

Bikeability – Cycling proficiency for the 21st century in Britain

D.Carlin Bikeability Consultant ¹ N.Truran Sustainable Travel Officer Cycling ²

¹ Little Orchard

Postman`s Lane

Little Baddow
Chelmsford

Essex CM3 4SF

England

Email: dan.carlin@hotmail.co.uk

Hertford County Council ²

County Hall

Pegs Lane
Hertford

SG13 8DN

England

E mail: nick.truran@hertfordshire.gov.uk

ABSTRACT

Bikeability is a government funded national cycle training scheme which is underpinned by the national standards, this was originally launched in Britain during 2005 and the national standards were developed and created after extensive consultation with cycling experts from over 20 cycling organisations and are built upon similar principles for training motorcycle riders and car drivers teaching the importance of assessing the likely risks faced by road users. Bikeability is the new “cycling proficiency” for the 21st century and gives people the confidence and competence to ride safely on today`s roads.

National instructors are trained over a 4 day period and are required to show competence in all aspects of Bikeability in order to qualify to be allowed to train cyclists to the National Standards. CRB / DBS security checks are carried out on every instructors on an annual basis.

It is estimated that at the moment we have in excess of 10,000 qualified National Standard Instructors available to train in the UK.

By March 2015 it is estimated that more than 1.6 million young cyclists will have been trained in Primary and Secondary schools throughout the country and since the Tour de France there has been a distinctly higher interest level in cycling and we anticipate further increases in cycle training uptake in future years. Government funding from the Department for Transport for Bikeability Cycle Training scheme has been agreed at £ 12 million for 2014/15 and 2015/2106

There are many national campaigns and local multi partnership initiatives taking place throughout the UK raising awareness on issues of safety, conspicuity, road positioning and developing a mutual respect for each other among all road users. There is also many schemes for pre - Bikeability children to start cycling earlier and also post Bikeability training to further enhance cycling for the more experienced rider.

Keywords: Bikeability, National Standards, Competence, Confidence, Mutual Respect, Government Funding.

REFERENCES

1.contactus@bikeability.org.uk

2. <http://bikeability.dft.gov.uk>

INTRODUCTION

In Britain cyclists operate as a driver of a vehicle and therefore have the same rights as any other road user, whereas in the USA there are two policies depending on where you are, in one, you must obey the rules for drivers of vehicles, in the other you must give way to motorists as a matter of law.

Europe (North)

Here again the emphasis is different as in the Netherlands for instance there is a system of restricted motor access and space limited to motorists, there is also a basis of a strict liability law where the motorist is automatically at fault in an accident, the only five European countries that do not have this currently are UK, Cyprus, Malta, Romania and Ireland. There are attempts in Scotland to try and introduce this new law into the legal system.

INTRODUCTION

Cycling in Britain was originally a very ad hoc affair, run by the police, it was a matter of setting up cones in the playground and teaching children to cycle and negotiate the cones, if successful they were given a triangular metal badge and that was about it. During the 1980's, Local Authorities began to take over the responsibility for cycle training and Road Safety officers trained volunteers to carry out cycle training, initially in the playground and then onto quiet roads, this was an improvement but each authority had different methodologies, the trained volunteers mainly taught from the footpath and a lot of the demonstrations of the manoeuvres were carried out by walking the turns and not demonstrated on a bicycle. As a result the training and assessment of the trainee's competence was not consistent nationally. Since 2005 when government funded National Standard Cycle Training (Later becoming Bikeability in 2006) was introduced by the DfT a much modernised and consistent cycle training system has been introduced throughout the UK and is still going from strength to strength and developing further , day by day.

BIKEABILITY OVERVIEW

Bikeability not only provides trainees with riding skills suited to the road but also covers the relevant sections of the Highway Code, bicycle checks, sharing the road with other road users, the correct use of safety equipment and what to wear . In addition, those choosing to wear a helmet will be taught how to fit and adjust them.

The DfT promotes the National Standard through the Bikeability award scheme in England. Award materials (badges, certificates, and booklets) for all levels are available. Training can also be adapted for those with disabilities.

Bikeability has a range of training available to suit all requirements for children from year 5 (9 year olds) to year 11 (15 years) ranging from complete beginners wanting to boost their confidence to those wanting to develop more advanced skills.

There are three National Standard levels (see table below) with a series of outcomes for each that a trainee must demonstrate. This training is subject to parental permission and full risk assessments to training areas.

