Government helmet campaign could frighten cyclists off the road

The Government's Road Safety Section has launched a campaign to persuade more teenagers to wear cycle helmets. The campaign is centred around macabre images of the skull, implying that head injury when cycling is both common and always with life-threatening consequences.

Much of the information being put out is untrue or wildly exaggerated. For example, the DfT website says that nearly 3,000 cyclists between 12 and 16 were killed or seriously injured on the roads in 2001. In fact just 699 children between 0 and 16 were seriously injured. The scare tactics and images do great harm to the promotion of cycling as a safe, enjoyable and healthy activity, where the health benefits hugely outweigh the risks of injury by at least 20:1. The mean time between serious head injury for a cyclist is over 3,000 years, and for a fatality over 20,000 years. The DfT gives the impression that serious head injury is likely on every trip.

Furthermore there is no evidence that helmets reduce injuries - national statistics suggest that they are more likely to increase the number or severity of injuries, and one research paper suggests that helmeted cyclists are more than 7 times as likely to hit their heads in a crash than non-helmeted riders. The DfT has never conducted research to show the effect of its helmet promotion on cyclist injuries or cycle use.

The most likely effect of the DfT campaign will be to scare many people from cycling. Teenagers are already the group that is most difficult to retain as cyclists. The NCS Board and Bike Week are greatly concerned about the effect of the Road Safety Section's actions on their abilities to get more people cycling.
The CTC is spearheading opposition to the Road Safety Section's single-minded campaign which has no regard for the future of cycling. CCN is fully supporting CTC and urges its groups and their members to write in protest to Tony Blair, Alistair Darling and Alan Milburn. Whatever your view on cycle helmets, please say "no" to the lies and scare tactics being used by the DfT to undermine all that is being done by so many people to promote cycling.

NOTE: the CTC is not anti-helmet, it is pro-choice, it's just that if people aren't informed of the facts, how can they make an informed choice? It is extremely important that the DfT research is acknowledged as flawed and that the department institutes new research. The original report is available on the DfT website.

The following is a copy of the letter sent by a CTC member about the matter to Tony Blair and you are encouraged to write yourself. But please write in your own words, do not simply copy the letter below.

Dear Mr Blair,

DfT "CYCLESENSE" CYCLE HELMET CAMPAIGN

The DfT is currently running a cycle helmet campaign which is undermining Government policy, which is to increase the amount of cycling in this country. The campaign available on the website www.cyclesense.net contains much useful advice, but its emphasis on helmet-wearing as a panacea for all ills is unjustified, inaccurate and likely to lead to a reduction in cycling by the target group, teenagers. Anything which reduces the amount of cycling by emphasising dangers rather than benefits (estimated by the BMA to be in the ratio 1:20) will virtually guarantee that this government's cycling targets will fail to be met. Given that the first cycling target has already been dropped, and that, on existing trends, subsequent targets will also be missed, this campaign is illogical and absurd.

The campaign itself would appear to be based on the faulty premise that cycle helmets reduce death and injury to cyclists, but all large scale and whole-population research shows that, at best, cycle helmets have no effect, and at worst, increase risk. This attitude appears to stem from the recent report from the DfT about cycle helmets "Bicycle Helmets - a review of effectiveness" which found that helmets are effective. The report ignores all large scale and whole-population research, and only examines research which finds a positive effect from helmets, much of which is questionable, and some is from researchers whose previous work has been shown to be highly inaccurate. Although the DfT qualifies the report on every page with the statement "Although this report was commissioned by the Department, the findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the De-
Cheltenham Road Casualty Figures Down

The 2002 road casualty figures for Cheltenham show a reduction over 2001. There were no fatal accidents in the 2002 statistics and the total number of casualties was 408. This compares with a total of 448 casualties in 2001 of which one was a fatality. However, over the longer term there seems to be no clear trend other than a reduction in the number of fatalities. A summary of the casualty figures for Cheltenham is shown in the table below.

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<td>Cyclists</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>Pedestrians</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>63</td>
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<td>Car Drivers</td>
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<td>157</td>
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<td>133</td>
<td>116</td>
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<td>Totals</td>
<td>408</td>
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<td>Fatalities</td>
<td>0</td>
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And that new research has been commissioned to fulfil the conditions ignored by the authors of the first report?
I wish to register my profound objection to the helmet campaign, and request that it be dropped immediately, and I also request that proper research be carried out.
Yours sincerely

Shimano Prize goes to Shopping by Bike Scheme

The 2003 Shimano Cycling Concept Award has been won by the Belgian environmental organisation Bond Better Leefmilieu Vlaanderen (roughly, Better Quality of Life Association of Flanders) and its highly-practical "Shopping with the Bicycle" project. BBLV’s project involves keeping track of shoppers who arrive at shops on bicycles.

