

WORKPLACE CYCLING

MAKE YOUR WORK BIKE-FRIENDLY



Think your workplace could be more bike-friendly?

This factsheet is for you if you cycle to work (or would like to).

It explains how to work with colleagues and your employer to improve facilities for cyclists at your workplace.

The ideas here mostly come from a large site, but will also be very useful in a smaller workplace.

How good could things be?

Cycle-friendly employers actively encourage cycling. If your workplace only *tolerates* cyclists then maybe it's time to do something about it.

Search online for Cycling Scotland's 'Cycle Friendly Employer' scheme to find out what the best workplaces provide.

There are physical things like **secure bike parking, lockers, changing rooms, showers and drying rooms**. There are the financial things like the **'bike for work' scheme** and paying **expenses for business travel by bicycle**. There are cultural things like **considering cycling as part of travel planning**. There are **social things** like a network of colleagues providing advice and support to get more people to ride a bike to work.

WORKPLACE CYCLING

What do you need to improve facilities at your workplace?

1. One or two 'champions' who are determined to make things happen.
2. A bicycle users' group that can speak on behalf of everyone who cycles to work (or would like to).
3. Evidence for, and agreement about, what needs changing.
4. Constructive relations with 'management'.

Be a champion for cycling

If you've decided that you want to change things, then you're an ideal person to be champion and to take the lead. To make progress will need determination and hard work: the more effort you invest, the more effective you will be.

It's great to have an ally. Is there someone else who can share work and ideas with you? Also, is there someone in 'management' who you can link up with? In a big organisation you might have a 'sustainability manager' or a 'travel manager', but whatever their title, you're looking for the person whose job it is to get fewer people using their cars.

It's really easy for people to say 'no' to ideas like this, so try not to give them the opportunity. You'll know your work culture and how much you can get away with, but we'd encourage you to be proactive.

You could have a chat with your boss to see if he or she will give you a bit of slack to do this alongside your proper job, or you could just get started and see if you can manage without asking them, then ask later when you know how much work is involved and it's too late for them to say no! Seek forgiveness, not permission.

Set up a Bicycle Users' Group (BUG)

There's lots of stuff online about setting up a BUG (search for 'bicycle user group'). We particularly like the advice from Cycling UK.

The things a good BUG needs are:

1. **Lots of members.** The more people you can recruit, the more powerful your voice and the wider your network. Don't just go for the year-round commuters: also get the people who would like to cycle but don't. A good way to recruit members is to have a stall with maps and freebies. Contact Spokes, Sustrans and Cycling Scotland to get stall materials. Sign up anyone who you think can help you. Keep track of the number of members you have.



Flickr CC BY-NC 2.0: Paul Ruskin, Penn State



2. **A place to share information.** A real or virtual noticeboard is vital. If your workplace allows it, an online discussion group is the best way for members to keep in touch with each other. A 'wiki' of pages of online advice is very useful: this can cover things like how to make the best of your workplace facilities, best bike routes to your workplace and general advice about bike commuting. For all this online stuff you or an ally will need to do much of the work. It's a fact of life that most BUG members will read the content you create without commenting or joining in. They'll still use it and enjoy it though.
3. **Regular communication.** The best BUGs have a weekly email to members that keeps the BUG active in their mind. A light-hearted message that lands every Friday lunchtime makes a nice way of rounding off the week. Update members about progress on projects, point them at discussions on your online forum and remind them of cycling events at work or elsewhere.

Gathering evidence

With your BUG set up, you can start thinking about what needs to change. Most senior managers like to see hard facts before making a decision, so start gathering these as soon as you can.

1. **Count the bikes at your workplace.** Start now. Count them at least once a week. Count them on different days. See if there's a pattern. You may find fewer in winter than



in summer, and different numbers on different days of the week. Plot a graph and keep updating it. Very quickly it becomes a useful reference.

2. **Survey the BUG members.** Do a proper survey of your members (consider SurveyMonkey or similar). Find out how often they cycle, which way they come, why they don't cycle more often, what they think about the current facilities at your workplace or nearby, and what they would like to see improved. Repeat the survey every year. This is better than just having a discussion, because it means you can take account of everyone's views, not just the noisy people's.
3. **Collect facts and figures.** There's lots of good information online about the benefits of riding a bike to work, about how to set up a 'Bike for Work' scheme, about being a cycle friendly employer and about the costs of provision of cycle facilities. Do your online research so that you are prepared for discussions with your employer. The Cycling UK website is very useful for this.

Constructive relations with management

The Spokes way is to be respectfully challenging, to praise good achievements when they happen, to sympathise with the constraints that people work under, but to be relentless in campaigning. We'd suggest you

WORKPLACE CYCLING

do the same at work. Find out who makes the decisions, and then build constructive relations with them. The existence of the BUG gives you the mandate to speak about the facilities on the BUG's behalf (rather than as an individual). The evidence you've gathered will bolster your case and will let you deal with objections.

1. **See both sides of the argument.**

People like to moan and grumble. Sometimes you may need to take the side of management (or at least put their point of view to the BUG) when BUG members are grumbling without good cause. Consider helping management by drafting responses for them.

2. **Target your messages.** If you work in a big organisation, you'll need to focus your messages. Talk to HR about paying expenses for bicycle use, and the Facilities Manager about installing bike racks. Be relentless in tracking down exactly the right people to help you.

3. **Find some allies.** Is there someone in management that you can help? In a big organisation there may be someone responsible for travel planning, for environmental targets or for employee wellbeing. Is your CEO a keen bike rider? Identify your allies. How can you help them? How can they help you?

4. **Help your employer.** The data you've gathered about the numbers of cyclists is a useful resource for your company when it needs to talk about environmental targets. Share your data freely, but then call in the return favour when you need it. If you take the lead on making your workplace a 'Cycle Friendly Employer', that helps your employer. Sustrans runs an 'Active Travel Champion' scheme: could that be you? How would that help your employer?

5. **Prepare, prepare, prepare.** If you're meeting your facilities manager to talk about installing bike racks, then go prepared with examples and cost estimates. If you're trying to persuade HR to start a 'Bike for Work' scheme, then find out about the different schemes, how they work and how much they will cost. Give management solutions packaged up and ready for them to approve. Do the work for them. These things aren't a priority for them, so make it as easy as possible so they are more likely to do them.

6. **Be realistic.** If budgets at your work are set annually, and there's no budget this year for what you want, then work relentlessly to get it into next year's budget. Play a long game.

And finally...

Setting up and running an effective BUG is hard work. It will take time to establish, and you'll need to be patient. However, with determination and focus you can make a tremendous difference to your workplace, and improve things for everyone who rides a bike there. That will be incredibly satisfying. It's likely to do your career prospects no harm either. You'll develop your skills of influencing, diplomacy, planning and organisation. You'll build a network of contacts across your workplace. It will look good on your CV!