

Safe Routes to schools

Northern Ireland

Spring 2008 Issue 03

Rural schools welcome global cyclist



One of the greatest cycling adventurers made his first trip to Northern Ireland during February to congratulate six schools who took part in a Virtual Walking and Cycling challenge around the world.

Alastair Humphreys was here to tell pupils about his 46,000 mile circuit of the globe. His expedition led him through 60 countries and across five continents and was described by Sir Ranulph Fiennes as "the first great adventurer of the 21st century".

Alastair spent his student loan and four years of his life cycling the world from Siberia to the Sahara and from Alaska to Argentina. After his return home he teamed up with Sustrans to work on a project to encourage more children to walk or cycle to school everyday!

Working closely with the Rural Safe Routes to Schools Team in Northern Ireland and using an idea which came from a Sustrans Officer in Lancaster, schools were invited to take part in a Virtual Walk or Cycle Around the World, following Alastair's journey.

Each school was issued with a map of the world to create a display for the children to see. For each day a pupil walked or cycled they were awarded with mileage to complete their journey around the world.

Sixteen schools took part in the challenge and Sustrans and Alastair were amazed when some schools made it around the world in just eight and nine days!

During his visit, Alastair visited six schools – Killylea PS Armagh, Killyleagh PS Co Down, St Jarlath's PS, Blackwatertown, Cloughmills PS, St Mary's PS, Cushendall PS and St Colmcille's PS, St John's Swatragh and St Mary's PS, Derrytrasna also took part in the event.

Alastair made a presentation to the children, captivating them with tales and educational stories from his travels. He highlighted important issues such as keeping physically fit and travelling in a sustainable way.

Peter Crabbe, Principal at Cloughmills said "It was an excellent talk and slide show. It was great for the children to see slides of all the countries and hear stories of all the different cultures. We are very proud of the children, everyday the children either walked or cycled to school".



Alastair and Sustrans in Cloughmills PS



Pupils and staff at Killylea Primary School receive a certificate from Alastair Humphreys



Alastair with pupils and staff of St Marys PS Cushendall



Pupils and staff at St Colmcilles with Alastair Humphreys and Sustrans



Pupils and staff at Killyleagh PS receive a certificate from Alastair Humphreys



Questions for Alastair from pupils at St Jarlath's PS, Blackwatertown

Welcome

to the third edition of your newsletter.

Contact the Schools Team:

william.methven@sustrans.org.uk

T: 028 90434569 Mob: 07876 453737

jill.mcdonald@sustrans.org.uk

T: 028 90434569 Mob: 07876 453661

Comments can also be sent to Sustrans 3rd floor, Marquis Building, 89-91 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8FE.

Credit: James Whorriskey

A message from William and Jill to the schools



It's hard to believe that this is the last term before the current Rural Safe Routes to School project ends in September. We have both found working with all of you to be such an exciting and rewarding experience. Above all it has been fun! It will be hard to say goodbye to each of you in September. We have made such great friends and we hope we will be able to stay in touch. We will not forget you!

You have all been such fine examples of what can be done in terms of improving levels of walking and cycling. You have proved that the car does not have to be king and is not the only option when travelling to school, that positive change is possible and most importantly that cycling and walking are much more fun for both pupils and parents, as well as being healthier and less damaging to the environment.

Thank you for your support and enthusiasm. Sustrans hope to develop this work and build on the success you, the first 18 rural schools have made of the Rural Safe Routes to School project.

See you all during May and June! **William and Jill**

A message from John Grimshaw



Across the UK the benefits of walking and cycling to school are being realised and Sustrans are involved with an ever increasing number of schools projects. Cycling England recently announced a £140 million work programme that includes funding for hundreds of safe routes to schools and cycle training.

In Scotland funding from the Scottish Government has allowed us to work with over 1,400 schools providing infrastructure and practical school-based activities whilst The Welsh Assembly has now spent over £22 million on 350 safe routes schemes.

In Northern Ireland it is wonderful to see the Rural Safe Routes to Schools project attracting such strong interest and support from parents, pupils and teachers. Their enthusiasm and commitment has made this project an exemplar for establishing solutions for rural schools UK-wide.

