

Cycle Bedford

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Issue 85
October 2019

The Voice of Cycling Campaign for North Bedfordshire



Bedford's DryCycle Electric Bike

CYCLING CAMPAIGN FOR NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE

Founded 1992

Committee

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Other members	Colin Last vacant
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@cyclebedford



cycle_bedford

Campaigning Representation

CCNB is represented on the following committees:

- Bedford Cycle Strategy Group (disbanded July 2018)
- Bedford Stations Travel Plan Steering Group
- Bedford Hospital Bicycle Users Group

and is a key stakeholder on the preparation and implementation of the:

- Bedford Green Wheel
- Local Transport Plan (LTP3)

It is affiliated to  (<http://www.cyclenation.org.uk>)

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Editorial

Two of the major crises of our time are Climate Breakdown and Toxic Air Pollution. Are they connected? Yes, in terms of our use of transport.

The latest government statistics (2017) for Bedford Borough, updated from those given in our last newsletter, now show (page 10) that 41% of all carbon dioxide emissions, the main greenhouse gas responsible for the increase in the temperature of the planet, are from the exhaust of petrol engine motor vehicles.

The level in the Borough attributed to transport has increased by 18% between 2011 and 2017 to give a value of 315.5 kt CO₂ per annum.

Although nitrogen dioxide emissions from diesel engine motor vehicles have been decreasing in the town centre area over the last few years they are still high during the working day when vulnerable people are out and about. This together with fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) from vehicle exhausts as well as from tyres and brakes have a significant effect on peoples' health.

It is therefore for both climate breakdown and health reasons that there is a need to encourage more and more people to use sustainable transport; buses, cycles and feet.

For cycling it is the responsibility of local authorities, such as the Borough, to continue to expand and improve the quality of the urban cycle network.

All schools, colleges, businesses (public and private) should action their green travel plans and encourage their employees and visitors to use sustainable transport.

We are disappointed in the continued delay in Highways England's provision of a safe cycle crossing of the A421/A6 junction in spite of the growing Wixams population (page 12). We are also disappointed with the Borough in providing a safe pedestrian/cycle crossing of Barkers Lane as part of the Goldington Green scheme (page 15).

In this issue we take a look at Bedford's own dry electric bike (page 5), cycle thefts (page 24), the town centre consultation (page 6) and on a lighter note a recent exhibition on what to do with discarded Mobikes (page 16) and how cycling helped Edward Elgar, the composer (page 35).

STOP PRESS

CCNB is extremely disappointed that the Borough's just published plans for the High Street, to be put in place next year, have not considered the needs of cyclists to travel safely to and through the town centre area. This is contrary to what has been promised over the last ten years when changes were made to this street.

Cover Picture - DryCycle

The Cover picture shows a DryCycle which was exhibited at this year's UK Cycle Show held at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham on 13-15 September 2019.

DryCycle is an eco-friendly four wheeled electric bike with a pedal assisted motor. With the look of a car, it keeps you dry and sheltered from all weathers, and allows you to ride in comfort and style on both roads and cycle paths, a great source of exercise and fun.

DryCycle is the brainchild of Andy Murphy, the owner and director of DryCycle Ltd which was founded in March 2019.

Andy is a member of the family who own the Dunster House Group in Caxton Road Bedford and the new company has been set up on their site.

Your Editor visited the facility in late September and was given the opportunity to test ride a DryCycle around the car park. The seat, pedal configuration and steering are similar to a recumbent bike, a type of bike I have never ridden, so it took a little time to get used to.

The DryCycle offers a healthy alternative to the use of an electric car and for those e-bike cyclists who would like a dryer ride.



*Prototype
DryCycle
with no
cover under
test*

Like the Henry Ford quote “Any customer can have a car painted any colour that he wants so long as it is black” the DryCycle is available in any colour a customer wants so long as it is **Yellow**.

For more information and its full specification see:

<https://www.drycycle.co.uk>

Town Centre Plan Consultation

Bedford Borough Council is writing a new Town Centre Plan and during September 2019 asked people for their views on the future of the town.

With the continued rise in on-line shopping and the internet, town centres up and down the UK are suffering and are having to change to continue to exist. Bedford is unique in its high level of independent shops and its 'Jewel in the Crown' the adjacent riverside.

What do people currently use the town centre for, how often do they visit and what might attract them to visit more.

Based on the responses received A draft plan will be published early next year for further consultation.

In the meantime it has been reported that a makeover of the High Street and St Paul's area, as part of the Transporting Bedford 2020 project, is due to start after the biennial River Festival in July 2020.

A leaflet on what is planned will be published in late October 2019 and distributed to all residents.



Current congestion/pollution in the High Street with cars, light vans, HGVs including car transporters

In mid September the government announced that Bedford had been selected as one of 69 town, cities and districts that would benefit from the government's £95m regeneration fund to upgrade England's historic shopping centres with an allocation of £2m.

CCNB Response

CCNB believes that one of the main reasons for residents and visitors not visiting the town centre, or not visiting more often, is due to the poor environment experienced along many of the shopping streets due to the sheer volume of traffic (cars, light vans, HGVs and also car transporters) causing severe congestion, safety problems and air and noise pollution.

Toxic air pollution due to nitrogen dioxide emissions from diesel engine vehicles and small particulate materials from all motor vehicles are known to be responsible for a whole range of health concerns many of which can lead to premature death. Under some weather conditions the poor air particularly along the High Street and St Paul's Square can be actually smelt.

The pollution, including carbon dioxide from petrol engine vehicles, is also contributing to the worsening climate crisis.

To create a distinctive, attractive, environmentally friendly and economically viable town centre for the future CCNB has proposed that the following points should be considered to improve the safety and health of everybody:

- (1) All through traffic and as much local traffic as possible should be stopped accessing the High Street, St Paul's Square, Horne Lane, River Street, Greyfriars and Midland Road (west).
- (2) The whole of the town centre area including the Embankment should be made a 20mph speed zone coupled with the installation of average speed cameras to ensure motorists who require access keep to the limit.
- (3) Residents should be encouraged to use more sustainable modes of transport to visit the town centre; cycling, walking and public transport.
 - (a) The town already has a reasonable public transport network of regular services within the urban area including the evenings and on Sundays with a lesser six day service to many rural villages. The use of buses should be given more publicity.
 - (b) To encourage more cycling, connectivity has to be improved, particularly within, to and through the town centre to make it safer for more people to choose this healthy and environmentally friendly mode of transport.
 - (i) Two main schemes outstanding for a number of years are to create a two way cycle route along the High Street and the completion of the northern mainly off-road east-west route via Lime Street - St Loyes - Bromham Road (off-road) - Brace St - Greyfriars - Alexandra Place).
 - (ii) Greyfriars and Midland Road (West) should both be made more cycle friendly with two way cycle lanes.

