

Beauty and the bike

“Boys on average cycle 138 miles a year and girls 24 miles.

Cycling and Children and Young People, A review, Tim Gill, National Children's Bureau.



Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity. Our vision is a world

in which people can choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. Every day we are working on practical, innovative ways of dealing with the transport challenges that affect us all. Our projects include the **National Cycle Network, Travel Smart, Connect2, Safe Routes to Schools and Bike It.**



Bike It is a ground-breaking project which has already quadrupled the

number of children cycling to its target schools. Bike It aims to get **more children cycling more safely, more often.** Bike It works with selected schools to help overcome the range of barriers which prevent children from cycling to school. We started Bike It three years ago with just four Bike It Officers (BIOs) working in 10 schools each. After great success (some of our schools have a third of all pupils now cycling!) Bike It has a new manager, two regional supervisors and a total of 27 officers, including two in London, with more expected to join the team soon. **Beauty and the Bike** – is one of the many tools used by BIOs to promote cycling to school.

The Concept



The **Beauty and the Bike** project was conceived by Emma Osborne, Sustrans Bike It Officer for Exeter...

“As a young woman who promotes cycling

and who cycled to school myself, I want to show teenage girls that cycling is a brilliant way to get around and keep fit and that you can arrive looking and feeling great too! I wanted to find a way to highlight the benefits of cycling in a way which appeals to girls' interest in health and beauty. 20% of term time rush hour traffic is created through children being driven to school. A lack of physical activity is associated with the growing levels of obesity in the U.K. These are important issues that cycling can provide a solution for.”

What is it?

The aim of **Beauty and the Bike** is to provide a series of prestigious (and fun) sessions for secondary school girls to help overcome the negative images they have of cycling and to inspire and empower them to take up cycling to school.

Beauty and the Bike sessions are run in school time and offer participants free health and beauty advice and practical solutions related to looking and feeling good when arriving by bike.



Isca girls route planning

Beauty and the Bike gives positive messages to year 7,8 and 9 girls on the health and fitness benefits of cycling. The project also provides facilities and equipment to create dedicated changing and storage areas for use by girls who cycle to school.

Each **Beauty and the Bike** session comprises two professionally delivered workshops, normally taking place in PSHE or Guidance lessons, with the following themes:

- Looking Good (delivered by the Body Shop or other Partner)
- Feeling Good (delivered by the BIO/or another female role model)

The Ethos

One of the most important things about **Beauty and the Bike** is that it does not aim to promote the wearing of make-up or to reinforce media images which pressure girls to look and behave in a certain way. Rather, it aims to challenge girls' inhibitions and to encourage and celebrate their efforts to travel in a way that is good for their health and the environment. An important part of **Beauty and the Bike** is to help girls grow to realise it is ok to look "less good" some

Beauty and the Bike – Information Sheet of the time, especially if you are doing something that is important to you!

Role modelling

Due to a general decline in cycling levels nationally in recent decades, many girls do not have contact with a **female role model** who cycles so this is exactly what **Beauty and the Bike** provides. The women involved are chosen for their credibility, knowledge and ability to relate to teenage girls.

Personal touch

A vital aspect of **Beauty and the Bike** sessions is the personal touch, i.e. advice from a regular, confident, female cyclist who can talk with girls and empathise with the barriers to cycling that they experience. The role model provides practical solutions to those barriers through detailed discussion and follow up work. In Exeter this has been done by the Bike It Officer herself.

Emma says *"The sorts of reasons that girls give for not wanting to cycle to school include; not wanting to be seen wearing a helmet, not wanting to "get messed up", worrying that boys will laugh at them if they fall off, worrying that they will get hot and sweaty. Girls also have concerns about cycling with traffic and are often unaware of the local traffic-free routes..."*



Isca College girls discuss and demonstrate "helmet hair"!

...The idea is to take girls on a journey in their minds from vaguely being

interested in cycling to school (but having a number of quite personal reasons why they don't) to actually doing it".

The role models empathise and approach matters sensitively so that girls feel comfortable in raising what are often very personal issues. A balance is struck between being enthusiastic and knowledgeable and not being so "into" cycling that young girls can't relate to or imagine themselves being like the role model.

