

East London Cyclist

www.wheelers.org.uk

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2010

THE NEWSLETTER FOR TOWER HAMLETS WHEELERS • LONDON CYCLING CAMPAIGN

Brrrrrr!



Okay, My fingers have just about thawed out again now to type the first 2010 edition of East London Cyclist! (Will Boris's "Cycle SuperHighways" be gritted, we wonder?)

Speaking of thawing out... watch out for new **potholes**, which are made worse by cold weather. If you spot any, it's vital that they are reported either directly to the Council, or you can use the web site: www.fillthathole.org.uk

Regular readers will no doubt have noticed that there hasn't been an issue of East London Cyclist for a little while, but we're back on track with lots of news. In this issue we have a special feature on safety, and an update on many projects that we are involved in.

We are looking forward to seeing you out and about this year and trying to imagine some warmer weather for rides and events.

We are also on the lookout for some new volunteers for various activities. ■

Robert Lister

All the range

At present, 14 Wheelers have volunteered to be 'cycling rangers' so thank you very much for your contribution! At the time of writing, briefing sessions are due to take place on **Monday 25th January** and at the **Wheelers Workshop on 30th January** where volunteers could just drop in at either to get their briefing.

If you are interested in joining up too, contact alix.stredwick@transport-initiatives.com or tel **020 8525 4512** and we may organise another session.

Basically, there are 3 different aspects to the Rangers volunteering, and you can choose to do as many or as few as you like:

- Regular reporting of street faults such as pot-holes, missing cycle signs, and blocked routes (minimum every two weeks)
- A one-off 'audit', to highlight future improvements on the streetscape that you would like to see for cycling.
- Suggestions for where new cycle parking should be prioritised.

All of these you would do in an area (e.g. an area round where you live); or along cycle route of your choice; or along another route of your choice (e.g. if your route to work doesn't actually follow a Tower Hamlets cycle route).

Contact Alix to find out more and get involved! ■

Alix Stredwick

2020 vision

Tower Hamlets Council has published **Cycling Connections**, the Council's Cycling plan up to 2020. Wheelers contributed to this plan, which can be accessed via:

tinyurl.com/cycleconnect



Young bikers

The Young Bikers project, supported by a Can Do community grant, has recently been set up by a Wheelers volunteer to provide students of all ages, from 7 – 18, with both printed and digital maps detailing safe cycle routes to schools and colleges in Poplar and the Isle of Dogs.

The maps are intended to reassure inexperienced riders and parents and help promote the uptake of cycling by young people. The routes will enable safe and pleasant journeys to school and will also link into the current cycle route network, encouraging other journeys in the borough.

The maps will also contain useful information such as bike retailers, cycle groups, workshops and cycle training opportunities in the borough, as well as tips on safe cycling.

Work on the project is currently underway and the maps will be made available from March 2010. They will be given out for free at all schools and colleges in the above areas and can also be downloaded from the Young Bikers blog.

Visit the Young Bikers blog at www.youngbikers.blogspot.com for more information and updates. ■

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Darren Reynolds

Greenwich

The campaign continues to ensure that suitable provision for crossing the river is made whilst the Greenwich foot tunnel is refurbished. Greenwich Council have yet to confirm what (if anything) they intend to offer, so during the week commencing October 19th, Greenwich LCC organised a petition. Representatives of Greenwich, Southwark and Tower Hamlets LCC collected over 1000 signatures from cyclists and pedestrians, with the vast majority of those approached signing up.

The petition demanded that full closure should be as short as possible and that during full closure an alternative must be provided. If you would like to add your voice to the campaign, please write to:

Councillor Chris Roberts
Leader
Greenwich Council
Town Hall
Wellington Street
Woolwich
London, SE18 6PW ■

Healthy start

You might remember that the Jan/Feb 2009 Wheelers newsletter announced the Healthy Borough funding for a range of projects, including a number of 'active travel' projects. Dr Rachel Bower, together with the public health department of Tower Hamlets NHS and LBTH's transport team, set up a pilot scheme of referring patients to cycle training lessons at BikeWorks plus Saturday group rides. These were for patients at St Stephen's GP practice who were not physically active and who would benefit from gentle bike riding to improve well-being and fitness. The Saturday rides were 'escorted' by a cycle trainer but crucially some kind Wheelers and other volunteers helped out, to create a supportive and fun atmosphere for the patients.

Over 70 patients were referred in this pilot scheme and the group rides attracted about 6 people per session, building up a nice support group. Now the project is being rolled-out to more GP practices in the borough and eventually the aim is for cycle training and rides to be based from other 'hubs' around the borough.

In the meantime, the Saturday rides from BikeWorks were put on hold for a few months over the winter, and now they are starting up again. We aim to get them going for mid-February, i.e. **Saturday 13th February**.

We need volunteers and it's a lovely way to spend 2-3 hours on a Saturday. You can come along as often as you like - perhaps one Saturday a month or every 6 weeks is a realistic option for volunteers, and all the help is very gratefully received!

Please contact alix.stredwick@transport-initiatives.com (mind the spelling!) to get signed up to the online wiki where the ride volunteers fix up what dates each can do, and you can find brief write-ups of previous expeditions!



Photo: Patient Paul and the ride instructor on a sunny Saturday ride in November 2009 on the Cycling for Health on referral scheme.