This cycle usage is monitored by participating retail outlets, which distribute 'shop by bike' cards to interested individuals. Every time a customer arrives at the participating shop on a bicycle, the customer gets a stamp on the card. When the card is full, it is handed back to the shop and it goes into a prize draw.
All retailers can participate, from bakers to bike shops and from butchers to supermarkets.
The BBLV pilot project was conducted in 43 towns and cities in Flanders. 13 000 people registered for cards and one

(Continued on page 4)
Letter to a Local Radio Station

Dear BBC Hereford and Worcester;

I've noticed that you perform the excellent service of broadcasting details of speed/safety cameras which are operating in the area.

I'm a bit surprised you're able to get away with aiding and abetting the speeding which then prevails elsewhere, but assuming that you are able to continue for a while, I wonder whether you could extend this service which, at present, seems a most unfair preferential treatment towards a particular section of the law breaking community.

I am trying to eke out a living on a pension and I find it necessary to shoplift to supplement my income. Unfortunately most of the major stores employ detectives, dressed like ordinary shoppers, to catch shoplifters like me. This is most unsporting and increases the chances that I will get caught. It’s not as if, like speeding drivers, I am endangering anyone's life; just taking a few things from big companies which can easily afford it.

The only warning that the stores give is to say that shoplifters will be prosecuted; this is no more helpful to us than the Highway Code saying that we MUST adhere to the speed limits.

I'm not against store detectives in principle, but I think it's unfair that they are allowed to operate incognito. Could you ask the major stores in the area to inform you of which floors their detectives will be working on at various times during the week. It would also be a great help if you could encourage them to wear bright yellow jackets.

You will then be able to broadcast this useful information, along with the speed camera warnings, to us unfairly victimised lawbreakers.

Yours faithfully,
John Mallows

(Continued from page 3)

million stamps were collected. Obviously, that equates to one million cycle journeys, many of which would not have happened without the attraction of a prize-draw.

BBLV hopes that once shoppers can see the benefits of doing their shopping locally and by bike, they will be less inclined to use cars for the same purpose.

The BBLV project received a lot of positive publicity in Flanders, including when, as a means of demonstrating bicycle load-carrying capabilities, a Belgian football star transported a refrigerator home by bicycle.

Frank Peiffer of Shimano, chairman of the SCCA judges, said: "We want to congratulate this organization and we hope our prize can help to make this project grow year after year."

The Shimano Cycling Concept Award is an annual award for not-for-profit organisations which aim to increase the amount of cycling in their locality.
CTC wins court battle over cameras

Safety campaigners, including national cyclists' organisation CTC, have forced the government to drop its demand that road cameras be painted yellow. After a High Court battle ministers conceded that safety camera partnerships can apply to the Secretary of State to use hidden fixed speed cameras.

A joint statement by the government and campaigners announcing the new road safety principle and issued following a judicial review, followed a ten month campaign by Transport 2000 and the Slower Speeds Initiative which includes CTC.

Roger Geffen, CTC Campaigns and Policy Manager said, "This agreement re-establishes the principle that motorists must respect speed limits at all times, not just when they can see a yellow camera. Many lives will now be saved and cycling on our roads will become far safer and more enjoyable as a result."

Vicky Cann, Assistant Director of Transport 2000 said: "This is a good decision for road safety because drivers across the road network now know they must stick within the speed limits, thereby reducing the death toll on our roads."

Paige Mitchell, Co-ordinator of the Slower Speeds Initiative, says: "Now we will be asking the Secretary of State to set up trials of covert versus overt cameras so that we can establish their comparative safety benefits. The door is now open to safety camera partnerships to apply to use fixed covert cameras if they think this will reduce speeding on their roads."