Background

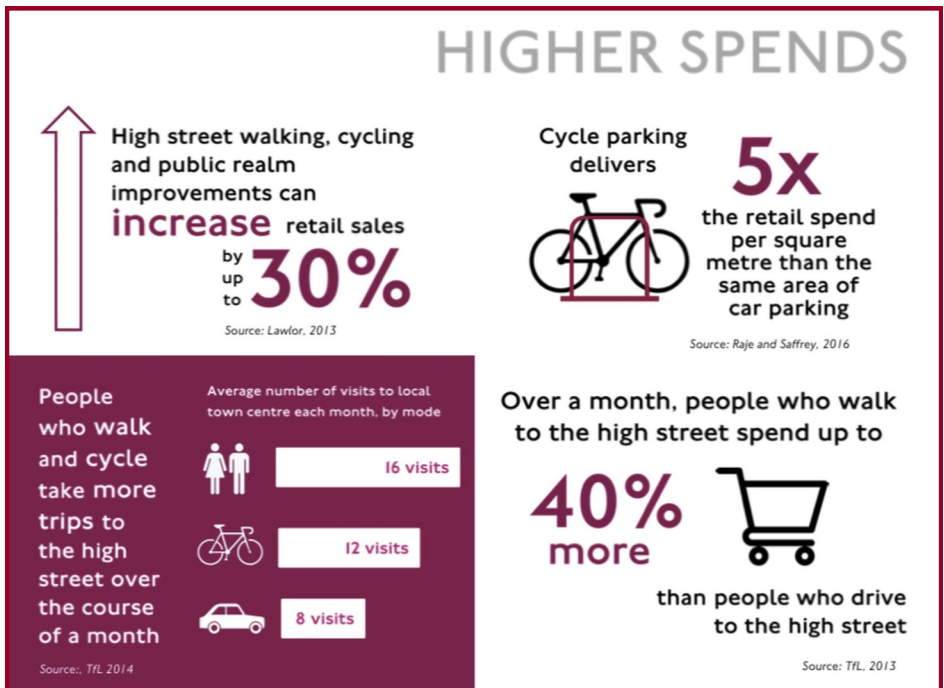
The proposals put forward by CCNB are not unique and have been recommended by a number of consultants and borough documents over many years.

The increasing number of vehicles on the roads in the central area has been known for some time by campaigners and others to be a negative factor in improving the town's attractiveness and economic viability and this has been confirmed in two recent consultant's reports for the Local Plan 2030.

The **Retail Report** confirms the poor shopping environment in the High Street, Greyfriars and Midland Road (west) due to the dominance of high levels of vehicular traffic which results in congestion and high levels of air and noise pollution as well as poor connectivity to the railway station.

The **Town Centre Report** also confirms that vehicles have to be removed or reduced to make the town centre an attractive/pleasant shopping experience, particularly in the High Street, St Paul's Square and Greyfriars areas.

The comments are also emphasised by the **Bedford Benchmarking - Sustainable Transport Report** which reiterates the fact that sustainable transport in Bedford is lower than in other comparable towns.



Bromham Road Bridge Update

As mentioned in CCNB's last newsletter a crane (now two) is scheduled to be installed in Bedford railway station's main car park for nine weeks from Monday 21 October to Sunday 22 December 2019 to allow Network Rail contractors to demolish and rebuild the Bromham Road railway bridge to allow electrification of the Midland Mainline between Bedford and Corby.

The operation will mean that nearly 300 car parking spaces will not be available during this period.

CCNB has advised via social media those motorists who only drive a short distance to the railway station, and are able to, to use a bicycle. The station still has more than 150 cycle parking spaces available to use each day.

The planning application submitted by Network Rail to the Borough's planning group for permission to demolish and rebuild the bridge (19/00370/FUL) was given approval by six votes to two with very little discussion by the planning committee at their 26 July 2019 meeting.

Your editor gave a five minutes presentation under the 'right to speak' procedure.

In the meantime the Department for Transport has still not given a decision on the Transport and Works Order. Until this is given the Inspector's report on the outcome of the February 2019 public inquiry of which CCNB was the main objector is unavailable.

Details of the design for the separate cycle bridge to be built alongside the reconstructed bridge are not expected before the end of the year.



Temporary bridge - stepped access in Spencer Road for able pedestrians



Temporary bridge - non-stepped access in Spencer Road for dismounted cyclists

Climate Emergency

Actions to reduce the effects of Climate Change have now become the top concern of everyone from Government to Local Authorities and individuals.

Last year's (October 2018) United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report stated that average global temperature increases should not exceed a maximum of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of this century. They gave dire warnings that the world had just 12 years (now 11 years) left) to avoid a climate change catastrophe. At the present time global greenhouse gas levels are still rising and current projections are an average increase of at least 3°C.

Bedford Borough Council has made significant reductions in emissions over the last few years and is to be congratulated but unfortunately this has **NOT** included transport.

The latest 2017 government statistics (June 2019) for the borough show that over the period from 2005 to 2017 carbon dioxide emissions from the Industry and Commercial Sectors have reduced by **70.9%** and from Domestic Sector by **46.2%**. However Transport has increased by **8.8%**, **17.6% since 2011**.

In 2005 transport represented **29%** of the total emissions but by 2017 this had increased to **41%**.

To reduce this level there has to be a significant change to sustainable transport; cycling, walking and public transport not only for climate change but also the health of residents (see Town Centre Plan page 6).

Toxic emissions (nitrogen dioxide) and particulate matter from transport are claimed to be responsible for many health problems leading to between 70-100 premature deaths every year in the borough.