Sustrans is lobbying the Northern Ireland Executive to build on the positive outcomes of Rural Safe Routes to School so that schools across Northern Ireland can enjoy improved infrastructure and safer routes to school. We hope to pilot Bike It which has trebled levels of cycling in participating schools with 27% of pupils now cycling to school at least once or twice a week.

John Grimshaw, MBE
Founder and Chief Executive, Sustrans

Exciting Summer term ahead

There are plenty of reasons to walk or cycle to school this summer term. Get out your bikes and walking shoes ready for the good weather!



Virtual Walking and Cycling Challenge to South Africa

For the summer term Sustrans have developed a virtual bike and foot challenge travelling to Cape Town, South Africa. Pupils will earn a number of miles towards their journey to Cape Town for each journey they make to and from school. The journey to South Africa will start on 21st April and the schools

team hope to see the first schools arrive in Cape Town in early June.

Schools can donate their old bikes to a charity that provides bikes to children in the Gambia so they can cycle to school too. Participating pupils, teachers and parents can also raise money for the Bikes4Africa Appeal to provide bikes for African children. For more information on Bikes4Africa Appeal click www.jole1000.org.



5-9th May Bike to School Week

This year's annual Bike to School week is coming up. Last year we saw some remarkable events with hundreds of children cycling to

school through their villages to a breakfast in their school. Advice is available from William and Jill for any school wanting to run a bike event.

19-24th May Travelwise Walk to School Week

Try out your new summer shoes and get into training for Walk to School week – a campaign run by TravelwiseNI.



14-22nd June Travelwise NI Bike Week 2008

This year Bike Week has teamed up with Nokia and Sport Relief to challenge everyone to get out of their cars, step away from the TV and get on their bikes! Advice on running a walking event is available from William or Jill or contact TravelwiseNI in Belfast 0845 378 0908.

11th June Record Breaking Walking Bus

Brake, the road safety charity is running a second world record attempt for the biggest walking bus on 11th June. Last year 80,000 children took part breaking the world record. This year Brake are aiming for 200,000 children participating in a walking bus at 10am. For further information and to register as part of the world record breaking attempt call 01484 559 909.

DARD Review of Safe Routes to Schools

"Many organisations fund work in schools, however, rural schools tend to fare less favourably as opposed to urban schools. We in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development are therefore here to do all we can to redress any imbalance..."



...The Safe Routes to Schools Project is one of many projects funded through the Rural Development Programme 2001 – 2006 which has this aim in mind. DARD is delighted that this project

focuses specifically on rural schools and has provided the opportunity for rural pupils to travel to school more actively and very importantly, more safely. When I have visited these projects I have been very impressed by the enthusiasm of the schools, the parents and the local communities and have seen at first hand the obvious pleasure this project has given to those children who have benefited across the 18 rural schools.

This project is an excellent example of partnership working and has brought 4 government departments together to provide both infrastructure works, the development of school travel plans and on the ground work with children, all in a rural setting! Let's hope that this small example of joined-up Government grows. However without the fifth partner all our joined-upness would not have produced a product. The crucial link that brought this about was undoubtedly a very experienced and committed Sustrans team who have guided all parties to a very successful conclusion.

As new opportunities for funding open up in the new Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 and other European programmes, DARD would hope that the good work that has been done under this programme, will commend itself to the funders and that this work could continue to be funded in all rural schools."

Vince McKevitt,
Head of Building Sustainable Prosperity Branch, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development



Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk

"The benefits and changes in attitudes by parents, pupils and staff have been exceptional. Our recommendation would be to get involved now and reap the very worthwhile benefits of this scheme."

Gail Ferguson, Principal, Kilbride PS, Doagh

"Parents are now happy to allow their child to walk or cycle home from school as the school area is now perceived as a safer area."

Joan Aldridge, Principal, St Marys Primary School, Derrytrasna

"I have noticed an improvement in the concentrations levels in class."

John McCrea, Principal, Ballinamallard PS

"We really enjoyed having you and were very impressed with the whole experience. You were all so helpful, understanding and related to everyone so well. The children thoroughly enjoyed the cycling as did the adults."

Karen Gilpin, Vice Principal Hezlett Primary School, Castlerock

"Sustrans made our school better by putting up a bike shed for our school pupils to cycle to and from school. Also there are flashing lights to warn drivers that children are coming in and out of our school. Thank you Sustrans."