One of the most powerful messages the female role model can give is to look and be fit and show how confident and happy she is with herself as a result of choosing to travel in an active way.

Bike It places emphasis on **Beauty and the Bike** being "prestigious". Girls attending have to obtain a "ticket" from the teacher that is promoting the event, and numbers per session are limited. It has proved useful to have some girls in each session that already cycle to school as they also act as peer role models.

Partners

The inclusion of a cosmetics retailer and makeover/skincare is primarily a "hook" to gain girls' interest and to give them some special treatment and a positive, fun, different experience.

THE BODY SHOP

In Exeter, The Body Shop agreed to support **Beauty and the Bike** events through its community work programme. The Body Shop Exeter franchise gives in-kind support in the form of sales consultants to help run sessions. Normally two of The Body Shop staff attend **Beauty and the Bike** sessions and provide a "looking good" workshop including discussion on the ethics of

Beauty and the Bike – Information Sheet
make-up manufacture, skin care advice and makeovers. The Body Shop Exeter also provide samples of The Body Shop products as part of a Bike It gift pack which is given to participants.

As partners, the Body Shop staff involved are briefed prior to the sessions to ensure they are on board with the aims of Beauty and the Bike and competent to work with and inspire young people.



In Exeter Bike It works closely alongside Devon County Council's Cycle Exeter team.

Cycle Exeter is one of Cycling England's Cycling Demonstration Towns, and is implementing a broad range of measures to make the city more cycle friendly. One of its targets is to get 20% of Secondary School students cycling to school, so Bike It and **Beauty and the Bike** complement the project well.

Ethics

Beauty and the Bike takes into account the ethical issues around the manufacture, testing and wearing of make-up (particularly the latter in young people).

If make-overs are to be included within the sessions then parental permission is sought. If the school has a strong anti-make-up policy, or the BIO feels that they would prefer not to include make-overs then sessions focus on skincare rather than make-up. Participants are also provided with an introduction to the ethics surrounding the manufacture and testing of make-up.





Isca girls enjoy The Body Shop products

Follow Up Work

The **Beauty and the Bike** sessions include the opportunity for feedback from participants on what else is needed to help them start cycling to school. As far as possible these requests are fed into the ongoing Bike It programme for the school and fulfilled in subsequent sessions.

Case study

At Isca College of Media and Arts (an 11-16 secondary school in Exeter) three Beauty and the Bike sessions have been held followed by one puncture repair session. Of the 54 girls that had attended Beauty and the Bike sessions, ten came to the puncture repair session and gave positive feedback about the original session and the follow-up. Future follow up work here and in other schools will include more bike maintenance, cycle skills and bike rides for girls as well as other general Bike It programme activities.

On Site Facilities

Consultation work recently undertaken with students in the Bike It schools suggests that on site facilities are required to further encourage girls to cycle to school, and to show them that their efforts in doing so are valued.



Beauty and the Bike won the Shimano Cycling Concept Award 2007.

Beauty and the Bike – Information Sheet
This means that the Exeter BIO has funding for gift packs for participants and for the upgrading of dedicated changing areas (within school buildings).

Upgrades might for example include; (depending on consultation with students) wall mounted hair dryers, large mirrors and secure storage lockers - to store books, cycle helmets, clothing etc.

Equality and Wider School Travel Plan Targets

All of the participating schools so far have had School Travel Plans (STPs) which they are encouraged to update annually. All STPs include targets to create “modal shift” away from the use of the private car to other modes of transport – particularly to walking and cycling. For the sake of gender equality and to support the wider School Travel Plan objectives, schools have been asked to “match fund” the facilities element of the project by providing equivalent facilities to support boys that cycle to school.

Boys can feel that this project discriminates against them, and Bike it works hard to ensure there is a balanced programme of cycling promotion activities to appeal to both boys and girls within each school.

Further Information

This information sheet will be followed up by a practical guide to be published in spring 2008, to be published on the Sustrans website.

Useful weblinks;

www.sustrans.org.uk

www.thebodyshop.co.uk

www.bikeforall.net