Borough's Climate Emergency

Bedford Borough Council's Executive in March 2019 declared a 'Climate Emergency' committing them to a six month project to identify actions to become carbon neutral by 2030.

One of the first actions of the re-elected Mayor, Dave Hodgson, was the announcement to create a Climate Change Committee consisting of members of the Executive and representatives from each of the political groups as non-executive members.

The first meeting was held on 30 September 2019. After discussion on the draft Terms of Reference - *To reduce its own carbon emissions by implementing projects and policies and encourage the residents of the Borough to reduce their carbon emissions so Bedford Borough is seen as the place to grow and has a good quality local Environment* - it was agreed to think about minor rewording to enable sustainable growth

and local air quality issues to be considered although the primary aim should remain on issues which affect global climate change.

Although transport in the Borough was responsible for 41% of all emissions, no projects were put forward to encourage staff to use sustainable transport to help reduce this high (and increasing) level .

It was also noted that it was necessary for the Council first to set an example and then to use its influence to reduce emissions by other public sector bodies, businesses and residents within the Borough.

Background

The Borough's Climate Emergency project is the latest in a whole series of plans to improve the environment. It first started in 1990 with the formation of an Environmental Development Team to promote environmental issues and develop environmental policy. An Environmental Strategy and Action Plan which included cycling was launched in 1992.

Following on from the recommendations of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit a roundtable of representatives of all groups interested in the environment was formed in 1994 called **Local Agenda 21**. A comprehensive action plan was put together and regular meetings held with stakeholders, including CCNB, until the early 2000s.

The Council was one of the early signatories of the **Nottingham Declaration** launched in October 2000 committing them to work towards reducing emissions.

All local authorities had to have a Development Framework to replace their local plan and one of the documents produced was **The Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan** adopted in 2008. This contained Policy CP26 - Climate Change and Pollution. As a result of the government's 2008 Climate Change Act a **Climate Change Strategy** 2010/12 was put in place. This has been refreshed recently to include the year 2015/16.

Under the first priority one of the objectives was to tackle transport emissions and this included improving and promoting a safe and convenient walking, cycling and public transport network

One outcome was the **Green Office Guide** and commitment to the Governments **Cycle to Work Guarantee** and **Cycle to Work Scheme**.

In 2013 there was **Climate Local Bedford** following the Council's signing of the Climate Local Commitment. Cycling was included in two of the commitments.

The first was 'to promote greener travel behaviours and encourage use of more sustainable modes of transport within the Council and wider community with the justification to support multiple corporate objectives to support our local economy, reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, reduce congestion, improve health and road safety'.

A421/A6 Junction Update

Background

In August 2013 the government announced that they would allocate funds to ‘Cycle Proof’ the strategic road network and in January 2015 £100 million was awarded to Highways England (HE) to cycle proof 200 schemes.

In HE’s Delivery Plan 2015-2020 published in March 2015, the A421/A6 junction was listed as one of the 40 schemes to be delivered in the first year 2015-2016. Plans for the schemes were approved by both Bedford Borough Council and CCNB in December 2015.

In February 2017 construction was stopped by HE’s Value for Money team as not meeting budget benefits. HE said in April 2017 they would reinstate the project following a further value for money review.

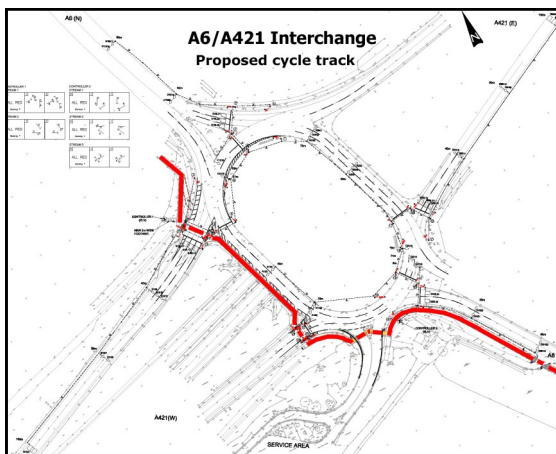
Update

At the Borough Council’s Environmental and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 12 September 2019 a members’ briefing note on the current proposals was discussed by the Chief Officer for Transport. The briefing note can be downloaded from:

<http://www.councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s46712/Item%2009%20-%20Briefing%20Note%20A6-A421%20Roundabout%20v6%2020190903.pdf>

The Borough had a meeting with HE on 20 August 2019 at which the only commitment made was that a further feasibility study would be carried in the 2020/2021 financial year.

As HE’s first five year plan finishes next year it will be subject to a further bidding process.



The absence of a safe crossing of the junction in the meantime has stopped residents of the new Wixams development from using a bicycle to access Bedford town centre and other facilities.

Scheme as originally approved in 2015

Bell Farm Cycle Track Open

The next section of the future new route of National Cycle Network Route 51 between Kempston and Marston Moretaine has recently opened as part of the Bell Farm development of warehouses alongside the western bypass on the other side of the A421 to the earlier Marsh Leys site.

The route for the last two years has terminated at an underpass of the western bypass just off Wilkinson Road. The three metre wide path now continues through the site and continues for a further 250 metres until it ends at a junction with the track through Wiles Wood.

External improvements to the existing network as part of a Section 106 agreement still have to be completed; a dual use path along the west side of Woburn Road from the roundabout to Postley Road via the Police HQ with a link around the north and west side of the roundabout into Wolseley Road industrial estate.



*Bedford Link Logistics Park - Link to Wiles Wood (above)
Views (below) from Western Bypass Underpass and link in Wiles Wood*



Martell Drive Crossover Completed

At the top of the rise from the Cemetery Road toucan the three metre wide path on the west side of Martell Drive changes over to the east side on its way to Ridge Road. The crossover links on both sides at right angles to the paths were originally only one metre wide when constructed some three-four years ago.



CCNB asked if they could be widened to three metres. Markings were chalked onto the links within weeks but it was only some three years later in September 2019 that the final widening and top surfacing of Martell Drive has taken place.

Britannia Bridge Step Removed

A step on the north side of Britannia Bridge where it joins the riverside path has caused problems with small wheeled wheelchairs and mobility scooters when approached from the north side.

