

National Cycle Training Project

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An introduction to the project given to an audience in Cheltenham, May 2002

History

The formal training of road users is a relatively recent concept. Back in the days of the horse and carriage, training such as took place was informal and by example, younger horsemen simply observed their elders and were given the reins when an opportunity arose.

Even during the first half-century of the motor car, training was a very relaxed affair. For most of that time there was no driving test and there are people still driving cars today who have never passed one.

Similarly, for a long time, training to ride a bicycle was thought no more relevant than training for pedestrians. It was simply something that most people could do, and a few people couldn't. You got on – perhaps with some support from a parent or friend – pushed away and coped as best you could until, gradually, you'd made sufficient mistakes and gained sufficient experience to know what best to do and not to do. People who rode with cycling clubs undoubtedly benefited from the example of others.

By the 1930s, however, the Government was becoming concerned about the steeply rising toll of death and injury on the roads, largely associated with the rise in motor traffic. The Road Traffic Act 1930 provided for the introduction of a Highway Code, and new driving licences formalised the need for driver training to meet specific objectives.

In 1934 cyclists became the focus of new regulation, requiring a white patch on the rear of a bicycle if it did not carry a light at night, and making it unlawful for a solo cycle to carry more than one person. The first cycle paths were introduced, the Minister having the right to oblige cyclists to use them. The threat of further legislation to deal with the 'lawlessness' of cyclists focused minds on ways to improve behaviour.

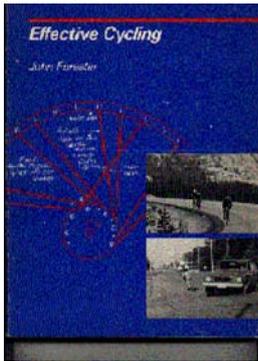
In 1937, a House of Lords Select Committee echoed evidence given by the Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) in favour of training for child cyclists. The following year the CTC's AGM passed a motion calling for instruction in cycle riding to be introduced into school curricula.

In the event war intervened and it was not until 1947 that a scheme for training and testing children in cycling proficiency was introduced by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The instruction manual was prepared by the CTC and its members were prominent amongst the trainers. By 1958 the scheme had proved so popular, that it was expanded and accorded national status by the Government.

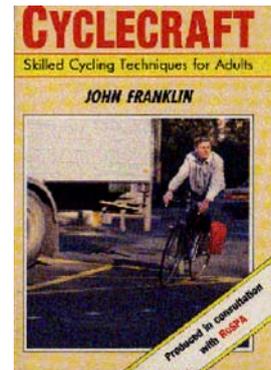
Over the years, what is commonly known as the RoSPA cycling proficiency scheme has seen several changes of format, but has given a basic grounding in cycling to millions of children. Notwithstanding criticism that the quality of training has declined as the police have withdrawn their involvement and as most of the training is now given by people who are not themselves regular cyclists, endorsement for the scheme came from a Transport Research Laboratory report in 1996 which concluded that child cycle training improves cycling skills and knowledge and the effects last for at least two years. The report found that the most effective training was road-based and spread over a number of weeks. A client-centred, problem-solving approach was found to be the best teaching method.

Training for adults

The interest in adult cyclist training diminished after the war, but resurfaced in a Department of Transport report in 1985 and has received increasing support since, especially amongst cyclists. Many people recognise that changes to the road infrastructure to make it more cycle-friendly will take many years to implement, and that the most positive way forward is to assist cyclists to deal better with the system as it is. In any case, equipped with a modest set of skills, most people can cycle on most roads with very little difficulty. Cycle training is also seen as an important component in enabling more people to cycle.



In 1984 *Effective Cycling* by John Forester was published in the USA, the first comprehensive guide to cycling technique and the philosophy of cycling. Four years later, the first edition of *Cyclecraft* was published, the first book in Britain devoted to teaching cycling skills to adults. Most of the adult training schemes now in being have their roots in these two publications.



