

York Schools Current Sustainable Travel Initiatives

Walk Once a Week

When children in York were surveyed, as part of the annual census survey, asking for their preferred mode of travel, many who came by car said they would like to walk or cycle. We have found that the constraint was often their parents wishing to drive as the journey to school was part of their commute. However, during Walk to School Week which was held twice a year, many of these children did indeed walk or cycle.

To encourage more sustainable travel to school on a regular basis York's own Walk Once A Week scheme was developed to replace Walk to School Week. Children are encouraged to 'Walk with Wilf' – our local friendly Viking (taking full advantage of York's heritage). To try and ensure longevity, schools are encouraged to personalise the scheme and adapt it to suit the school – a weekly competition perhaps. Each week children are to be encouraged to travel to school by bike, scooter or walk at least once a week. The scheme was launched in May, with nearly 20 schools taking part. Initial feedback from the first term of operation will be analysed over the summer, and several more schools have requested materials starting in the Autumn. Schools may start at any time.

Walking Buses

A 'Walking Bus' lets a group, or 'bus', of children walk from home to school each morning quickly and safely under the guidance of trained adult supervisors. The 'bus' has a regular route, timetable and stops like a powered bus. It relies on volunteers to organise the bus, something many schools find difficult to find. However some schools have been able run walking buses successfully. Robert Wilkinson school is currently promoting 'walking buddies', an informal walking scheme where families get together to walk to school, with older children looking after younger. This has proved popular and again was developed with the help of the School Travel Plan Coordinator.

Park and Stride

Some schools have Park and Stride sites where parents are encouraged to park at a suitable safe location (a friendly pub or sports club perhaps) a short distance from the school and then walk the rest of the way to school. Not all schools have such a location, but where possible sites are sought.

Schools are helped to find a suitable site and guided into how they might approach the owner for permission to use it. Schools are advised to make the approach themselves as this is more likely to be successful. Once a suitable site is identified, if necessary the school is supported in promoting it to parents to encourage them to use it. Occasionally to improve access, some work may be included in the Safer Routes to School Scheme. For example the car park at Ethel Ward playing fields in Haxby was identified as a suitable Park and Stride site. However the short distance from the car park to the footpath was grass, so working with Engineering Consultancy, permission was sought from the Town Council for permission to

construct a path across the grass to link the car park with the pavement, allowing passage during the wetter months.

Road Safety Initiatives

All schools in York (including Independents) are offered Bikeability cycle training, and all Primary schools do take up the offer of Level 1 and 2 Bikeability training with around 64% of Primary school children participating. This is taken by children in Year 5. All children in years 3 & 4 are offered Pedestrian training. Level 3 Bikeability training is offered to all Secondary schools with 353 pupils from 11 Secondary schools participating. Bikeability cycle training is important for the City as some schools as it gives children road awareness which they will carry forward in to their adult lives. A number of schools in York will not allow children to cycle to school unaccompanied unless they have taken Level 2 training.

Parent and carer training sessions (partially funded through Cycle City initiative) have been introduced to help those parents who may lack confidence to cycle to school with their children but who would like to. Training is given to the family so that they may be confident on the journey to school. The availability of this training has had an added benefit as in June 2010 Carr Junior school changed its cycling policy. Originally only those children who had passed level 2 training (years 5 and 6) were permitted to cycle to school. As of June younger children may cycle with their family to school provide that Parent and carer training has been completed. This came about through the efforts of the School Travel Plan Coordinator.

21 of our schools have a school crossing patrol. The School Crossing Patrol Supervisor works with the School Travel Plan Coordinators to identify and improve the environment in the proximity of the schools they serve.

Cycle City

Cycle City has provided a tremendous opportunity to encourage our young people to get cycling. The funding has enabled us to target key areas and show that cycling in York is safe and fun. Analysis by Cycle England from the first three year's Cycle Demonstration Town programme shows that investment in cycling pays back at least 3:1 in terms of increased health benefits, and other aspects such as a reduction in congestion and air pollution.

As York already has a culture of cycling and a good cycle net work, the Schools group of the Cycling City project decided to focus on events that got children cycling. These have tended to be high profile with media coverage. In April 2009 we held 'Biking Vikings' where 70 children cycled into the centre of York accompanied by Vikings. This was followed in June by Save My Bike Day where families could come along and find out how make safety checks on their bike and make simple repairs. September saw a Schools conference where 20 of York's schools came along to find out more about cycling in York and the Bike It project. December saw a families Christmas bike ride to the Christmas village at Murton, to demonstrate that it is possible to cycle to a venue most would normally drive to, particularly in winter.

So far in 2010 we have seen York's first Virtual bike race with 19 schools actively participating. Schools raced each other from Lands End to John O'Groats with each journey to school counting. During the two week period nearly 10,000 bike journeys

were generated. The average rate of cyclist in the participating schools during this time period was 20% compared to around 5% for primary schools, the best were achieving well over 40% of children cycling with the best up to 60%. Cycle counts by schools after the event showed that children were continuing to cycling to school after the event had finished. Another similar event is planned for late September to tie in with York's second Car Free day and the Jack Archer Award.

Bike It - York has appointed a Bike it officer, funded by Sustrans, who works closely with around a dozen schools to encourage cycling. He works through a mix of assemblies, classroom activities and outdoor activities. Evidence from other Bike It towns and from York, who itself was a Bike It town in 2005, is that Bike It works and schools continue to see raised cycling levels after the programme has finished. The Bike It officer works with the School Travel Plan Coordinator to identify suitable schools.

Beauty and the Bike - This is another Sustrans initiative aimed at encouraging young women to continue cycling and giving them the confidence to do so. Whilst there tends to be roughly equal numbers of males and females cycling in primary school, the numbers of girls cycling in Secondary school drops markedly to around 10% of cyclists. Using a female tutor, girls in years 6 and 7 from 10 schools in York have a 3 session programme looking at the barriers to cycling, cycle maintenance, some cycle training and route planning skills including a bike ride.