At the request of CCNB a strip of tarmac has been placed across the step by the Borough to give a level surface.



Step - before



After

Goldington Green Improvements!

A pair of mini-roundabouts were installed during September 2019 at the junctions of Goldington Road with Goldington Green and Barkers Lane to ease traffic congestion.

As part of the work a new island was installed to help pedestrians cross Goldington Green. Disappointingly no improvements were made on the ground as promised several years ago and requested by CCNB to improve pedestrian and cyclists safety to cross Barkers Lane on the off-road Goldington Road cycle route, a busy crossing for Goldington Green school pupils and parents although a borough press release did say that this crossing and one across Sandy Road would be made safer.



Barkers Lane/Goldington Road junction

A hazardous crossing for all vulnerable users

A mobility scooter and a pedestrian with a pushchair users finally able to cross after waiting for sometime for a clear road

Designing in Turbulent Times

In early October 2019 your editor paid a visit to the Lethaby Gallery at Central St Martins in Granary Square, Kings Cross, London where an exhibition called 'Designing in Turbulent Times' was being held.

The Lethaby Gallery is dedicated to the creative talents of students, staff and alumni of Central Saint Martins. From fashion and art to design and performance, it publicly celebrates the College's past and present while enthusing/stimulating/inspiring and provoking about our collective futures.

Of particular interest was the section on 'Designing with Abundance' where one of the MA Industrial Design graduates, Qiang Huang, had completed various pieces of furniture using discarded bicycle parts, which she had collected from the London warehouse of Mobike.

She said that in China, over 20 million public sharing scheme bikes have been produced, with many ending up discarded. As a result she had established an association called **Bike Scavengers** which encourages people to disassemble shared bikes and turn them into valuable products. New objects are created from semi-finished parts and reclaimed components. At the heart of the project is a critique of the environmental impact caused by the operation of bike-sharing schemes and their unregulated growth in China.



The collection includes a Bench of Saddles featuring a metal frame with rows of vertical fixings for attaching 36 discarded saddles. The interlocking saddles form a single seating surface with a repetitive pattern that the designer said "refers to the over-production of shared bikes".

Other items (above) include lamps made from salvaged mudguards, a stool featuring six saddles attached to a stem-like base, and a kitchen trolley created by fixing bike baskets to a simple frame with wheels.

Government Spending Plans

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sajid Javid, on 4 September 2019 outlined the government's spending plans for the coming year.

Cyclists were again disappointed to hear no mention of funds for cycling or walking to enable local authorities to provide the infrastructure required to meet government targets in its Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS). This was in spite of more than 11,000 people (including CCNB) writing to their MP urging them to ask the government for more money.

Cycling UK Chief Executive Paul Tuohy said, *"We're facing a climate crisis, an air pollution crisis, a congestion crisis and an inactivity-related health crisis. Getting more people out of cars, particularly for short journeys, is part of the solution to all of these crises, but this won't happen by magic and by simply setting targets to increase active travel, when what's required is a major increase in investment."*

In September 2019 the government did announce a £20 million investment to upgrade 22 routes for the National Cycle Network including new routes, better surfacing and improved links to other transport modes.

The nearest route to Bedford will be a new traffic-free path alongside the HS2 in Buckinghamshire.

In October the government also announced a further £13 million for cycling this time additional funding for bikeability, the cycle training programme for children, to celebrate more than 3 million having being taught bike safety skills and to allow it to continue in the 2010/2021 financial year.

Both funds are part of the government's long-term ambition for cycling and walking to become the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of longer journeys. It has been claimed that almost £2 billion will have been invested in active travel between 2016 to 2017 and 2020 to 2021 and is a three-fold increase in investment per head since 2010.

Unfortunately very little of this investment has found its way to Bedford Borough.

It is difficult to see how the government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) target to double cycling and walking by 2025 can be met, particularly as cycling in Bedford over the last year has seen a decrease for the first time in 13 years.

Quote

"You always know when you're going to arrive. If you go by car, you don't. Apart from anything else, I prefer cycling. It puts you in a good mood, I find." — Alan Bennett, *British playwright*

Milton Keynes Bike Sharing Schemes

Milton Keynes currently has two bike sharing schemes - Santander Cycles and Lime Green e-bikes.

Santander Cycles, in Milton Keynes since June 2016, are now operated by nextbike UK Ltd which is part of the German company nextbike GmbH, the world's most extensive bike sharing provider with more than 200 cities across 26 countries in four continents.

The current bikes have been made to a new design by Pashley.



Lime Green e-bikes were introduced in November 2018 (see Newsletter No 84 - July 2019).

Earlier this year the bike sharing scheme operated by Ofo was dissolved due to vandalism and rising costs. A number of the bikes have been for sale on Milton Keynes market priced at £60 although on eBay they are still selling at up to £120. Several Ofo bikes with new owners have been seen in Bedford.



Creative Urban Living Festival

From late September to mid October 2019 Milton Keynes held its first ever Creative Urban Living Festival in Midsummer Boulevard. The theme was 'Built, Unbuilt and Unbuildable' and was housed in a temporary 'fun' campus of buildings.

The festival was programmed and curated by the experimental architectural practice 'raumlaborberlin'.

raumlaborberlin believed that MK was the perfect bike city with the Redway network allowing you to travel anywhere by bike or foot without having contact with cars.

The Redways have a lot of potential for greater use.



One of the main sections of the festival was the 'Bike School' as a celebration of all things bike with a specially designed bike ramp, dedicated bike repair and maintenance team and an energetic, cycle themed programme.

This consisted of free guided cycle tours around the Redways, electric bike sessions, balance bike lessons, bicycle lessons and BMX workshops. Also included in the festival was an e-bike powered cinema.

Government Cycling Statistics 2017/2018

The latest cycling statistics were published by the Department for Transport on 30 August 2019 covering the period 2017/2018 until mid November 2018.