Arle Court to Longlevens Cycle Path & Cycle/Footpath

With the A40 Golden Valley Bypass now out of bounds to cyclists the route through Churchdown on the B4063 is now a primary commuting route for cyclists. The Cheltenham Cycle Campaign has been taking an active interest in the provision for cyclists along this route. The intention, on current plans, is to have a west bound (heading towards Gloucester) on-road cycle lane and an east bound shared cycle footpath. The cycle footpath in particular has caused some concern as it is not only uneven, it is in places narrow. In short the fit commuting cyclist is unlikely to use it as along that road it is not only possible but highly likely that the cyclist will be travelling at between 15 and 20 m.p.h. At these speeds sharing with pedestrians is neither desirable nor safe. However, because some road width has been used to provide a slightly widened pavement (cycle/footpath) at places where central reservations have been installed the cyclist is squeezed towards the kerb. This is also true for low powered motor scooters and motor bikes. There are some good features on the cycle/footpath. Where it used to end in a give way at right angles to the road the cyclist is now taken straight off the shared use path onto a cycle lane sufficiently in advance of traffic lights to give some chance of getting into the right lane. It is in an effort to ensure that future improvements really are improvements that CCC have started a dialogue with those responsible for implementing the cycle provision on this road. It would be criminal to spend thousands on a provision which is unfit to use.
A House of Commons Transport Select Committee reporting in April of this year called on the Government to lead a debate on road pricing, saying that just building new roads will not solve transport problems or help reduce the emissions causing climate change.

Some of the conclusions are outlined below and include:

The Government cannot continue to pretend that investing in infrastructure alone, even at levels far above those currently seen, whilst allowing car use to rise unchecked, can reduce congestion.

It is clear that without a major shift in policy, congestion on the network will worsen over the next two decades along with the negative environmental and social consequences this will bring.

The findings of the studies must address the causes of congestion if they are not simply to perpetuate previous unsustainable trends.

The balance of evidence and the experience of the studies leads us to conclude that road user charging on the inter-urban road network is the most important way to stop congestion growing.

It is essential that the Government leads the debate on the benefits and difficulties of widespread road user charging.

If road-user charging is ever to be an acceptable proposition, alternatives to travel by car must be provided. This will require greater levels of funding and significant forward planning.

The committee went on to say “We are astonished that strategies that manifestly work against the UK's climate change commitments are being approved”.

In June Alistair Darling in an article in the Observer said.

"You can't build yourself out of the problem that we face. We have a choice in the next 25 to 30 years: either we build more and motorways - astronomically expensive, environmentally damaging, and I doubt if we could actually do it - or we take a radically different look at how we manage the system. That is where road pricing comes in. I am convinced that unless we look at this possibility, then future generations will not forgive us."

Yet still there appears to be no firm action to carry out any of the above, indeed since this Government first came into office in 1997:

- The real cost of car use has fallen and the cost of using public transport, buses and trains, has risen.
- The Government has offered little support to Local Authorities who wish to introduce con-
gestion charging.
• The fuel price escalator has been abandoned.
• In its 1998 white paper the Government stated that we cannot build our way out of congestion with new roads. Yet last December announced that thousands of millions of pounds would be spent widening roads.
• The Government now acknowledge that their targets set on coming into office, which included a quadrupling of cycle journeys by 2012 compared to 1997, are not going to be met.

Just as this article was being completed the Government announced a £7 Billion road widening program. Transport 2000, Friends of the Earth and the CTC all condemned the measure as simply postponing the inevitable. It was noticeable that there was no corresponding announcement relating to improving the public Transport or on improving an integrated transport system. Fine words are easy, grasping the nettle of the road lobby would appear to be more than this Government is prepared to tackle. So, we can look forward to more congestion and probably more irate drivers as we pass them on our bicycles on our way to or from work.

Cycling, faster and less expensive than a damaged Ferrari

This article was first sent as an email to members of the British Human Power Club and is reproduced here by kind permission of its author.

Graypaul is the Ferrari shop in Loughborough: here the gentle folks of the United Kingdom may come if they find they have disposable funds amounting to rather more than the price of my house, and they may buy a shiny red automobile capable of seating a remarkably small number of people for the horsepower available, and they may subsequently drive it at no more than seventy miles per hour notwithstanding its potential speed which, I gather, is rather more than double that permitted on the highways in this fair land.

I, unwilling or unable to spend monies on a Ferrari, was conveying myself and sundry items of shopping out of Loughborough yesterday morning on my rather less costly recumbent tricycle, and dawdling along the cycle lane happened to be going outwards against the flow of traffic coming into Loughborough, this inward flow being very slow, nose-to-tail, because the worthy citizens of this region all simultaneously choose to effect their weekly purchases of a Saturday morning.
Amongst these motorists were two salesmen from Graypaul in a Ferrari. Recumbent tricycles, even such crude and hideous vehicles as are built by mine own fair but barely competent hand, are exceedingly interesting to look at, and so it proved. Both the salesmen inside the Ferrari turned to stare as I pedalled gently by.