The National Cycling Strategy of 1996 recommended local authorities to establish on-road cycle training for adults, and the National Cycling Forum in 1999 noted that "adult cycle training is also valuable, both because it gives non-cyclists the confidence to try cycling and because wider adoption of 'positive cycling' techniques will help reduce cycling casualties".

It had become clear, however, that national co-ordination of adult training was required if schemes were to be credible, far-reaching and effective. In 2000, therefore, the CTC successfully bid for funding to establish a National Cycle Training Scheme. History had in effect repeated itself, for just as it was the CTC that had initiated child cycle training, so now it is instrumental in laying the foundations for the training of adults.

The National Cycle Training Project

So what is the National Cycle Training Project?

First a caution. The project is still in its early days and the first pilots will not start for another month. Many aspects of the project have not yet been settled, and everything is subject to change in the light of experience. Some extensions to the project may or may not happen, or may be in a form different to that originally suggested. Therefore please treat what follows as a guide to what the project is about, not as a definitive statement.

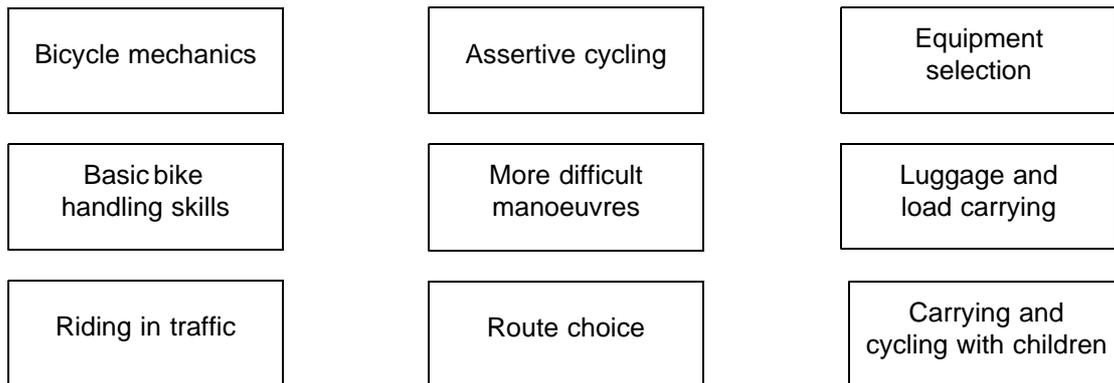
The National Cycle Training Project is funded by the Department of Transport, Local Government & Regions (DTLR), by the Department of Health, and two charitable trusts. It is being co-ordinated by the CTC and advised by a Reference Group. Most of the actual hands-on work in developing the project is being carried out by Cycle West as a contractor to the CTC.

The Reference Group has representatives from the DTLR, Dept of Health, Driving Standards Agency and the Scottish and Welsh administrations. Local authorities are represented by York and Surrey County Council, and there are representatives from RoSPA and the Association of Chief Police Officers. People involved in some of the existing adult training schemes are present. For example, the London School of Cycling, Cycle Training Ltd, Scottish Cycling Development Project, Cycle West themselves and, of course, York Council. Then there are a couple of people like myself, who have been involved in adult training in the wider sense.

