use the bikes both for work and for leisure trips. Their report [Pool Bikes for Business](#) offers guidance on how to set up a workplace bike pool.

Action for local authorities

Local authorities play a crucial role in persuading businesses and organisations to set up workplace travel plans. Without local authority encouragement and persuasion, most company chief executives will say that their staff travel choices for the journey to work are 'none of my business'. Conversely, in areas where the local council is actively promoting workplace travel plans, their adoption by businesses quickly results in up to a third of the workforce being covered by a travel plan.

The key actions local authorities can take to encourage employers to set up workplace travel plans are described in [Making Smarter Choices Work](#) (2004). Evidence on the effects of local authority workplace travel plan schemes is described in [chapter 3](#) of the research study, [Smarter Choices: Changing the Way we Travel](#) (2004). Based on these reports, five 'top tips' for local authorities to encourage workplace travel planning are as follows:

Establish a travel plan for the council's own employees

Before asking other organisations to draw up a travel plan, the local authority should set up a travel plan for its own staff. This will help demonstrate to businesses that the council has 'put its own house in order'. It will also provide useful practical experience of what works in your own local context – for example, which measures are most effective in a rural area, or an urban one. Finally, local authorities are major employers, so efforts to support your own staff to travel in a sustainable way will affect the travel choices of a large number of people.

If your local authority does not have a travel plan, or has a largely moribund travel plan, you will need to gain senior level support for the appointment of a travel plan officer to implement or re-vitalise the travel plan. There should be an effective monitoring programme, so that you know how staff are changing their travel habits as a result of the council's actions. Employees should be surveyed to find out which of the actions listed in the first part of this briefing would most encourage them to cycle, and the most-wanted actions should be implemented.

Use the planning system to require travel plans

Local planning authorities should systematically examine all planning applications to identify those which are strategically significant, and for which a travel plan should be a condition of planning permission. Typically, local authorities might require all applications for developments employing more than 50 people to establish a travel plan.

Guidance on the nature and content of planning conditions or planning gain agreements is contained in the DfT best practice guide [Using the Planning System to Secure Travel Plans](#) (2002). This is currently being updated.

Employ a team of workplace travel officers to promote travel planning to businesses

It is not realistic to expect one officer to promote travel planning to external organisations as well as implementing travel plan measures for the council's own staff. Successful local authorities typically employ a small team – e.g. about three full-time staff – to promote workplace travel planning to other organisations.

Pick your targets – concentrate on working with large organisations

By concentrating effort on a few of the largest organisations, it will probably be feasible to reach about a third of the workforce in your local area. Key targets would be likely to include hospitals (where congested site access may often provide the impetus to reduce car use); colleges and universities; government agencies; and major private sector employers.

Work out what you have to offer

It will be easier to engage organisations in the travel plan process if they are already required to implement a travel plan as a result of a planning agreement, or are in the process of seeking planning permission.

Where this does not apply, you will need to think carefully about your initial approach to the business, the reasons that they may be motivated to develop a travel plan (e.g. to cut business costs), and what you can offer them in terms of help, advice and services.

You should be able to offer an attractive range of services and benefits to help organisations implement a travel plan. In relation to cycling, you might offer any or all of the following:

- Grants to cover the cost of purchase and installation of a cycle shelter, or other on-site cycling facilities such as showers or lockers.
- Free cycle training for employees.
- Improvements to the cycle route to the site, based on consultation with their employees.
- A pool bike scheme, which offers bikes and administrative back-up to organisations for six months.

Other support you might offer includes:

- Preparing and analysing a staff travel survey – for example, Exeter Cycling Demonstration Town invited all employers to take part in a 'Travel to Work Tally', which it plans to repeat each year
- Public transport benefits – for example, help in securing a deal with bus and rail operators to provide cut-price tickets for staff
- A commuter planner club, where companies from a similar geographical area (e.g. a business park) or sector (e.g. further education institutions) can share information and work together

Publications and references

[The Essential Guide to Travel Planning](#) (2007) I Taylor and C Newson, Transport for Quality of Life, for Department for Transport, National Business Travel Network and Campaign for Better Transport

[Cycle to Work](#) tax incentive scheme: [employer leaflet](#) and [employee leaflet](#)

[Pool Bikes for Business: a practical guide to setting up a workplace bike pool](#), SEA / Renue, Southwark Council and Transport for London:

[Making Smarter Choices Work](#) (2004) Department for Transport

[Smarter Choices: Changing the Way we Travel](#) (2004) S Cairns, L Sloman, C Newson, J Anable, A Kirkbride and P Goodwin, Department for Transport

[Using the Planning Process to Secure Travel Plans: Best Practice Guide](#) (2002) Addison & Associates and Transport 2000 Trust, for Department for Transport