Presently, as Shakespeare had it, or immediately as I would say, there was the most enormously loud bang for a collision of not much more than about five miles an hour, and I marched to glance in my mirror to see shards of the front end of a Ferrari and shards of the back end of some other vehicle fly through the air. Abruptly all the traffic stopped and motorists clambered out amid clouds of dust, and there was much furious tyre-smoke as, puzzlingly, the Ferrari driver whacked his exquisite - well, formerly exquisite - machine into reverse gear as if to back pedal through time and thus undo the crash.

Naturally I stopped for a moment to survey what must have been oh, many thousands of pounds worth of damage, and then full of remorse as the List can well imagine, I pedalled hastily home so as not to incur any share of the blame.

One learns, perhaps, that a recumbent tricycle can on occasion execute a journey in less time than can a Ferrari.

Richard Middleton

Ministerial changes

In the June Government reshuffle, John Spellar has been replaced as the minister responsible for cycling by Kim Howells, MP for Pontypridd. Alistair Darling remains in overall charge of transport and David Jamieson retains responsibility for road safety. New junior minister Tony

Poor Road Surfaces could Deter Cycling

A report from the House of Commons Select Committee recognises that road maintenance often poses particular problems for cyclists and suggests that this could be a deterrent to increasing cycle use. Expansion of ‘Cycle Friendly Infrastructure’ to contain a review of maintenance procedures and techniques is suggested.

Full report, Local roads and pathways:: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmtran.htm#reports

Help Wanted

The editor of this esteemed journal is looking for a little help. If you can write in an interesting and informative way on cycling issues please contact the editor or secretary of the Cheltenham Cycle Campaign.

The amount of time involved is not high as our current production is four issues per year.
Cycling motorists ten years on

In 2002 the AA repeated its 1992 & 1993 survey of ‘Cycling Motorists’ - drivers who forgo their car for the bike for specific utility trips. Both surveys, based on a sample of 1000, indicated that about a third of drivers cycle. Of those motorists who have (ever) used their bike in the last two years, 34% cycled to leisure activities, 14% for shopping trips (25% in 1992/3); 9% for commuting (17% in 1992/3). 43% of the motorists surveyed said they were not likely to start cycling again and this was found to include relatively large proportions of men and older cyclists. In 2002/3 many more motorists, though, said that they would be encouraged to start cycling or to cycle more if they wanted to get fit.

From CTC Cycle Digest.

Successful Bike Week

1,220 events were registered throughout the UK during Bike Week 2003, more than 20% above the target set by its organisers. 66 of the registered organisers – or around 10% of the total – were CCN groups, following local authorities (168) and cycle retail and hire organisations (68). It is estimated that more than 116,000 people took part in the events. Discussions continue over the future of Bike Week, with mixed messages from the Department for Transport as to whether it will continue to grant funding. The National Cycling Strategy Board, however, sees the event as the keystone of nationwide cycling promotion. The provisional dates for 2004 are 12th to 20th June.

www.bikeweek.org.uk

Feedback

At present, for the whole of the Honeybourne track, apart from the tarmaced part, it is a travesty for Cheltenham BC to call it a cycle track. On a road bike it is at best uncomfortable, and in places downright dangerous. The northern end, from the stadium to Wymans brook, is impassable when wet. CBC had plans to improve things, what is the status of those? Item on back page re. double yellow lines. The lines near me, outside the shops on Windyridge Road, Wymans Brook, are routinely ignored, and I have never seen a traffic warden or policeman taking action there. As well as creating a hazard for cyclists, there has already been one fatal accident there (a motorist), and it’s waiting to happen again.

Mike Collard

The state of the Honebourne cycle track has been raised with council officers and we are told that the current hold-up to improving the surface along its length is that they are waiting for quotes to install (vandal proof) lighting, before resurfacing the track. We are told the money for the improvement has been set aside. As for yellow lines this has been brought up with the relevant authorities, with the usual excuses given, lack of man-power. We will not let this drop. Ed.
Pothole spotters wanted

The Council Officers would like your help in reporting potholes in the road. As they are unable to get around all the roads on a regular basis they rely on the public reporting faults in the road. The details required are the name of the road and the exact location of the fault, if you can relate it to a nearby house number this narrows down the area. You should also indicate the nature of the fault, pothole, collapsed drain, broken manhole cover etc. You should send your report to Stephen Burden, Network Maintenance Manager, Central Depot, Swindon Road, Cheltenham, GL51 9JZ. Telephone 01242 774 545 or email: Streetcare@cheltenham.gov.uk If the fault is not in Cheltenham Borough then go to http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/adobe_acrobat/Agents%20Areas.pdf to find out where you should report the fault.