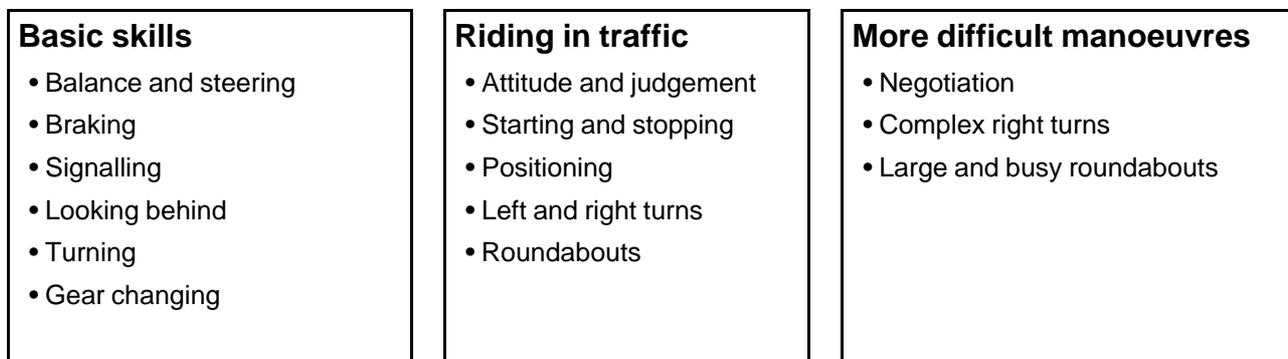
The aims are to develop a national programme of cycle training for teenagers and adults – those groups for whom there is no national training scheme at present. And through a process of accreditation, to provide a standard of quality assurance for cycle training that the public can rely upon and respect.

The means by which the Project will achieve these aims include a system of training and regulation for instructors; a curriculum for students, and publicity materials.

The project will use a modular approach for delivery, permitting a certain amount of mix and match in order to tailor training to the needs of an individual. It is the intention to set standards, without imposing standardisation, as it is recognised that the needs of individuals will vary, as will the requirements of training organisers.



This is an idea of the modular structure to be adopted, although not all of the modules shown will necessarily be implemented, at least not at first.



And these are the sort of topics likely to be covered in some of the core modules, although not all people would be expected to progress as far as the more difficult manoeuvres.

The core project is targeted primarily at cycling as a means of transport and for general leisure, but it is intended to provide links on to other forms of more specialised cycle training, either existing or which may be implemented by other organisations outside of the project. For example, the Scottish Cycling Development Project already has links with the BCF coaching and activity leader schemes and to the British Schools Cycling Association courses.

Best practice

The National Cycle Training Project started with a review of existing literature. There wasn't a lot to read aimed at cyclists apart from *Cyclecraft* and *Effective Cycling*, but a Driving Standards Agency book about motorcycle riding was also included, just as *Motorcycle Roadcraft* had been a reference for *Cyclecraft*. Three instructors manuals were examined together with more general guidance from RoSPA.

There was also in-depth examination of existing adult training schemes both in the UK and abroad. Some are run by non-Governmental organisations and private companies, others by local authorities. From this review a quite extensive list of best practices was drawn up, of which I will mention only a selection.

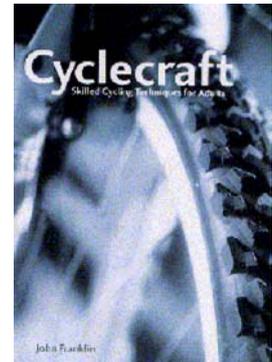
So far as clients are concerned, it is essential to tailor tuition so far as is possible to their individual needs and concerns. One-to-one training is generally best, but small groups have advantages in certain situations. It is imperative that all training includes on-road cycling, although some off-road may be needed at first for novices. It is also important to include theory as well as practice. Adults have a right to know why they should do something as well as how. This also leads to better retention of important concepts than the rote learning of a set of rules. Feedback must be two-way and should be encouraged. And organisers shouldn't be afraid to charge a realistic price for training – it enhances its value and appeal. Existing schemes range from free up to £25 per hour.

Instructors must be properly trained, and they should be paid a fair wage. Typical rates are £5 to £13 per hour. It is important to have regular monitoring, both of the instructors and of the effectiveness of the training that is given.

Risk assessments and insurance are essential. Contracts with clients and instructors should be fair but legally robust. And there should be properly prepared emergency procedures if something should go wrong during training.

Content and materials

Cyclecraft is to be required reading for all instructors and recommended reading for clients. The consensus was that there was no point devising a new teaching manual when this covered all the required ground and was readily available. The book is about to be reprinted.



