

## Sustrans-trained cycle instructors help communities to flourish

**A cycle training project organised across six areas in Northern Ireland where we are building local links and networks, has flowered into a fantastic initiative which is having a positive impact on all sectors of the community.**

From the 45 initial participants who completed National Standard Cycle Training and were also trained as group ride leaders, 14 were chosen for full Cycle Instructor training. The 18-month project run by Sustrans' Community Connector, Patricia Wallace, has resulted in a diverse range of people being trained from youth workers, women's health workers, physical and mental health workers to teachers, volunteers, detached youth workers and parents from a young fathers' project. Having qualified with flying colours, these instructors are now passing on their cycling skills in many communities across Northern Ireland and having an impact where it is most needed.

They were presented with their certificates by Minister Danny Kennedy MLA at a ceremony in Derry/Londonderry in October. He told them that he had taken up cycling again last summer and recognised the importance of helping people cycle safely on the roads.

**Susan Gibson, Director of Derry Well Woman, commented, "The initial cycling course organised by Sustrans had a hugely positive impact on us as a team as well as promoting a genuine interest in us all to take up cycling in a serious and sustained way. It is a refreshing approach to improving physical and mental wellbeing."**



**Dave Smith from the 'Yo' Youth Project receives his Cycle Instructor certificate from Minister for Regional Development, Danny Kennedy MLA**

Lorcan Doherty



**Celebrations at St Matthew's Primary School on winning Northern Ireland's first Bronze School Mark**

PressEye.com

## Belfast school pedals to first Bronze School Mark

St Matthew's Primary School in Belfast has been so successful at encouraging children to get on their bikes for the school run that it was awarded the Sustrans' Bronze School Mark in the Autumn, the first to receive the accolade in Northern Ireland.

Staff, parents and children have worked hard with Sustrans' Beth Harding, to embed a culture of walking and cycling at the school, hosting Bike Breakfasts, Dr Bike workshops, Brighter Bike Days, guided bike rides, after school bike clubs, and Bikeability cycle training. During its first year of working with Sustrans, St Matthew's Primary doubled the number of children regularly cycling to school to an impressive 53 per cent of pupils.

Their efforts to change travel behaviour were rewarded with a visit from the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Niall Ó Donnghaile, who presented the award.

Beth commented, "I'm delighted that St Matthew's Primary has achieved the Sustrans Bronze School Mark; it highlights all of the hard work put in by the children, teachers and parents and the tremendous results. The school is really dedicated to inspiring children onto their bikes, to reducing the effects of the school run on the environment and to encouraging healthy and active lifestyles."

And over the winter Beth has been busy running Brighter Bike Days in schools across the city to make sure children continue to cycle to school and have experience of how to stay safe in winter conditions.



# UPDATE

## From the National Director



We have plenty to celebrate here in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as 2012 gets underway.

Many of our Big Lottery-funded schemes to create local links and networks enabling people to make more of their everyday journeys by bike and on foot are now under construction. These include

the all-important Waterside Greenway in Derry/Londonderry linking to the Peace Bridge and the stylish new bridge in Ballymoney, whilst the Newtownabbey Way is due for completion by June. We will be inviting you to a number of opening events as the year progresses.

Moreover, the latest results of our schools' work show a dramatic increase in the numbers of children cycling safely and independently to school. At the schools we are working with, 14% of children in Belfast are cycling to school at least once a week.

### Active school travel gets the green light at Stormont

Thanks to your generous support and rapid response to our Funding Cuts Appeal back in the spring of 2011, we are now in the position to build on this encouraging data emerging from the schools we work with. Sustrans staff have been able to engage with politicians at Stormont with very positive results. Our recent proposal to achieve increases in walking and cycling to school has led the Northern Ireland Executive to include targets for this in the Programme for Government. Sustrans hopes to play a major role in helping to meet these targets which represent a major breakthrough for active school travel. We should now see improved routes to school, more cycle parking, cycle training and other promotional measures to encourage children to walk and cycle on the school run.

### Making our streets safer for walking and cycling

The tragic deaths of two cyclists killed on main arterial roads during the morning commute in Belfast last summer brought home to many the dangers of cycling. We know that more cyclists on better designed roads and better driver behaviour reduces the risks for all road users and simple measures could avoid so many of these needless casualties.

That is why Sustrans is campaigning with others to make our roads safer and to encourage considerate use of this shared space through safe driving and cycling. With the invaluable help you are providing through our Get There Safely appeal, we are campaigning for more safe walking and cycling routes, better maintained roads and pavements, continuous bus and bike lanes and 20mph zones in built up areas, as well as on-road cycle training and better enforcement of driver speeding and red light breaking.

We will be supporting the Private Members' Bill by Conal McDevitt MLA to reduce speed limits to 20mph in residential areas and we will back the Department for Regional Development (DRD) as they dramatically increase the pace of rolling out bus and bike lanes in central Belfast.