Grace Blaney P.6. St Mary's Primary School, Derrytrasna.

"It keeps you really fit and I like the new track because it's making more people walk."

Joshua, Killylea Primary School, Co Armagh

Event Roundup

Cloughmills Primary School enjoyed a visit from Alastair Humphreys and took part in the Carbon Saving Day.



Members of the **Gracehill Primary School** School Travel Committee made up of pupils, staff, parents and Sustrans came together to launch the School Travel Action Plan.

Hezlett Primary School, Castlerock have participated in escorted bike rides and recently celebrated the official opening of the school cycle paths in an event attended by the school travel team and project funders.



Money more Primary School Money more pupils even had coordinating balloons and jumpers for the Carbon Day!



St Colmcille's Primary School Pupils and staff thoroughly enjoyed their visit from Alastair Humphreys, pupils and staff created a display to celebrate their achievement.

St Jarlath's Primary School, Blackwatertown

School champion Mary Finn organised a very successful Carbon Saving Day which was thoroughly enjoyed by all!! Well done to all at the school.

St John's Primary School, Swatragh

St Johns attended the presentation made by Alastair Humphreys at Cloughmills Primary School and have been working with DOE and the pupils to provide Road Safety education. Thanks to Martina for all her work!



Kilbride Primary School, Doagh held a series of excellent events including a hearts walk, carbon saving day, and are currently participating in escorted bike rides.



St Joseph's Primary School, Bessbrook Brendan Lewis organised two very successful walk to school days, one of which was the Carbon Saving Day.



Killylea Primary School, Armagh have been extremely busy with Winter Welly Walks, Carbon Saving Day and Easter Egg Rolling Events.

St Mary's Primary School, Cushendall

The school took part in the Carbon Saving Day and had a visit from Alastair Humphreys. The school are also holding a cycling event during April with Sustrans.



St Mary's Primary School, Derrytrasna

The school meet Alastair Humphreys during when they visited St Jarlaths Primary School for Alistair's talk.



Killyleagh Primary School, County Down held a successful Carbon Saving Day organised by Carney Cumper and the school. Principal John McCrea organised a well supported Carbon Day at Ballinamallard Primary School.

Broadbridge Primary School, Eglinton held an Easter Bunny walk to school.

Credit: Killylea PS

Credit: Killyleagh PS

How to organise a Wheely Good Bike Event

In the run up to Bike to school Week 5th-9th May you may find the following ideas useful in planning your events.



Big Bike Event at St Colmcilles, Claudy

Bikers Breakfast with prizes at St Johns PS, Swatragh

Some ideas for events!

- A Bike Breakfast
- A raffle with bike related prizes
- Invite special guests – cycling champs etc!
- Certificates for those who take part!

Event Countdown

5 weeks before the event

- Get the ok from the school management and confirm dates
- Decide on a budget if needed
- Recruit volunteers to help organise/ help on the day

4 weeks before the event

- Ask a local cycle shop if would like to get involved
- Write to local businesses for prizes/donations

3 weeks before the event

- Organise overflow bike storage
- Decide on wet weather plan
- If providing food, organise catering
- Pupils to design posters or banners

2 weeks before the event

- Publicise the event in school newsletters, put posters up in school, and send letters home with permission slips for photos
- Give volunteers and pupils tasks for the event
- Confirm who is attending

1 week before the event

- Tell your local press about the event
- Remind pupils in assembly
- Do risk assessment if needed
- Buy prizes or other kit needed
- Do a count of bikes before to show increase at the event

On the day of the event

- Take lots of photos
- Count the number of cyclists
- Review the event and lessons learnt
- Keep momentum going!

For more info please see www.sustrans.org.uk/pedalpack

Rural Schools working in partnership with Roads Service

ROADS Service

After many requests for information on who supports Sustrans in their work, we thought it was time to feature the contribution which DRD Roads Service makes to the project.

Roads Service is the sole road authority in Northern Ireland, responsible for just over 25,000 km of public roads together with about 9,000 km of footways, 5,800 bridges, 261,000 street lights and 370 public car parks!



Credit: Roads Service

Denver Brown (left), a Roads Service engineer based in Southern Division, has been working with Sustrans to deliver improvements to infrastructure which will hopefully be supported at three schools in the project; Killylea Primary School, Armagh, St Jarlath's Primary School, Blackwatertown and St Mary's Primary School, Derrytrasna.

