

BIKE TO WORK TACTICS

*How do you make your workplace cycle-friendly? CTC's **Cherry Allan** has some advice – and outlines what you can win by getting involved this summer*

Warm mornings and long, sunny evenings make the summer an especially enticing season for cycle commuting. This June, there's even more incentive with Bike Week's focus on cycling to work and the Love to Ride Workplace Challenge (see the sidebars opposite and on page 46).

But with sunshine and targeted events charming thousands more onto their bikes to join the UK's 800,000 or so existing cycle commuters, will their employers be ready for them? Come to think of it, if you cycle to work, has your employer always been ready for you? Are you and your transport choice welcome?

If your answer is 'No' or only 'Sort of', then this summer could be the perfect opportunity for your own cycle-friendly workplace campaign.

First, get your employer involved with a commuting-based Bike Week event and a prizes-up-for-grabs Workplace Challenge. Then seize that momentum and do an audit of cycle provision where you work. Is

something essential missing? Is something not fit for purpose? Here's a checklist of what we think a cycle-friendly employer should offer at the very least – and why.

Cycle parking
Is there any? If so, is it attracting bikes – or are the drain pipes doing a better job? Ideally, cycle racks should be near the premises, easy to get to, covered, secure and well-designed.

If there's nowhere outside, could a room or cupboard inside be converted into lockable bike storage? Wall hooks can be used if space is tight.

What's in it for your employer? Cycle parking is better value for money than car parking. GlaxoSmithKline in West London estimates that a single car parking spot costs them £2,000 a year to maintain. Filling the same area with six to eight cycles instead of just one car makes financial sense.

Lockers, drying facilities & showers
Not everybody wants or needs to change clothes at work, but for those who do – and certainly for those with a passion for collecting cycling stuff for every eventuality – a locker is very useful.

Although the weather shines on cycle commuters more than it pours (honestly), there are occasions when a drying facility will be welcome. This need be nothing more complex than a cupboard, with hanging rails and a dehumidifier.

Showers help make some people much happier about cycling to work. Best to steer clear of any off-putting suggestion that cycling is hard, smelly work; it needn't be.

Don't forget that people who jog, go to the gym or exercise during their lunch breaks appreciate showers too.

What's in it for your employer? **a)** It's a good way of ensuring that staff who like to keep fit feel valued. Fit staff are good for business: on average, regular cycle commuters take more than one day fewer off sick a year than colleagues who don't cycle to work, saving UK businesses around £83m annually; **b)** Lockers and drying facilities stop hazardous piles of mouldy sportswear annoying your site manager.

Tax incentives
The tax-free mileage rate for using your own cycle on business is currently 20p a mile. (Note: this is for mileage *at work*, not for commuting to and from work.) There's no excuse for not offering the going rate, particularly if car mileage is paid. It's clear from CTC Campaigns' inbox that some employees have to fight for it – or go to the hassle of claiming it directly from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Don't let that happen to you!

What's in it for your employer? It saves money: car mileage rate is more than twice as much.

By subscribing to the Government's Cycle to Work Scheme, an employer can buy a cycle for an employee and hire it to them for a regular payment, usually over a year. If they want, the employee can buy the bike at the end of the loan period at market value. It's tax-efficient because payments are deducted from wages before tax, typically saving an employee at least 25% of the cycle's cost. There's no need to worry about



Opposite page: © Juice Images / Alamy



BIKE WEEK 2015

When: 13-21 June (but events take place until September and beyond!)
Details: bikeweek.org.uk

Bike Week is one of the best annual opportunities to promote and encourage 'everyday cycling for everyone'. CTC invented it in 1923. It's the UK's biggest nationwide cycling event and there for people of all ages and abilities to give cycling a go for fun, visiting friends, getting to work, school or the local shops.

The special focus of this year is cycling to work, boosting people's confidence and inspiring them to cycle-commute. We'll be seeing all kinds of imaginative events, such as 'buddy' rides with novice colleagues, forays to scope out easiest routes and workplace challenges.

Check out the hundreds of events already planned for 2015, and/or organise one yourself and benefit from free public liability insurance, promotional material and event registration on a national site that attracts thousands of hits.



Bike Week is delivered by CTC as part of the European Intelligent Energy Programme.

» admin – experienced facilitators are easy to find online.

The scheme is popular and encourages people to cycle. The Cycling to Work Alliance (a group of the leading providers of the scheme) reports that a record 183,423 employees took advantage of it in 2014, and that more than 70% of first-timers had been either occasional, novice or non-cyclists beforehand.

What's in it for your employer? a)

Employers benefit from National Insurance Contribution savings, and, if VAT-registered, can reclaim VAT on the purchase of the cycle;

b) Employers get fitter, healthier staff.

✓ Cycle training

There are many National Standard Instructors who are happy to visit a workplace to cycle train staff. New or returning cyclists may find this useful, but we don't think it should be a prerequisite for cycling for business purposes. (Employers can't impose training on cycle-commuters anyway.)

What's in it for your employer?

Reassurance, and a practical and entertaining addition to staff training programmes

✓ Bike repair toolbox

You can probably do without a wheel-truing kit, but a track pump and puncture repair equipment might come in handy.

What's in it for your employer? a) Staff who aren't worrying about their morning puncture all day; **b)** Track pumps can also be used to top up soft car tyres, so non-cyclists can benefit too.