## Campaign success stories

In fact, we will shortly see some results of our campaigning. With the support of the six East Belfast MLAs and the local MP, three new toucan crossings are being installed to improve safety on the Comber Greenway as we link the route to Titanic Belfast. In Derry we have campaigned for 15 years to improve the unpleasant riverside route which has forced users to negotiate a car park. By Easter this car park will close and a new traffic-free riverside path will be in place so people can walk and cycle in safety.

### Comber Greenway now unlikely to be used as bus route

I'd like to thank all our supporters who have supported our campaign to safeguard the Comber Greenway for walkers and cyclists. Following extensive lobbying by Sustrans, the DRD has accepted that the route is better used as a greenway rather than a bus way. As a result, improved bus routes are now being proposed on the Upper Newtownards Road. We are strongly supporting this proposal as it improves bus routes to local schools, shops and places of work and leisure such as the Stormont Estate and Dundonald Hospital.

### NI forests to be accessible to all

Along with many cyclists, Sustrans has been concerned at a proposed by-law which would create a ban on pedestrians accessing forests at night (cyclists are currently not included in access except on designated routes). So we have all lobbied DARD not to introduce this by-law and also to expand access in general to the forests for cyclists.



Our message seems to have been heard during the consultation period and in November the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Michelle O'Neill MLA, stated in the NI Assembly that she proposes to allow the continued use of forest roads and paths after dark and, perhaps more significantly, permit cycling and other recreational activities to take place over as much forest land as possible, subject to sensible rules which should make clear when the right of access should be suspended, for example when there is an unreasonable risk to the health and safety of visitors or forest workers.

The Minister said that responses to the consultation pointed in general to a need to adopt less restrictive by-laws and suggested that most visitors behaved responsibly, which is also the Department's broad experience. As we go to press, the revised by-laws are being prepared for final scrutiny.

Good work! Our thanks go to everyone who got involved.

**Steven Patterson**  
Director, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

## Contact details

If you would like to get involved or have any comments, do get in touch with Steven and the team:

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# Network News

The National Cycle Network continues to grow and improve all the time due to your generous support. Thank you on behalf of happy walkers and cyclists everywhere.

## 99 New route to Belfast's Titanic Quarter Visitor Centre

As Belfast prepares to commemorate the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic in April with the opening of a £97m visitor centre, Sustrans is putting the finishing touches to new sections of National Route 99, the **Comber Greenway**, which will extend it into the heart of **Titanic Quarter**.

Billed as a world-class visitor destination showcasing the story of the Titanic and Belfast's wider shipbuilding and seafaring heritage, Titanic Belfast is expected to become one of Ireland's top tourist attractions and so developing walking and cycling links to it became a top priority for Sustrans. An extension of the Comber Greenway from Dee Street by the installation of four toucan crossings and the opening of Fraser Street will vastly improve access from East Belfast and beyond, and benefit staff and students of the recently opened Metropolitan College who choose to walk and cycle.

Meanwhile, further afield, the imminent installation of the Ballyrainey Road Bridge outside Comber will make the greenway much safer for pedestrians and cyclists who make everyday journeys into the city.

Sustrans will be organizing a cycle ride to celebrate the opening of the Comber Greenway extension into the Titanic Quarter later in the summer. Make sure we have your email address by emailing [supporters@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:supporters@sustrans.org.uk) so that we can invite you to come along. Alternatively, phone our Belfast office for further information on 028 9043 4569.

Donal McCarra



*Students and staff at the Belfast Met will benefit from the new walking and cycling route*

## Work begins on Derry/Londonderry's new Waterside Greenway

After the grand opening of the Peace Bridge last summer, the focus has now shifted to creating walking and cycling links to and from it with the construction of a new riverside walking and cycling path. A sod-cutting ceremony took place in St Columb's Park in November to mark the start of work on the Waterside Greenway which will connect communities to the east of the Peace Bridge, provide access to the spectacular new facilities in the park and provide a safe and direct traffic-free route into the town centre.

Sustrans' Ross McGill believes the Waterside Greenway will ensure increasing numbers of people choose walking and cycling as realistic options for travel across the city. "Many residents travel into the city centre for their everyday journeys and this route will help even more people take advantage of the new Peace Bridge. It also means that people from across the city will be one step closer to a traffic-free greenway on both sides of the Foyle."

**The new route into the Titanic Quarter and the Waterside Greenway are just two examples of the many local networks Sustrans is developing with the help of funding from the Big Lottery Fund. The aim of the work is to bring the National Cycle Network into the heart of communities. To find out more visit: [www.sustrans.org.uk/connect2](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/connect2)**

## Good news from National Cycle Network signage audit

We are happy to report that the results from the signage audit carried out on our behalf by Cycle City Guides were largely positive, thanks to the sterling work of our volunteer rangers. With most of the National Cycle Network being on rural roads we are reliant on them to ensure that it is kept well signed. The data showed that, overall, the routes are well signed and this is reflected in the comments we get from visitors on long distance rides across the country.