Transport Initiatives are managing the roll-out of the scheme, contact Alix Stredwick, Tel: 020 8525 4512 ■

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Alix Stredwick

Safety view

CTC, the national Cyclists' Organisation, has launched a campaign: "STOP SMIDSY" "Sorry mate, I didn't see you!"

Because sometimes sorry just isn't enough.

Stop SMIDSY aims to address the far too common attitude that simply saying 'Sorry Mate, I Didn't See You' somehow erases an act of bad driving. This is not true and it must be stopped.



You can get involved by visiting the Stop SMIDSY website and logging your experiences of bad driving. You can report crashes, near misses and incidents that you have witnessed.

Why?

The police, prosecutors and the courts all contribute to protecting us from criminal behaviour on the roads. Much of the time, they are effective and many bad drivers are prosecuted and receive the appropriate penalties. Yet, unfortunately some bad drivers go unpunished due to what CTC perceives as occasional failings of these institutions. This can send out the message that driving inconsiderate ly or in a way that puts others at risk is acceptable.

Most of us have experienced bad driving. By creating a place to collect and share these stories, we will create the political will to change how the institutions of our society deal with bad driving. ■

Get involved! Visit: www.stop-smidsy.org.uk

LCC 's plan for 'safer lorries' can be found at:
www.lcc.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=1514.

The campaign includes lobbying for European regulation that would improve drivers' mirrors to be implemented without delay and training drivers in cycle-awareness. ■

Sadly a cyclist was killed in Tower Hamlets on in September last year at the junction of Whitechapel Road and Vallance Road. **Chrystelle Brown** was on her way to work as a fitness instructor in Canary Wharf from her home in Hackney when a lorry struck her.



Jenny Hawes, Chrystelle's cousin, writes: "She was a beautiful, energetic girl with so much love and warmth to offer.

It's a travesty. In terms of the accident - she died on a dry road, in day light, wearing a helmet. The realignment of the two roads has been identified by multiple safety studies as the best way to improve safety at this black spot, however the cost of the scheme is under threat due the TfL's shrinking budget - in my opinion this scheme is not something we can afford to cut back on more lives will be lost."

We are supporting Jenny's campaign for change, and for improvements to the layout of the junction.

Sign the petition at:

www.gopetition.co.uk/petitions/save-cyclists-lives.html

Chrystelle's death adds to the worrying number of cyclists killed in collisions with larger vehicles. There were 10 fatalities in London in 2009, of which eight involved LGVs and seven of those victims were women. This is the highest number of cyclists killed since 2000.

The onus to be safe on the streets of London is placed on the vulnerable road user - pedestrians and cyclists. London is the most unsafe place to be in the UK if you are a pedestrian; more teenagers will die from being hit by a vehicle than by being stabbed by another child, and yet little regard is given by the media to that mode of slaughter. From transport policies that allow large vehicles 24-hour access to most of London to a ready acceptance by the CPS not to hold drivers to account, it is a struggle to remember that we are in a city that is being promoted for cycling. If the government is serious in getting people on bikes as an aim for individual health and as a cut in the nation's carbon footprint then there needs to be a substantial change of attitude towards sharing the streets.

What can we do in Tower Hamlets? Circulate the petition; write to your councillor asking that the borough implement cycle awareness training for contractors' vehicles. ■

Gerry Matthews

Rides and events

Please check our web site, or call the ride leader in advance, as times/details sometimes change!

January

Saturday, 16th January

HILLY RIDE (MODERATE)

Either in the Chilterns or South Downs - details to follow. Meet on top of the Green Bridge, Mile End Park (time TBA)

Contact: **Steve**

Saturday, 30th January

BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Monthly Workshop – 11am-3.00pm at Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road. Back to spruce up your bike for 2010!

Sunday, 31st January

BREAKFAST RIDE (EASY)

Cafe breakfast at about 9:15am, destination to be announced on the day. 15-20 easy paced miles in total. Meet at 8.30am on top of the Green Bridge, Mile End Park. Contact: **Caroline**

February

Wednesday, 10th February

MONTHLY WHEELERS MEETING

Meet at St Margaret's House, 21 Old Ford Road. 7.30-9.00pm - everyone welcome. Followed by a visit to a local pub from 9.15pm.

Contact: **Owen**.

Sunday, 21st February

MILE END TO CAMBRIDGE (HARD)

Details to follow.

Meet on top of the Green Bridge, Mile End Park (time tba) Contact: **Dave**.

Saturday, 27th February

BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Monthly Workshop – 11am-3.00pm at Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road. Time to sort out that squeak!

Sunday, 28th February

BREAKFAST RIDE (EASY)

Cafe breakfast at about 9:15am, destination to be announced on the day. 15-20 easy paced miles in total. Meet at 8.30am on top of the Green Bridge, Mile End Park. Contact: **Caroline**

March

Wednesday, 10th March

MONTHLY WHEELERS MEETING

Meet at St Margaret's House, 21 Old Ford Road. 7.30-9.00pm - everyone welcome. Followed by a visit to a local pub from 9.15pm.

Contact: **Owen**.

Saturday, 27th March

BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Monthly Workshop – 11am-3.00pm at Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road.

Arrive early if you've got lots to do.

Tea, chat and maybe some bike fixing!

More rides will be added to our web site!

Contacts

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