Level	Age	Size of training group	Minimum course timing	Incentives
<u>Level 1</u> During Level 1 riders learn to control and master their bike. The training takes place in an off road environment away from traffic usually in a playground or closed car park.	5 years and over, usually 9 to 11 years old.	3 to 12 (Maximum instructor to trainee ratio is 1:15).	2 hours	A certificate and red badge is awarded to those who successfully complete the course.
<u>Level 2</u> During Level 2 Bikeability training riders get out on the roads! Level 2 gives real cycling experience so that trainees are able to deal with traffic on short journeys, like cycling to school.	6 years and over (usually 9 to 11 year olds).	3 to 12 (Maximum instructor to trainee ratio 1:6). Note: Level 2 courses with more than 3 trainees per instructor must be taught in two or more sessions and may not be delivered in a single day.	Minimum on road course times vary according to number of trainees. Number of trainees per instructor: 2 hours for 1 or 2 trainees , 4 hours for 3 trainees, 5 hours for 4 trainees and 6 hours for 5 or 6 trainees.	A certificate and an orange badge is awarded to participants who successfully complete the course.
<u>Level3</u> During Level3 training riders learn the skills to tackle a wider variety of traffic conditions than on Level 2 . When trainees reach Level 3 standard they will be able to deal with all types of road conditions and more	Mainly teenagers and adults.	1 TO 3 (Maximum instructor to trainee ratio of 1:3 but usually done on 1 to 1.	All courses are based on a 2 hour session but longer times or additional sessions may be needed, when training 1 to 3 it is recommended that at least 2 instructors are present.	A certificate and a green badge is awarded to participants who successfully complete the course.

challenging traffic situations.				
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BIKEABILITY FUNDING

The Department for Transport provides grant funding of up to £40 per training place to Local Authorities and School Games Organiser Host Schools. This is for delivery of Bikeability training to children between school years 5-9 (ages 9-15).

Training covers Level 1, Levels 1&2 combined, Level 2 and Level 3.

Bikeability and Safety Standards.

Safety standards are important to the Department for Transport and any cycle training organisation or sole trader who wishes to deliver Bikeability must take part in a quality assurance process to help ensure organisations are delivering good quality cycle training. This process involves initially registering a scheme, self-assessment, external reviews and annual re-registration. Currently there are approximately 420 registered schemes across the country.

In addition, Bikeability training may only be delivered by trained and registered National Standard Instructors (NSI's) who have successfully completed a DfT recognised instructor training course and have live membership with a DfT recognised Instructor Training Organisation (ITO).

ITO's ensure that instructors are provided with any updates to national standard for cycle training and opportunities for continuous professional development as a minimum membership benefit. Currently there are approximately 10,000 + registered instructors and 19 ITO's country wide.

During the spring of 2010 the DfT commissioned Ipsos Mori to carry out a research study into the impact and perceptions of cycle training, with specific focus on Bikeability. The results were encouraging, particularly in addressing the safety concerns of parents as children who have taken part in the Bikeability scheme feel safer and more confident when riding on the road (86%) and their parents feel more confident in allowing them to do so (87%) Bikeability training itself was also rated very highly by both parents (97%) say that they are very / quite satisfied with the training) and children (95% describe it as fairly / very good), and children who have taken part say that they would recommend it to friends.(91%).

LOCAL AUTHORITY CYCLE INITIATIVES AND CAMPAIGNS

There have been theories and emotive discussions over cycling safety in Britain as in other countries, but some comparisons are more of interest than others. In 2012 there were 38 cycling deaths per million miles cycled in Britain- the fourth lowest year on record but compare this with the Netherlands where more money is spent on cyclists? The number was almost half at just 22.

As well as a higher per capita spend on cycling this may also be due to “Smeed’s Law” or Safety in Numbers. In 1949 R.J. Smeed, a British statistician argued that as traffic density increased motoring deaths would decrease in relation to the number of vehicles on the road, there are those who maintain that this theory also applies to cyclists linking the high proportion of cyclists with its impressive safety record. If the theory holds true, we should see a change in motorist’s attitude as they adjust their behaviour to accommodate a higher proportion of cyclists on the roads.

With this in mind, many road safety professionals in Britain have been constantly campaigning to raise awareness of both cyclists and motorists about safe riding and driving also aligned with mutual respect and consideration for each other and the right to share the road.

Bikeability training figures for Essex March 2009 to March 2014

Quota year	Agreed quota	Actual outturn
2009/2010	250	201
2010/2011	1200	2510
2011/2012	2750	3951
2012/2013	3600	4656
2013/2014	4750	5204
2014/2015	7200	4800 to end October 2014 (ahead of target).

The above figures do not include an extra 2500 places targeted by the School Games Organisers for 2014/2015.

ESSEX INITIATIVES

National campaigns have high, but time limited impact, when aligned with multi-partnership targeted local campaigns which pick up and carry on taking the message to the public the ongoing drip feeding can be extremely effective.

We run national campaigns then add a local initiative with police and fire authority involvement:

“Be Safe Be Seen”

A national conspicuity campaign which was picked up locally and continued with Essex Police posters and Road Safety, Police and Fire Officers identified local problem areas and pilot teams were on the streets and at events talking to the public and distributing leaflets in schools and colleges.