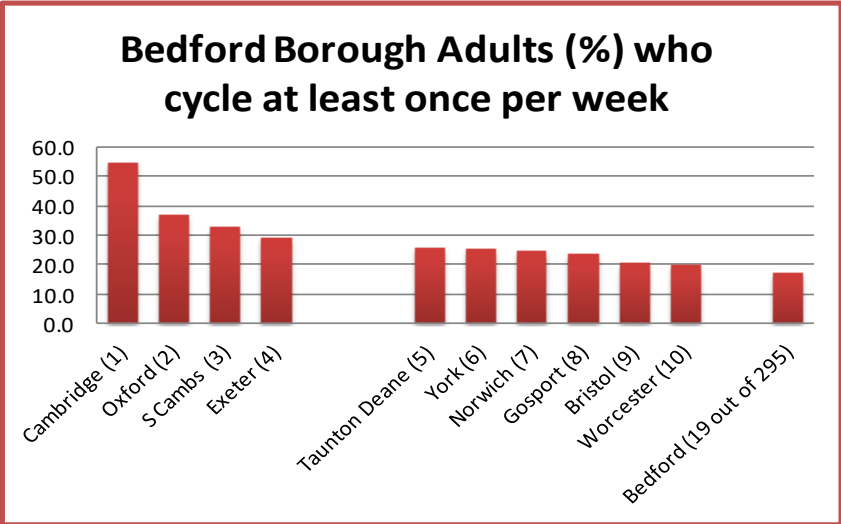
The figures are derived from an Active Lives Survey (ALS), an annual household survey administered by Sport England which replaced the Active Peoples Survey (APS) in 2015/2016.

The results for Bedford Borough residents over 16 years old showed:

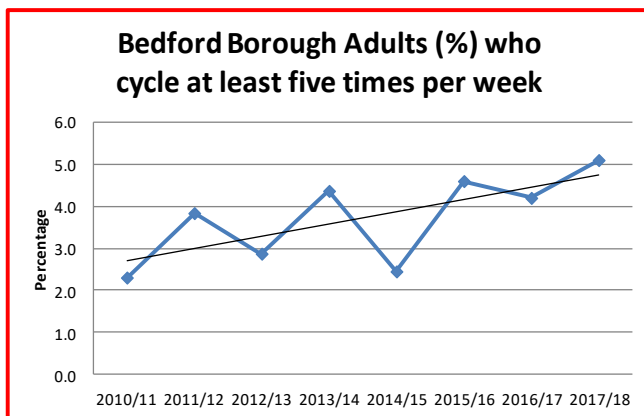
- 19.8% cycle at least once per month
- 11.7% cycle at least once per week
- 7.1% cycle at least 3 days per week
- 5.1% cycle at least 5 days per week

This is an average increase of 37% since 2010/2011 or 5.3% per year. Over the four levels Bedford Borough is ranked on average in the top 19% out of 295 local authorities excluding London Boroughs and the Isles of Scilly.

The figure below for the percentage of adults who cycle at least five times per week show Bedford at 21th out of 295 local authorities with only Cambridge and Oxford being significantly higher at the 95% confidence limit.



CCNB cycle counts in Bedford town centre over the last 18 months have seen a 6 to 10% drop. It will be interesting to see if next year's government figures for 2018/2019 also show a fall. Is this due to the PSPO ban or the downturn in High Street shopping?



Bedford Station Counts

CCNB cycle counts at Bedford railway station for the 2019 summer period gave a **3% decrease** over 2018, the first seen since CCNB counts started in 2006.

What is the reason for this downturn?

Is it due to the high thefts at the station over the last year? (see page 30).

Over the last 13 years there has been a 83% increase representing an average of 6.4% per year. This is still slightly higher than the increase given by the latest DfT figures shown above.

Bedford Station Cycle Stands

To gain access for the construction of a new gantry at the station, 64 'Sheffield' type cycle spaces in two areas were removed in mid July 2019.

In mid September 54 were replaced as two-tier stands in one of the areas. A further 28 places will be restored by the end of October to give a total of 630, an increase of 18 places.



French Cycle Bridge - Robert Goodacre

During a cruise along the Rhône and Soane rivers recently we visited the towns of Tournon-sur-Rhône (west bank) and Tain l'Hermitage (east), riverside communities situated on opposite sides of the Rhône river.

The towns are linked across the river by two bridges, one a road bridge and the other providing access for pedestrians and cyclists. The latter is called the Passerelle Marc-Seguín bridge, honouring the structure's designer. The present-day footbridge was built in the mid-1960's and is an exact replica of an original bridge dating from 1825.



This was the first cable suspension bridge in Europe built in 1824 and stood as an example for later bridges that were built using the same construction, such as the Brooklyn Bridge (New York) and the Golden Gate Bridge (San Francisco). The original bridge was demolished in 1965 since it no longer complied with current safety and river navigation standards.

Being a cyclist, one item that caught my eye was the method that the authorities have used to ensure that cyclists dismount before cycling onto the bridge. I have never seen these items anywhere else, with a guide on the roadway for the bike's wheels and a decorative sign above to indicate that this entryway is for cyclists.



Novel method to ensure that cyclists dismount before cycling onto the bridge

Incidentally Tain l'Hermitage is a small town on the Rhône River. Today the town is best known by the wine area of the same name, Hermitage – AOC (Appellation d'origine contrôlée). Proving that one cannot have too much of a good thing, Tain l'Hermitage is also home to the internationally known chocolate maker, 'Valrhona', who alongside their factory have a chocolate academy and museum in the town.

Tain l'Hermitage is in the Drôme department just north of Valence and about an hour south of Lyon. It is on the N7 national road, and there is an exit for Tain l'Hermitage off the A7 *Autoroute* that runs between Lyon and Marseilles.

Cycle Thefts - Colin Last

We want to encourage more people to cycle but the risk that their bicycle may be stolen is shown to be an important factor in putting people off.

In recent years I have had a bicycle stolen from my garage, and also another (despite being locked) from Bedford town centre. Both were reported to the police but unfortunately neither was recovered.

I am not alone. Having spoken to a number of cyclists this is not an uncommon experience. This article examines the data relating to cycle theft, how prevalent is it?; and what we can do to prevent us becoming victims to this crime.

STATISTICS

Statistics on bicycle theft are recorded by the police. They are also available from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). This is a national survey conducted regularly in which people are interviewed and which aims to find out more particularly about unreported crime. All this data can be found on the Office of National Statistics website.

