

# Routes 2 action

Spring 2011 **Issue 23**

## Use your senses on the school journey

*A pupil from New Oak learns how to become an 'Experience Collector'*



Pupils from two Bristol primary schools have been taking part in a special project to get them to use more of their senses on the school journey.

Working with local Bike It officers, artist and educator Christian Nold introduced his **Sensory Journeys** project into Staple Hill and New Oak schools. The aim of the project was to investigate young people's sensory experience during their school journey in order to encourage pupils to evaluate the way they travel to school and to become more aware of their surroundings.

At a series of workshops pupils were encouraged to become 'Experience Collectors' and took part in a

variety of activities designed to awaken their sense of sight, smell and sound. The children then recorded and discussed their experiences of the school journey and did drawings of what they experienced. These were collated and uploaded onto a specially created website using open mapping software to build a picture of the journey to school from the pupils' point of view.

From this Christian Nold developed high-quality, large-scale Sensory Maps for each school, incorporating the pupils' thoughts, feelings, observations and drawings about the journey to school and their local area.

Welcome to Routes 2 Action. Wishing all of our readers a very Happy New Year! To get 2011 off to a flying start, this issue is jam-packed with innovative and exciting ideas to encourage young people (and adults!) to get active and enjoy healthy, sustainable school travel. The lead story tells us about a unique project which proves that walking, cycling and scooting to school beats driving!

**Page 2 School Travel Foreword:**

Celebrating Sustrans' 16th year of working with young people

**Page 3 Bike bus:** One parent's solution for the school run

**Page 4 Planning ahead:** a project to promote active school travel during transition

**Page 5 A Q&A special:** all your cycle parking questions answered

**Page 6 Scotland:** Piloting vehicle exclusion zones around schools

**Page 7 Incentive scheme:** to help encourage active travel

**Page 8 Bike It:** the first school to earn silver!



*Staple Hill pupils carefully recording experiences of their school journeys*

Continued on page 2...



# All aboard the bike bus

*The bike bus in action!*



**Paul Howard, a parent from West Sussex contacted the School Travel team for advice about setting up a cycle train, or in his case, a bike bus! Here's his story...**

“ I love cycling. So too do my children. But getting to school and back by bike has been a major challenge over the past few years.

First there was the logistical hurdle of cycling with four young children. Then there was the absence of bike racks in the playground. Fortunately the children's bike-handling skills have improved with age and a timely financial contribution for bike racks from Sustrans mean both of these obstacles have now been overcome.



*Just a few of the smiley pupils and adults who take part in the bike bus*

Yet the major hurdle of finding a safe route to school remained. The only way to avoid ignoring the No Cycling signs on a long section of footpath was to ride down the narrow, congested village main street at one of the busiest times of the day; hardly a pleasant experience on your own, let alone with little ones in tow.

The only answer, it seemed, was safety in numbers: if cyclists could group together, with adults on the outside, chaperoning the children, their presence on the road would be impossible to ignore. Working on the assumption that the vast majority of drivers are only a threat to cyclists through being unaware of them, our safe progress down half a mile of the main street could be assured.

Guidance from Sustrans and the council, through the local School Travel Advisor, confirmed that parents cycling with their own children – even in a group – would not need insurance cover. As a result, with support from the school and the Co-op, who donated hi-vis vests – or yellow jerseys, if you prefer – the bike bus was born.

So far, the weekly scheme has been well received. Five families now routinely participate, and only once has the weather caused it to be cancelled. Indeed, the youthful enthusiasm of the participants and the high visibility of the bus itself has prompted a much greater

## £unding Tip

Awards for All is a Lottery grants scheme funding small, local community-based projects in the UK. One of the aims is to encourage healthier and more active people and communities and as a result, schools have been successful in applying for grants to help with school travel projects.

The grants on offer vary between England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales so visit the website for details about grants available in your area.

[www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk)

awareness of cycling in general. It might not yet be perceived as normal, but at least cycling to school is now possible.

”  
**Most importantly, what do the pupils think about the bike bus?**

*“I think it's good to ride together in a group with our hi-Vis vests so we can be seen by all the car drivers. And it's fun!”*

Grace Norman, aged 8.

*“I like riding with the others but they have to remember to go slowly so we can all stay together.”*

Benji Howard, aged 6.