“Let`s Look Out for each other”

A national mutual respect campaign pointing out that 80% of cyclists hold a driving licence and 1 in 5 drivers cycle at least once a month , they`re often the same people. We organised a regional initiative through our Instructor Training Organisation (ITO) and Essex held the launch at Police HQ attended by press and TV. Alex Dowsett the (previously a Sky team rider) who now rides for Movistar took part and helped to raise the profile. From this came another local initiative. One of the problems identified when talking to the public was constant complaints about cyclists riding on pedestrian walkways and shopping centres and causing distress and danger to pedestrians. We arranged for 3 pilot areas for police teams to attend during the evenings and stop and talk to cyclists, at this stage it was mainly discussions and warnings issued, along with the” Let`s Look out” leaflet , the response from cyclists was very positive. Essex police are due to launch a new initiative in September 2104 based on the problem identified and will look to reduce the safety issues by stopping cyclists without lights, cycling on the footway, contravening traffic signs, cycling dangerously or without care, the officers will have the option (at their discretion to give a warning, issue a fixed penalty notice, issue a summons (in serious cases) or offer the option to do an on line cycle improvement course at a (very reduced cost). The aim is to curtail the minority of cyclists who get the majority a bad name, give pedestrians safe access to pavements and walkways.

and create a safe and secure environment for all. This has been welcomed by virtually all cyclists that have been spoken to.

HERTFORDSHIRE

Hertfordshire currently run several additional schemes and campaigns to compliment cycle training.

Bikeability training figures for Hertfordshire 2009 to 2014

Quota year	Agreed quota	Actual outturn
2010		4965
2011	4500	4806
2012	4500	4968
2013	5000	5500
2014	5500	4785 to date
2015	6000+	Expected increase of 500

Hertfordshire Year of Cycling (HYOC)

This is a scheme that has been set up to enable the county to bring all aspects of cycling and information surrounding it under one place to make it easy for residents and businesses to find the information they require.

The scheme links into events such as the 'Tour of Britain' along with much small local events, allowing safety advice, information on mapping and details on things such as lead rides in partnership with British Cycling to be provided, giving help in inspire people to get cycling or return to it.

A brand was also developed to help identify the work that has been done to promote cycling, and following the initial year this will then change from 'Hertfordshire Year of Cycling', to 'Cycling in Hertfordshire' as the legacy work continues.

Beginner Biking

A scheme operated in Hertfordshire and initially developed by Tina Walker from cycleinstructor.co.uk to help get children aged 2 – 5 cycle without stabilisers and under their own control on a bike. It is delivered with two instructors working with a parent / guardian to build confidence and cycle unaided.

The scheme began in 2011 and was taken over by Hertfordshire County Council in 2013 to enable it to be delivered in all areas of the county, building on the small areas it had initially been operated in. Since 2013 the scheme has doubled in size and won its 3rd Green Apple Award, following its previous 2 prior to the scheme being centrally operated.

Beginner Biking has 70% success rate in children cycling by the end of each 1 hour session, with those not cycling very close to doing so.

Like 2 Bike

The aim of this project is to increase the number of children cycling regularly to school and reduce the number of car journeys.

This will be a year long project with selected schools that have identified the potential to increase the number of children regularly cycling to school by at least 2 percentage points. In the course of the year the school will run a variety of activities to raise the profile of cycling with the school community. In order to do this the school will receive the support of a member of the HCC Safe and Sustainable Journeys to Schools team. Schools can select the activities from the toolkit outlined below.

To ensure the success of the project we will ask the participating schools to:

Nominate a named champion from the school who will take the lead for the project and be the main point of contact for the SSJ in Schools team

Run a Level 2 Bikeability training course during the course of the project

Collect data on how many children cycle to school before during and after the project

Develop a cycling policy for their school

Hertfordshire County Council will:

Assign a team member to work with the school to set up and run a range of activities in the school

Provide incentives and rewards

Provide an information pack for children and staff

It will also be possible for schools to work towards accreditation levels by completing activities and achieving Modal shift (more children cycling).

Toolkit

Mandatory:

Bikeability training, Before during and after collection of cycle to school data & The Big Pedal virtual bike race (run by Sustrans)

Options:

Level 1

Themed assemblies

Cycling STARs group (involving the children)

Level 2

Beginner Biking/fun skills (if Children's Centre on site), Scooter training, Dr Bike Session, Incentive Scheme, Smoothie Bike sessions, Bling your Bike/Bike shed competition, Smoothie Bike sessions, Level 3 Bikeability, Events, Led rides & Bike coding

Level 3

Sustain the increase in cycling for at least a year.

CONCLUSION

Although Britain has a different kind of cycling environment to the majority of the rest Europe, we feel that we are making good headway in our efforts to raise the profile of cycling and creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect amongst all types of road users, there is a need for increased patience, understanding and an acceptance that we can all share the road. The financial and psychological support and cross party support from all political parties in national government circles has added impetus to our ongoing efforts to increase safer cycling in the UK. With the continued promotion of free Bikeability training in our schools, we have built an expectation for cycle training and our future aim is to continue to promote the case for adding cycle training to the school curriculum and make it part of the ethos for all. As we approach the time in the next few years, when the first of our trainees will be possibly driving as well as cycling, we look to see a marked improvement in safety levels and driving behaviour which will hopefully validate our case.