Last year in England and Wales there were 86,807 police recorded bicycle thefts, 7% down on the previous year. In the Bedfordshire Police Area this was 1,296, which in bucking the national trend is up 22%.

On a more local level, the number of bicycle thefts recorded by the police in the Bedford area are shown in the table below. This is in the year from May 2018 to April 2019.

Table 1: Bedfordshire Police Crime statistics

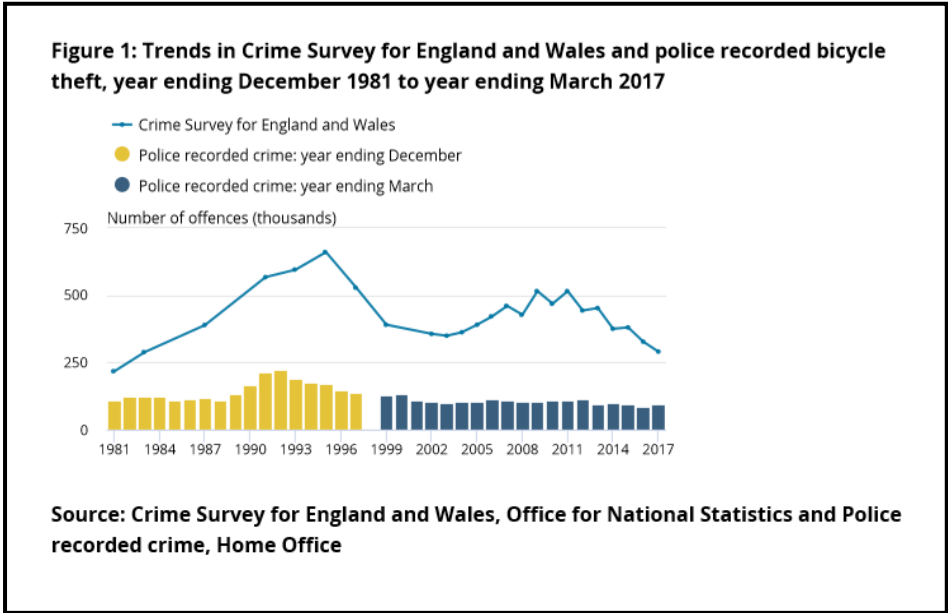
Ward	Thefts (May 18 - Apr 19)
Town Centre	148
Bedford Central East (Castle Road)	35
Bedford Central West (Midland Road)	42
Cauldwell	87
De Parys	53
Harpur	87
Newnham	87
Queens Park	11
Kempston	35
Putnoe	8
Goldington	19
Brickhill	11

Thefts are concentrated in certain areas, particularly in the Town Centre. The figures however should be treated with caution, as there is a high level of underreporting of bicycle thefts to the police. The CSEW data is a more accurate reflection of the true number of bicycle thefts. They show an estimated 317,000 bicycle thefts nationally in 2018; this is over 3 times the number recorded by the police.

There are a myriad of reasons why the figures are not totally accurate. For example the bicycle which was stolen from my garage was recorded as a burglary as it was part of a more serious crime and thus did not turn up on the police records as a bicycle theft.

Long-term trends

Although the figures may only be an estimate, the perceived wisdom is that the Crime Survey for England and Wales, which has collected information in a consistent manner since the survey first ran in 1981, is a reliable measure of long-term trends. See Figure 1 below



Notes: In the 1980s and early 1990s, CSEW bicycle theft rose (peaking at 660,000 incidents in the year to December 1995) before declining until around the early 2000s. This was followed by a general upward trend, between the year ending March 2003 and the year ending March 2011 with some year-on-year fluctuation. This follows a different trend to total CSEW crime, which since peaking in 1995 showed marked falls until the survey year ending March 2005. Since the year ending March 2012, the trend in bicycle theft has been on a general decline.

The long-term trend may be going down, but this is still a shocking number, and as I can testify the effects on the victim of the theft can be profound, even if you are insured. Many victims don't bother to replace their stolen bicycles or cycle less often. I have changed my behaviour – I have a cheap bike for when I go down the shops and for local journeys, and now a big lock which cost a quarter of the cost of the bike. My racing bike I **never** leave unattended. And my security at home is immensely improved too.

Further Analysis

The Crime Survey for England and Wales provides additional information about the circumstances surrounding incidents of bicycle theft.

Opportunity seems to be a major factor in where cycle theft is committed. Two thirds of thefts occur in or close to victim's homes, including outside areas and garages. The high rate of residential cycle theft can most likely be attributed to a lack of secure storage.

Other targeted locations are where bikes are concentrated such as at university campuses, schools and railway stations, again in areas where cycles are often not securely locked.

Around 70% of bicycle thefts took place during the week (equivalent to around 16% per weekday) and around 30% took place during the weekend (equivalent to around 12% per weekend day).

Although in the majority of cases bicycles weren't locked, in around 40% of bicycle thefts the bicycle was locked by a chain, cable, shackle, D lock or similar.

My bicycle which was stolen from the town centre was secured using a cable lock, but I hadn't appreciated how easy it is for thieves to cut with a pair of simple bolt cutters. The lock was a deterrent to the opportunist thief but not the well equipped professional.

REDUCING THE RISK OF THEFT

The reasons that thieves target bicycles are that cycles are widely available, often expensive, simple to sell, and we make it easy by not securing them adequately. So what can be done to reduce the risk of them being stolen?

Local authority / police actions:

There are things which the police, local council and businesses can do.

We would all like to see more police presence. Unfortunately the police are increasingly under-resourced and cycle theft is not seen as a priority compared for example with knife crime. The emphasis is very much on prevention. Bedfordshire Police regularly organise events where you can get your cycle marked and receive crime reduction advice.

It is important to have safe places to secure bicycles and improved provision of cycle stands is something which CCNB have been active in promoting. There are more than 500 cycle stand spaces in Bedford town centre, 602 at the railway station and more than 3,000 at other public/private locations on which to secure a bicycle.

CCTV cameras should act as a deterrent, and there is good coverage in some areas such as the town centre. Improved lighting in areas where bicycles are parked can help too.

Individual actions:

At the end of the day though it is up to us to secure our bicycles properly. Here are a few things we can do.