✓ Pool bikes

Worth asking for, but you'll need to be convincing to secure pool bikes at work. A fleet of cycles for staff use (including a folding bike for train journeys) helps build a cycling culture. Health and safety requirements do apply to the provision of pool bikes, but there's advice available on this. Transport for London's guidance on pool bikes for business is good. See bit.ly/1bK2HPQ.

What's in it for your employer? A reliable, cost-effective transport option, especially for local meetings and travel between sites etc.



• (Left) Many National Standard Instructors are happy to visit a workplace to cycle-train staff, if needed

• (Below) Pool bikes, if supplied, need to be practical

• (Bottom left) Contact your local authority if poor road conditions are putting off potential cycle commuters



To set up a Bicycle User Group, preferably with your organisation's consent, hunt down a support team via flyers on bikes, mass emails etc.

✓ Travel plan

A travel plan sets out how an organisation intends to reduce the car travel associated with its operations, including how staff commute. Your employer may have a travel plan already – if you're on a relatively new site, the council may have insisted on one, perhaps for the whole of the estate.

If there is an existing travel plan, check whether it needs updating. If there isn't one, there's plenty of advice on starting from scratch; many local authorities offer support.

While the plan should cover sustainable transport in general, you'll want it to give cycling a central role. All of the elements above need to go into it.

What's in it for your employer? a) The more businesses who develop and commit to a well-monitored travel plan, the less peak-hour congestion there'll be. Congestion is a costly burden on business and on the national economy; in England, this could be as much as £22bn by 2025; **b)** When they

do encounter a traffic jam, staff cyclists will be able to breeze past it; **c)** Travel plans are, potentially, good PR. It shows that the employer cares about the environment and the impact its travel habits are having on the local and wider community.

Now that you've drafted your checklist, it's time to appeal to your management. You can go it alone, or found a 'Bicycle Users Group' (BUG) to help.

Getting the BUG

An ideal BUG is a kind of internal pressure group/cycling consultancy/promotions agency/social club that does everything it can to persuade their employer to cater well for existing cyclists and encourage others to cycle commute.

To set one up, preferably with your organisation's consent, hunt down a support team via flyers on bikes, mass emails etc. Then agree priorities, develop your strategy, survey travel habits and wishes/problems, »





Photo: Summit Cycles in Aberystwyth © Keith Morris / Alamy

The Cycle to Work Scheme enables employees to save 25% or more on the cost of a bike. Employers save on National Insurance Contributions and VAT

do some costings, and distribute tasks. Armed with your facts, goals and evidence, meet with the people who possess the relevant powers, explaining what's in your cause for them. A brief presentation could be a good start. Say how nice it would be to have whole-hearted management support, as well as a small budget. If they come back with concerns about liability, health and safety and so forth, explain: that cycling isn't a particularly risky activity; that encouraging cycling rather than driving helps make road conditions safer because cyclists do very little harm; and lots of major employers (not least GSK) are only too happy

to incentivise it. Also, you might like to find a diplomatic way of getting them to consider just how (ir)responsible it is to remain complacent about the noisy, polluting and climate-changing car trips your workplace generates.

Vibrant BUGs won't leave everything to management. They'll help with maps, routes, 'bike-buddying', advice and leaflets, negotiating discounts in local bike shops and social activities etc. They'll also be a driving force when it comes to signing up to events like Bike Week and Love to Ride's Workplace Challenges, and making them fun and effective.

Improving cycling conditions

Your efforts may earn you a really cycle-friendly workplace, but a single nasty junction on the way to work may prevent work colleagues from even considering commuting by bike. Thus, an effective BUG might like to turn its attention to improving the world beyond the workplace.

It's worth approaching your local authority about the features along the highway network that are scuppering your cycling ambitions. Your councils may be responsive to representations from local business, and some have the resources to help not just with road improvements, but more generally with



NATIONAL WORKPLACE CYCLE CHALLENGE 2015

When: 8-28 June **Details:** lovetoride.net

This year, CTC, Love to Ride and Cyclescheme are inviting businesses to see who can get the most staff to ride a bike for at least ten minutes. As team competes against team, office against office and company against company (all very amicably, of course), local and national league tables will monitor progress and determine the front-runners.

It's free for organisations and individuals to take part, there are six size categories for businesses and a range of individual and team prizes, including a trip to New Zealand, new bikes, bike gear, holidays around the UK, and more. Local authorities can sign up to support and boost participation in their area, whatever their cycling budget.

Behaviour change and encouraging modal shift in commuting habits is the underlying aim.

LOVE TO RIDE



the promotion of sustainable and active travel as well.

Every extra cyclist is a success

Getting people to commute by bike isn't always easy. Don't get downhearted if progress is more drip-drip than a torrent. Your activities are changing the cycle commuting scene for the better.

- You'll be helping to create a less stressed and healthier workforce.
- Maybe you'll encourage more women to cycle. Currently, men cycle around three times as much as women.
- You'll be easing some drivers into cycling, perhaps making inroads into the 70% of commuting trips of 2-5 miles that are currently done by car.
- If you live in an urban area, you'll be doing your bit to help it reach the cycle commuting levels seen in Cambridge (29% of working residents), or London, where the number of people living there who cycled to work more than doubled from 77,000 in 2001 to 155,000 in 2011. ●

For more information about persuading your employer to become cycle friendly, visit www.ctc.org.uk/cfe. And, for general commuting advice, see: www.ctc.org.uk/ride/commuting