Web sites worth a look

http://www.slower-speeds.surf3.net/index.htm Campaigning site for lower speeds on some of our roads.
http://www.carbusters.ecn.cz/ Site which gives views of an alternative way of life, i.e. without a car.
http://www.ukcycling.net an independent, community-run site for cycling news and information
http://www.bikereader.com/BikeReader/BikeReader.html Worth a visit for the dictionary of cycling.
www.cyclecheltenham.org.uk We are back on-line.

Dates for Your Diary

Saturday 23rd to Monday 25th August (Bank Holiday Weekend) Mildenhall Cycling Rally
Monday 22nd September European Car Free Day.
Wednesday 5th November 7.30 p.m. Cycle Campaign Annual General Meeting (Provisional, please confirm with the Secretary).
Further info: velocity2003@marie-paris.fr

Cheltenham Cycle Campaign meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month (except August). They are held at the University of Gloucestershire, Francis Close Hall campus, St Paul’s Road. starting promptly at 19.30Hrs. Usually in room TC 108.

Provisional dates for Bike Week 2004 are 12th-20th June.

Cheltenham Cycles

OPEN : TUESDAY- SATURDAY 9am-6pm
61, Winchcombe Street, Cheltenham, GL52 2NE
TEL: 01242 255414
High Speeds = Bad Driving

The on-going debate about speeding & speed cameras continues. This article was written, but not published, as a response to an article "Bad driving, not speed, is the culprit" in "The Engineer" magazine.

The argument about whether or not inappropriate speed is the cause of an accident in the first place misses the point: the overwhelming issue is that if a speeding motorist is involved in any accident, the consequences of that accident are much more serious than if he/she had not been not speeding.

For example, whilst a pedestrian being hit by a car travelling at 20 m.p.h. is reckoned to have about 95% chance of survival, with the car travelling at 40 m.p.h. the chance of survival plummets to about 5%. So although the reduction in accident rate related to slower driving speeds may not be as great as one might expect, the death and injury a road accident leaves in it's wake is hugely reduced.

Much health and safety legislation is based on the principles of a simple risk assessment. For example, hazardous liquids are stored within a bund wall so as to contain any spill if it happens. This does not reduce the chance of a spill happening, but is does minimise the knock on effects. We could all cite similar examples to add to this. Driving is no different—if you cannot eliminate all risk then at least reduce the consequences as far as possible.

Remember too that driver attitude has a huge effect on actual driving ability, and although good driver training can do much to prevent accidents, some people are so naive or selfish they seem to believe that if they never cause an accident it’s OK. "It’s not my fault that the child stepped out from behind a parked car, etc".

If and when any accident happens, slower collision speeds will do much to lessen the severity of the impact. So whilst one can perhaps forgive the initial driving error that caused the accident, the unforgivable thing is to be driving excessively fast to start with, and that’s about attitude more than anything else.

Local Issues

Cycle Map.
A new revised cycle map of Cheltenham is now nearing completion. Funding for the map has been sought and we are hopeful that it will be available soon. This map will be noticeably different the previous map in that it will make use of colour, where all previous editions have been in black and white.

Cycle Routes to GCHQ

The council proposals for cycle routes to GCHQ Benhall have been scrutinised by members of CCC committee. There are a number of areas where it was felt that the proposals could be improved and our views have been made known. In many cases it is a matter of improving access for cyclists to existing quiet roads, putting in light controlled crossings where required and spreading the load rather than forcing cyclists down a single route, which could cause conflict with pedestrians or motor vehicles.
Join Cheltenham Cycle Campaign

You can make a difference by joining Cheltenham Cycle Campaign. We aim to improve conditions for cyclists, and to make the Cycle Campaign a more effective organisation. The more supporters we have the better. Individuals and families can join and local organisations are welcome to affiliate as associate members.

Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________
Post Code:_______________
email:_______________
Telephone No. ______________________
Annual Membership £3 Individual  £5 Family
£10 Associate
I enclose £       for Individual/Family/Associate* membership and a donation of £
Please send cheques to our Treasurer:Mr A Halls, 14 Durham Close, Warden Hill, Cheltenham, GL51 5DF
I hereby give permission to the Cheltenham Cycle Campaign to hold the above details in its records.
signed__________________________                  Date_______________
* Delete as appropriate

Publications

Volume 9, Number 1, 2003 of "World Transport Policy & Practice", a quarterly journal edited by Professor John Whitelegg, is available free of charge as an Adobe Acrobat PDF file at http://www.eco-logica.co.uk/WTPPhome.html

(Transport Statistics)