*“I like my bike and it's fun to ride with others.”*

Nadia Bartlett, aged 9½.

**ACTION**

A big thank you to Paul for contributing this story. If you've got an idea for an article, we'd love to hear from you! Email us at [schools@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:schools@sustrans.org.uk) or give us a call on 0117 915 0100.

## Transition champs

The transition from primary to secondary school is a big step for all children, so Wirral Council's School Travel Team and Year 9 pupils from Hilbre High Secondary School have worked on a project to help the new arrivals make a smooth transition to their new school.

*"To help make the change from primary to secondary school, we worked with Year 6 pupils in four of Hilbre High's feeder schools,"* says School Travel Plan Co-ordinator, Catherine Brownlow.

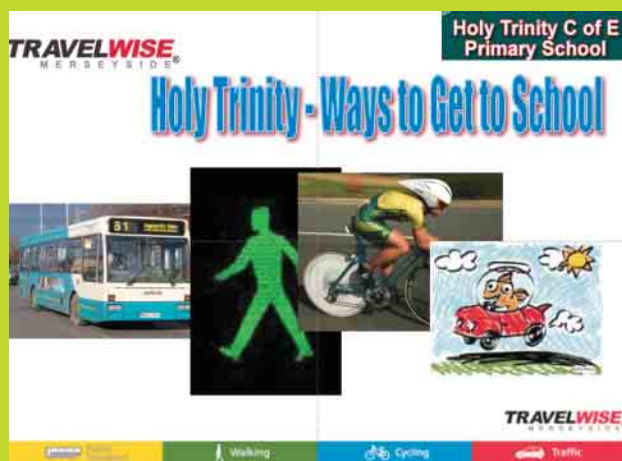
Eight gifted and talented Year 9 pupils from Hilbre High worked on a project to provide travel information for the Year 6s at West Kirby, Blackhorse Hill Junior, Hoylake Holy Trinity and Great Meols Primary Schools.

The Year 9s looked at walking, cycling and public transport and did an audit of all the facilities on offer at Hilbre including cycle access, shelters, footpaths and bus stops.

Pupils then spent a day with a marketing company producing an information leaflet and a PowerPoint presentation tailored to each of the schools, which they then presented to the Year 6 pupils.

*"It really made the Year 6s consider how they were going to get to secondary school. Pupils who have been cycling to primary school realised that they could carry on at secondary school,"* says Catherine. *"This has been a great project and we plan to repeat the exercise next year, hopefully with the Year 6s cycling to Hilbre."*

A hands-up survey is planned to see how the new Year 7s are travelling to school and Bike It officer, Simon Wallis, will be delivering some Year 7 assemblies to keep the sustainable travel message alive.



*Year 9 pupils from Hilbre High made and presented a PowerPoint presentation on school travel for Holy Trinity Primary Year 6s*

**ACTION**

For more information about transition and school travel, visit the Resources section of our website and have a look in the Toolkit.  
[www.sustrans.org.uk/schooltravel](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/schooltravel)

## Success for virtual race around Wales



*Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Environment present pupils with a plaque celebrating their win*

Last October, Sustrans challenged 8,000 pupils from Bike It schools across Wales to take part in a virtual bike race.

For one week, pupils, parents and teachers were awarded virtual miles each time they cycled to school and these were put towards each school's total in completing a 709-mile virtual tour around Wales. Pupils from 38 Bike It schools were encouraged to demonstrate their new-found passion for cycling in celebration of the Safe Routes to School initiative in Wales and the 15th anniversary of Wales' National Cycle Network.

The winning school, Ysgol Melin Gruffydd in Cardiff, completed the course in just two days and made a total of 747 journeys by bike during the whole week – almost 200 of which were made by parents and teachers. For its efforts, the school was awarded with a plaque presented at an event held by Sustrans in the National Assembly for Wales (also the site for the finish point of the virtual race), where pupils had the opportunity to voice their enthusiastic support for Bike It to Assembly Members attending. The winning school also got to spend a day with BMX stunt show, Team Extreme, including demonstrations and coaching. The other regional winners, Ysgol Bryn Hedydd and Glanymor Primary, won an Extreme Mountain Bike Show.