Ensure your cycle is easily identifiable. Make a note of model, frame number, colour and any accessories. Also photograph it and have the underside of the frame marked with a post code.

Bicycle registration – Register your bicycle and make it difficult for thieves to sell, and easy for police to identify as yours. There are a number of schemes where you can register your bicycle on a website but one recommended is immobilise.com

Securing your bike outside

When leaving a bicycle unattended it is always advised to lock it to a permanent structure or cycle stand in a well-used and properly lit area where it is visible to passing pedestrians.

Locks

Even a good lock will not necessarily stop the seasoned professional equipped with toughened bolt cutters or small angle grinders; but it will deter the opportunist thief.

Essentially, there are two types of security locks to choose from:

- (1) Flexible locks (cable, chain and armored locks)



Y2) Shackle locks ('D' or 'U' locks)



The pain is having to carry a lock around; they can often get in the way whilst cycling, so there has to be a compromise between security and portability. The large chain illustrated is very secure but it is very heavy and cumbersome to carry around. The smaller cable lock is light and portable, but is not as secure.

The compromise is probably a D-lock, it lies between the two in terms of security and carried on a bracket fixed to the frame.

Locks can be expensive, and we also have to weigh this up against the value of the bicycle. Is it worth the risk in getting a cheap ineffective lock?

Try and make it as difficult as possible for a would-be thief. Thread the lock through the frame, and at least one wheel if using one lock, and secure it to the cycle stand, railing or other immovable object. Ideally use two different types - a D-lock as well as a flexible one.

Remove and take with you quick release valuables such as lights, pumps and panniers.

Securing your bike at home

Remember the statistics about most bicycle thefts occurring at home, so don't be complacent and make sure you secure your bicycle. If you have space in your house keep your bikes locked inside. If you use a shed or

a garage, consider using a floor or wall-mounted anchor lock for extra security. A battery operated alarm for your shed is also a good idea to deter thieves. Buy a decent lock for your shed, one that can't just be unscrewed with a screwdriver.

Other measures to take

Get insured: Some household policies include bicycle insurance, but check the small print. Does it cover the bicycle away from home? Cycle-specific insurance does also exist.

What to do if your bike is stolen

If your bicycle is stolen then ring the police; dial 999 if the theft is still in progress. If it's already happened, dial 101 (non-emergency number) or visit your local police station. If your bike has been taken from a train or tube station, call the British Transport Police on 0800 405 040. Inform your insurance company, providing them with the same full details you've told the police.

Regularly check websites such as eBay and Gumtree to see if your bike is being sold online and share the fact your bike has been stolen on social media.

References:

Sidebottom, A. (2012). *Bicycle (bike) theft*. JDiBrief Series. London: UCL Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science. ISSN: 2050-4853.

Available from www.jdibrief.com

Office for National Statistics – www.ons.gov.uk

Bedfordshire Police Crime Map – www.police.uk/bedfordshire/57/crime

Further Reading

Comprehensive articles on bike security can be downloaded from:

Cycling UK

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/article/campaigns-guide/stop-bike-stolen>

Sustrans

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/what-you-can-do/get-cycling/your-bike/bike-security>

British Cycling

<https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/commuting/article/ww-Wise-Words---Cycle-Security-0>

and

Direct Line

<https://www.directline.com/home-cover/how-to-prevent-your-bike-from-being-stolen>

Bedford Station Bike Stands/Thefts

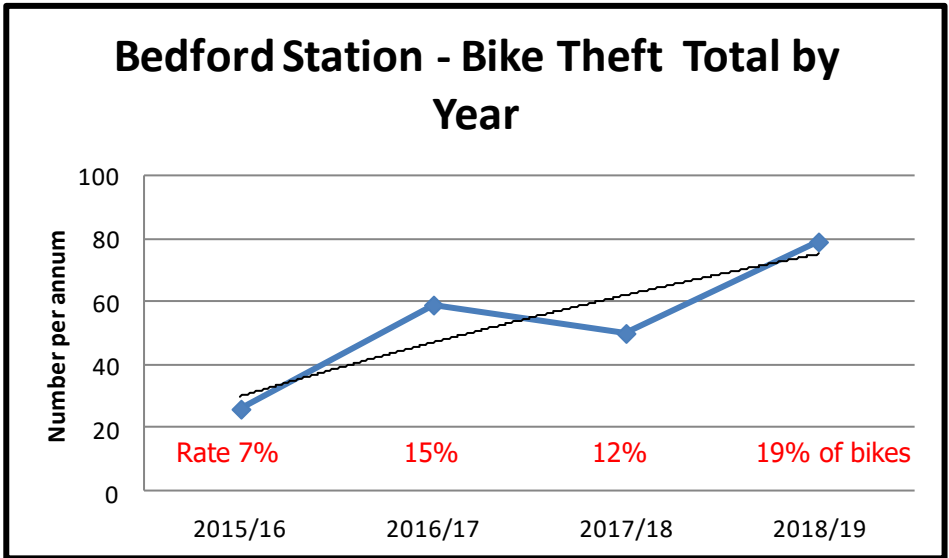
Cycle Stands

Bedford station has the 11th highest number of cycle stands out of 1027 stations on the UK rail network to enable commuters and others to leave their cycles while continuing on the train.

Cambridge	2850
St Albans City	1150
Oxford	1064
Cambridge North	1000
Chelmsford	960
Milton Keynes Central	900
Woking	752
Brighton	740
Paddington	682
York	626
Bedford Midland	588 (612 inc 24 in BBC CP)

Cycle Thefts

Thefts at Bedford station have increased significantly over the last three years even with virtually all the stands under CCTV surveillance.



Please take note of the recommendations made in the previous article. See also:

<http://www.ccnb.org.uk/securityb.shtml>

Planning Applications

CCNB for more than 10 years has looked at all planning applications submitted to the borough and has responded where necessary to those which contain, or should contain, cycling elements.

In the last two months responses have been made to the following major applications:

Land off Hookham Lane for 400 dwellings, a new primary school and sports facilities (19/01974/MAO)

A spine road through the site from Hookham Lane to Ravensden Road is planned to have a 3 metre cycle/pedestrian path on one side. The path does not link into the town's cycle network. CCNB has suggested that if the application is approved there should be an upgrade to the path to a wider dual use path on the west side of Hookham Lane to link to the cycle network at the Wentworth Drive/Norse Road roundabout.