However, there are sections of the Network that are not covered by our volunteer rangers so this report will enable us to further improve the signage in partnership with Roads Service who are responsible for maintaining the majority of the signs. We aim to have the work completed this spring.

## 93 Rockport path construction

The North Down Coastal Path which has already been upgraded between Bangor and Helen's Bay has just undergone further improvements. North Down Borough Council has upgraded a short section of the route at **Rockport**.

Sustrans is working with its partners to bring the whole of the route between Belfast and Bangor up to standard so that it can become part of National Route 93. A present by-law which prohibits cycling on the path is presently undergoing revision to remove this restrictive clause.

For further news and information, please visit our website at <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sustrans-near-you/northern-ireland-and-the-republic-of-ireland>. We would urge you to help promote the website by sending the link to your friends and colleagues or anyone else you think may be interested.



## Spring days out in Northern Ireland

Whether it's discovering hidden bluebell woods, surprising Mum with a Mother's Day cream tea or celebrating St Patrick's Day, Northern Ireland has lots to choose from when it comes to car-free days out.

### Springtime flowers and bluebell woods

Early in the season, head for the National Trust properties of The Argyry in County Armagh to join the Snowdrop Walks (off **Regional Route 11**, near Dungannon) or to Springhill House near Magherafelt for their Sunday Snowdrop events (situated on **Sperrin Route 8**). Later on, for a magnificent carpet of bluebells, the Woodland Trust

rates Killaloo Wood in County Derry as one of the best places in the UK to spot this beautiful flower; the wood is situated close to the **Faughan Valley Cycleway** off **National Route 93**. Another good option is Daisy Hill Wood near Newry and close to **National Route 9**.

### Mother's Day

A cream tea can be a special treat on Mother's Day – and even better if you've worked up an appetite by cycling there! Here are a few ideas for National Trust properties close to the National Cycle Network that have good tearooms: Giant's Causeway in County Antrim on **National Route 93**; Castle Ward on **National Route 99** in County Down; Mount Stewart also in County Down and accessed via minor roads from **National Route 99**; and the Crom estate in County Fermanagh on **National Route 91**.

### St Patrick's Day

What better way to celebrate St Patrick's Day than by cycling to the Spring Carnival in Derry/Londonderry on **National Routes 92** and **93** where you'll find music, carnival parades, dance and storytelling. Visit [www.derryvisitor.com](http://www.derryvisitor.com) for more details. Alternatively, Springhill House (see route details above) is holding a Shamrock Shenanigans weekend and is offering free entry to anyone who can prove that their name is Patrick.

For information on routes and attractions on the National Cycle Network, plus nearby railway stations, visit the on-line mapping at [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

## Featured Ride:

### Lagan Towpath: Lambeg Station to Titanic Belfast

This ride takes in part of Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) which lies along the River Lagan and stretches for 11 miles from Stranmillis, Belfast, to Union Locks, Lisburn. Starting from Lambeg Station, follow the signs for National Route 9, and you will benefit from most of the route being downhill as you follow the river into Belfast. Head down Tullynacross Road which brings you to the towpath, turn left and follow the waterway all the way for an enjoyable ride. Turning right brings you to Lisburn, the Island Mill Civic Centre and Union Locks.

The woods, meadows, wetlands, parks and farms along the River Lagan are alive with wildlife. Particularly difficult to spot, but most rewarding when you do, is the Kingfisher, the symbol of Lagan Valley Regional Park and one of its shyest residents. Kingfishers are small and unmistakable; bright blue and orange birds which fly rapidly and low over water. They hunt fish from riverside perches, occasionally hovering above the water's surface.

An excellent midway point to take a break is Malone House, reached by heading up a steep path just before the gate at Shaw's Bridge. Well worth the effort of the climb, Malone House is a stunning Georgian mansion set amongst the rolling meadows and parkland of Barnett Demesne. Teas, coffee and snacks are served in the Malone Room. When you return to the towpath and pass through the gate, pause a moment to appreciate the artwork etched into it.

Continue along the towpath through Clement Wilson Park to its end at Cutters Wharf. From here the route through Belfast passes the Waterfront Hall. Cross the river over Queen Elizabeth Bridge and take the riverside path to Titanic Belfast past the Odyssey and new Titanic buildings.

Obvious points along the route to make an exploratory detour include at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, over Gilchrist Bridge to the Giant's Ring earthwork, at Belvoir Forest Park, the Botanic Gardens and Ormeau Park. There are many options to extend or vary the journey and each time you travel along the route you are in for a mini adventure.



### The Route

**Distance:** 10 miles/14.5 km

**Terrain:** mostly flat, traffic-free towpath, suitable for walkers, cyclists and wheelchair users

**Getting there:** railway station at Lambeg

**Maps:** Lagan and Lough Cycle Way leaflet – available from [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

**OS maps:** Discoverer 15



*The timid kingfisher*

Dean Dolton [www.robeck.demon.co.uk](http://www.robeck.demon.co.uk)