Working closely with Sustrans, Denver has been able to deliver infrastructure which will hopefully be well used and supported. This work brings many positive benefits to children's lives and to the local community, which is encouraging to all those involved.

All Road Service Divisions have been involved with delivering infrastructure improvements at the 18 schools ranging from the installation of solar powered flashing school warning lights which alert drivers to the school, to widening existing footways to allow cyclists to share the path with pedestrians, to the installation of pedestrian crossing points.

The support of Roads Service and in particular individual engineers working on the schemes has been invaluable to our success.

P7 pupil Ailís Stevenson, St Mary's Derrytrasna said: *"The work around our school is great, because now we can cross the road safely, lights flash to warn drivers that we're coming out of school, and we can put our bicycles in a place where we know they're free from harm."*

Safe rivers to schools!

A South African village is demanding that a bridge be built across a crocodile-infested river to stop children swimming it to get to school. Students as young as seven have been making the crossing for two months since the community's boat was stolen. "I worry all the time. There are dangerous animals in there, especially crocodiles," says Thuthukani Primary School headmistress Hlengiwe Mthembu. The children, some of whom also attend Mabizela High School, often arrive tired and unable to concentrate, she says. "They sit in class and shiver because of the cold and they can't study well because they are worrying about how they are going to get home."

Tips for organising a walking bus

Six Major Benefits of the Walking Bus

1. Exercise!

The walking bus gives everyone a chance to take part in regular exercise. Evidence shows that more active children are likely to become more active adults. *Just a 15 minute journey to and from school can contribute to half the daily recommended exercise for children.*Reference: A safer Journey to School, the Pedestrians Society, 2000.

2. Road Safety!

Children who walk to school on a walking bus are part of a large and visible group which is supervised by adults and seen safely into school. This reassures parents who are concerned about letting their children walk on their own

3. Road Sense!

The walking bus helps children learn pedestrian skills so that when they begin to walk on their own they are better equipped to deal with traffic.

4. Socialising!

The journey to school gives children a chance to talk and make new friends, when they've arrived at school they've done their chatting and are more ready to learn.

5. Environment!

Every journey made on foot helps reduce the amount of traffic around schools, which will help reduce air pollution and improve our local environment for everyone.

6. Breathe Easy!

Did you know that research has proved that if you make a short journey in a car, you are exposed to more air pollution, than if you walk! By using a walking bus, children will have fresh air to wake them up, before settling down to work in class



Broadbridge PS, Eglinton

How to set up a Walking Bus

Anyone who is keen can set up a walking bus but we recommend that you involve your headteacher, Sustrans officer or road safety officer for some initial guidance.

1. Find out which parents and pupils are interested and where they live. The buses' success will rely on having an enthusiastic co-ordinator and enough volunteers to share the 'driving' and 'conducting'. The more parents involved, the less time each volunteer will need to commit!
2. We would recommend having at least 1 adult for every 6-8 children taking part, but you can have more if parents feel more comfortable with this.
3. When a route is agreed, Sustrans can help assess its suitability and work with our partners to deliver pedestrian training.
4. We strongly recommend wearing high visibility jackets.
5. Setting rules both for pupils and volunteers can be important, such as what time the bus leaves, and what happens if a child misbehaves or misses the start time etc.
6. Background checks can be carried out – but most schools don't see this as necessary as there should always be two or more parents or other adults to supervise the bus.

For any further information, or if you would like us to set up a meeting within the school to take things forward, contact William and Jill on 028 9043 4569.

Caption Competition Winner

"Always look on the bike side of life – de do de do de do de do!"

We are pleased to announce the winner of the Caption Competition featured in our Autumn newsletter. Well done to **Mikey Hopkins** a P5 pupil in Kilbride Central Primary School for his winning caption.



Win Hi Vis Vests for a class at your school!

To be in with a chance of winning answer the following question and email ruralschools@sustrans.org.uk

How many balloons full of carbon dioxide represent one car journey to school?

First correct answer received wins a hi vis vest for everyone in their class!

The prize has been kindly donated by Discount



Workwear who supply cut price hi-vis vests and jackets for adults and children. For more information on their products and branding service contact Alison 07879 461601 or email alisong@discountworkwear4u.com