The scheme, organised by local Bike It Officers, Tim Anfield, Louise Powell and Alan Heaton, was a great success. *"It was amazing to see the bike shelters fill up, then overflow!"* says Tim. *"So many pupils and parents took to their bikes for this competition, it really shows the potential for behaviour change towards sustainable travel."*

# Q&A

## Q: Can you help me choose the right cycle parking for my school?

**A:** As a charity we can't recommend a supplier for you, but we've put together a directory of cycle parking manufacturers to help you find companies in your area. It's in the Toolkit section of our website. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/cycleparking>

It's always worth asking other schools in your area who have recently installed cycle parking about their experiences, and your School Travel Advisor may have some ideas too.

In R2A 21 we featured some innovative, greener cycle parking designs which included strong educational aspects in the form of habitats for wildlife and pupil-led designs. If you need something a little more traditional or want to go for an ultra modern design, you can still make sure your choice is environmentally sound. Tim from H-B Designs has these tips on choosing long-lasting, sustainable cycle parking:

**Tip 1** – “Ask potential suppliers what the design life of their products is and how long a warranty they offer. How often will your new cycle parking need maintaining? For best long-term protection from corrosion, always go for galvanised steel and if you want to liven up metalwork with colour, painted finishes are easier than powder coating to refurbish later. Remember longevity is the key to sustainability and cost effectiveness.”

**Tip 2** – “Choose primary materials such as steel and wood, avoiding the use of virgin stock plastic where possible. Always ask where materials come from and how they can be re-used, recycled or refurbished at the end of their life.”

Take a look at Tim's website for more information on his sustainable cycle parking solutions [www.hbdesigns.co.uk](http://www.hbdesigns.co.uk).

*Wood can provide an attractive and long-lasting material for a cycle parking shelter*



## Q: How can we include younger children in cycle to school activities?

**A:** Many schools are now installing dedicated scooter parking alongside their cycle parking. Scooting is fun for those children not yet able to cycle, encourages active travel from an early age and fosters skills which carry through to cycling later on such as steering, stopping and balancing. Include scooters in any cycle incentive scheme you run.

*Scooter storage can be practical and appealing*



Offering some sort of cycle training to younger children is a great way to get them involved and boost their confidence. Many schools find it cost effective to have a member of staff, perhaps a teaching assistant, trained as a Bikeability instructor. As well as offering level 2 to the Year 5/6s as usual, level 1 can be offered to the younger children without having to pay an external trainer to come in. Visit the website for more information. [www.bikeability.org.uk](http://www.bikeability.org.uk)

Our Bike It officers find that 'ditch the stabilisers' sessions always go down well in their schools. Similarly some schools are offering 'balanceability' or other balance bike training to their infants as a precursor to Bikeability. (A balance bike has no pedals and a low seat so children can scoot it along with their feet). For more information visit [www.balanceability.co.uk](http://www.balanceability.co.uk)

You could also get involved in British Cycling's Go Ride programme, which offers fun, structured cycling coaching for children of all ages, usually delivered as an after-school club or similar. Teachers can go on a one-day course to train as Go Ride coaches or British Cycling have their own coaches who go into schools. Visit [www.britishcycling.org.uk](http://www.britishcycling.org.uk) for more details.

**ACTION**

Read our new 'Cycle Parking for Schools' information sheet which includes a step-by-step guide to choosing your cycle storage. Have a look at the resource review on page 6 for more details.

# Car-free zones

Two Glasgow primary schools, Merrylee and Our Lady of the Annunciation, are piloting Scotland's first 'vehicle exclusion zones' around their schools.

Over a period of six months, pupils from both schools helped local road safety officers put together maps of the streets around the schools, deciding which ones were safe zones to park in (green) and which were unsafe (red). The aim of the scheme is to reduce accidents and encourage children to walk to school.

Parents are now being asked to either park more than five minutes walk from the school and/or cut down the number of car trips they make. Although the scheme is voluntary, it is hoped that by involving pupils and parents at the planning stage, they will feel more committed to making it work.

As part of the project, the pupils also carried out traffic surveys and put up anti-parking banners at the school gates.