Bromham Beauchamp Park (19/01904/MAO) for 390 dwellings off Stagsden Road Bromham.

The application proposes a cycle/pedestrian path along Barker Drive/Peacock Road to Northampton Road but CCNB has suggested that the zebra crossing across Northampton Road is converted to a cycle zebra (parallel zebra) crossing to allow cyclists to avoid having to dismount and walk their bikes across.

CCNB would also like to see the whole length of the cycle/pedestrian path along Grange Road from Northampton Road to the Village School to be built to a minimum width of 3 metre and where it crosses over Grange Road a cycle zebra installed rather than a standard zebra.

To give improved safety to novice and inexperienced cyclists and to encourage more residents to cycle CCNB has suggested that funds should also be given to allow Bedford Cycle Network Route No 4 to be made completely off-road along the north side of Stagsden Road as far as Bromham Road bridge and the bridge itself made one way only to allow the route to continue to the start of the off-road route to Bedford.

Manton Lane Reservoir Site (19/01860/MAF) for a B8 warehouse

The application proposes a 3.5 metre wide dual use cycle/pedestrian path from the existing cycle network at the Manton Lane/Brickhill Drive junction to the site entrance. A link will also be provided if approved from the Brickhill Drive allotments access to Murdock Road to improve pedestrian and cycle access from the east to avoid the hill.

Aspects (19/01624/MAF) to build 128 apartments

CCNB has suggested that the cycle routes mentioned should be provided with cycle zebras where they cross Barkers Lane, a road which will become even more difficult to cross, if the application is approved.

Cambridge Cycle/Pedestrian Bridge



Keep to the Left

Have you ever met a cyclist (or a pedestrian) on a dual use path, or even a segregated path, coming towards you who doesn't know which side to pass you and on occasions nearly causes an accident. Your Editor has.

On a recent visit to Scotland the following sign was seen on the side of a narrow road. Obviously for motorists it is also equally valid for cyclists on narrow tracks or paths.



Please cycle on the left on a dual use or segregated cycle path

Photographs on the left - If only a similar bridge for both pedestrians and cyclists could be constructed across the railway line in Bedford.

Personnel Changes

Government

Ministers responsible for transport and cycling appear to change with a blink of an eyelid.

On 23 May 2019, **Michael Ellis**, MP for Northampton North, became the new cycling minister after his predecessor, **Jesse Norman**, was hurriedly shuffled to the Treasury. He was previously Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Arts, Heritage and Tourism.

Ellis thanked Norman for moving cycling and walking up the political agenda and in his first speech reiterated Norman that walking and cycling MUST be the default way of getting around for short journeys.

With a new Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, elected in July 2019 changes were again made in the transport area with **Chris Heaton-Hughes**, MP for Daventry, replacing Michael Ellis and **Grant Shapps** replacing Chris Grayling as Minister of State for Transport.

Bedford Borough - Executive

In the May 2019 local elections, Dave Hodgson was returned as **The Mayor** for his fourth term of office.

Councillor Charles Royden continues as the **Portfolio Holder for Environment, Highways and Transport** (and **Deputy Mayor**).

Bedford Borough - Officers

The current organisation structure in the Council of officers responsible for activities involving cycling is as follows:

Chief Officer for Planning and Highways (COPH) - Jon Shortland

The COPH is responsible for fixed highway assets including the road, pavements and verges

Chief Officer for Transport (COT) - Chris Pettifer

The COT is responsible for issues relating to the movement of traffic including improvements to the highway to improve traffic flow.

Chief Officer for Environment (COE) - Paul Pace

All three report to the **Director of Environment** - Graig Austin

Under the COT is:

Manager for Transport Policy and Coordinaton - Melanie MacLeod and **Manager for Traffic Operations** - Andrew Prigmore.

From 1 October 2019 Yo Highton, who has been working for a number of years at Borough Hall for Sustrans on funded cycling projects, has been appointed **Team Leader for Sustainable Transport**.

Elgar and Cycling

Edward William Elgar (1847-1934) was the first modern English composer whose choral and orchestral works gained international recognition and became one of the major figures of the last romantic period in Europe.

He is known for such works as the Enigma Variations and the Pomp and Circumstances Marches.

His father had a music shop in Worcester's High Street and surrounded by sheet music, instruments and music textbooks, the young Elgar became self-taught in music theory.



Elgar was a passionate and adventurous early cyclist from the age of 5 years old.

On warm summer days, he would ride into the countryside with his scores to study them.

In 1903 he bought new Royal Sunbeam bicycles for himself and his wife. He nicknamed his bicycle 'Mr Phoebus'.

The picture shows a statue of Elgar with his bicycle outside Hereford Cathedral. Other statues of him can be seen at the end of Worcester High Street facing the cathedral near to where his father had his shop and at the top of Church Street in Malvern.

Thanks to Trevor Wall for giving the Editor the idea for this short piece.

Diary

18 - 24 November 2019 - Road Safety Week

This year's theme is 'Step up for Safe Streets'

27 - 29 March 2020 - London Bike Show

Excel Exhibition Centre - Celebrating 10 years in the saddle

See <http://www.ccnb.org.uk/diaryb.shtml> for details & other events

Local Cycle Rides Contact:

Cycling UK (CTC) - North Beds Section - (01234) 219148

Cycling Campaign for North Bedfordshire



Our Vision

To see Bedford as a

'Town of Cyclists' & 'Cycle Friendly Communities'

Objectives

- ◆ To promote, encourage and support cycling as an important means of transport and recreation.
- ◆ To encourage consideration of the needs of cyclists in all aspects of transport planning and management, access issues and recreational use.

Membership

Please contact us if you have any cycling issues or better still, consider becoming a member to give us added weight in our discussions with the relevant authorities. Write to:

Membership Secretary, c/o 15 Dove Road, Bedford, MK41 7AA

including your name, address, postcode, telephone number and e-mail address (if available) together with your subscription.

Single £3.00 (£13 for 5yr); Family £5.00 (£22 for 5yr)