Road Safety Development Officer, George Cairns, says:

*"The School Travel and Road Safety (STARS) initiative, which includes the red and green zone project, will provide schools with the resources and support to highlight and address school travel issues. It will be fully supported by council officers and the Go Safe Glasgow Road Safety Partnership."*

**ACTION**

For more case studies and resources to help you set up a car-free zone, visit Living Streets' Walk to School website:  
[www.walktoschool.org.uk/car-free-zone](http://www.walktoschool.org.uk/car-free-zone)



*To launch the project, pupils stood outside the school holding up red or green cards*

## Resource review

### New School Travel infosheets

If you have a question, concern or a general interest in school travel, be sure to have a look at our wide range of infosheets, from Developing a School Travel Plan to Staying safe on the school journey. We've been busy updating the infosheets to make sure all the facts and figures and initiatives mentioned in them are all up to date. Here are a few examples to whet your appetite!



**Cycle parking for schools** is an essential read for any school considering having cycle parking installed. It covers funding, choosing suitable cycle

storage, a section dedicated to eco-friendly shelters and loads more besides.

**Facts and figures to support school travel initiatives** contains a huge range of information which provides evidence to support school travel initiatives and will inspire staff, pupils, parents and the local community to work together to make the school journey safer, healthier and more enjoyable for everyone.

**Staying safe on the school journey** addresses issues such as road safety, 'stranger danger' and antisocial behaviour. It offers practical advice and ideas about how to encourage active, independent school travel whilst ensuring that children stay safe.

**The infosheets above and many more can be found on the school travel website in the Resources section:**  
[www.sustrans.org.uk/schooltravel](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/schooltravel)



# Epsom Downs earns silver



*Bike Breakfast at Epsom Downs Primary*

**Epsom Downs Primary School in Surrey has become the first school to be awarded the Bike It Silver School Mark.**

The school has come a long way in a short time. When Epsom Downs became a Bike It school in September 2007, many pupils didn't have bikes or their bikes were in a poor condition and only about 15% of children cycled to school with any regularity. At the last hands-up survey in the summer of 2010, this had gone up to 45%.

**"To go from a low level of cycling to earning the Silver Mark in just three years is an amazing achievement,"** says Bike It officer, Gayle Rowson. **"The school has shown great dedication and has really embedded a cycling culture."**

Cycling is now an integral part of its School Development Plan. Epsom Downs runs their own annual cycle week, organised by Bike It champion, Gemma Finbow. During the week the school is packed with bikes and the pupils enjoy a variety of cycling related activities, including bike maintenance sessions and virtual bike races.

Cycling is now given time in the curriculum and the school has invested in a pool of bikes and helmets to lend to pupils who need them. The school also successfully campaigned for over two years for a crossing outside the gates and runs regular Bike It breakfasts with a bike smoothie maker.

Last summer, 12 Year 6 pupils cycled with another primary school to the local Bike It secondary school as part of the area's first transition event, where they enjoyed fun bike skills sessions with Year 7 tutors and children.

# Recycling scheme gets pupils cycling again

When Bike It started up in Belfast in September 2009, Edenbrooke Primary jumped at the chance to sign up. However, Bike It officers soon discovered that not all the children who wanted to cycle had access to a bike.

**"Bike It is all about breaking down barriers, and what a barrier it is when you don't have a bike!"** says Sustrans Director for Northern Ireland Steven Patterson. Bike It set about creating a bike recycling scheme to provide refurbished bikes for willing young cyclists. With funding from Bike Hub and Belfast City Council, they worked with local Recycling Centres to salvage bikes that were being thrown out that could be re-used.

**A total of 20 bikes were rescued and were then repaired by local bike shop, Bike Dock. "Not only are there now 20 very proud new bicycle owners, but a real cycling culture has kicked off at the school,"** confirms Steven. **"Each time we visit we see 30-40 bikes."** New cycle parking has been installed and pupils are benefiting from cycling to school, becoming healthier and seeing more of their local area with their friends.

The scheme was nominated for the Brighter Belfast Environmental Awards, coming second in its category.

**Sustrans is the charity that's enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day.**

**It's time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today. [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)**

Photo credits: P1 and 2: Sustrans, P3: Paul Howard, P4: Hilbre High School, Tim Anfield, P5: H-B Designs ([www.hbdesigns.co.uk](http://www.hbdesigns.co.uk)), P6: Glasgow City Council, P7: Whitchurch Primary School, P8: Gayle Rowson.

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Routes 2 Action is a free termly publication which aims to support the school community – teachers, parents, governors and schools – in school travel initiatives.

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