A comprehensive instructor's manual, drawn up by Cycle Training Ltd, will be the recommended reference for the administration and practical aspects of implementing a training scheme.

The curricula for adult training is to be firmly based on the principles of vehicular cycling, whereby cyclists are expected to ride as part of the general traffic mix, enjoying the same rights as the drivers of other vehicles and accepting the same responsibilities.

There will be a model client curriculum, so that prospective clients know exactly what to expect, and there will be a model curriculum for instructors.

Clients

There is no such thing as a 'typical' client. Everyone is an individual whose aspirations and concerns are important. Therefore each person applying for training will be assessed in three ways. At initial enquiry or registration they will be asked certain basic information, such as have they cycled before, what is their reason for wanting to cycle, and are there specific journeys they wish to make? Do they have any disabilities that could affect their cycling, etc.

At the start of their training, or at a preliminary session, they will be assessed verbally in more detail. What are their experiences or perceptions of cycling? Do they have experience of sports in which precise control is required? Are they generally confident, over-confident or timid?

Then there will be assessment riding a bicycle. Moving off, riding in a straight line, looking behind, etc.

Based on these assessments, clients will be classified as Novice, Beginner or Practitioner.

A novice is someone who lacks basic cycle control skills. He or she is unable to balance at all, keeps falling off, wobbles much of the time, pedals incorrectly, etc. Training for novices will take place either on very quiet roads, or off-road.

A beginner is someone who has mastered many of the cycle control skills but lacks the skills for riding in traffic. He or she can probably balance, start, stop and ride along, but their course may be erratic. They have difficulty looking behind, signalling or turning tight corners, etc. Training for beginners will take place on lightly-trafficked roads.

A practitioner is anyone who is more able. They can ride in a straight line, ride one-handed, look behind and signal. Training for practitioners will take place on a variety of road types.

Instructors

Instructors must be regular urban cyclists, who can cycle competently and confidently in a wide range of traffic situations. They should be friendly, tolerant and outgoing and have good organisational and communication skills.

They must be familiar with vehicular cycling and, as previously noted, will be required to read *Cyclecraft* as the principal reference. They should remain calm, be punctual, reliable and trustworthy.

It would be a bonus if instructors had teaching experience, particularly with adults, and knew basic first aid. Police checks may be required in certain circumstances.

There will be a national registration and accreditation scheme for instructors, the details of which have not yet been finalised. And there is enthusiasm for the setting up of a professional institute, that might indeed administer the entire scheme, but there are lots of issues there including funding.

Instructors should engage with their clients as equals, listening and responding to all questions and concerns. Teaching will generally be by questioning and example, so that the client is fully involved in what is being taught. As previously said, there needs to be theory as well as practice, working towards agreed goals. And the client's commitment should not end with the lesson, but they should be empowered and enthused to think about what has been taught and to practice within their ability between sessions.

Training sessions

Training sessions should start with a greeting, confirmation of identity and perhaps a warm-up. Each session, assessments must be made of the weather, the client's well-being, the state of his/her bicycle and the clothing worn.

Based on all this, and where the training is to take place, a dynamic risk assessment will be required. The current level of competence of the client should be determined and goals agreed for the session.

Sessions should include theory, as necessary, to explain what is being taught. Generally teaching will be a mix of demonstration, practice and questioning. An instructor should always ride behind the client, in most cases to the inside so as not to impede the client's rear vision, but in the case of novices an outside position can influence traffic to leave more clearance.

Risk assessment needs to be an on-going process and if anything happens that causes the risk to be unacceptable, the training session must be immediately modified or terminated.

At the end of a session the instructor should discuss the client's progress and what should follow.

Roll-out

Pilots of the National Cycle Training Project are to commence in June in London, Surrey and Hereford.

It is hoped that the full scheme will be rolled out in Spring/Summer 2003, providing the framework for the training of teenagers and adults. The implementation of training schemes will be up to local initiative, which could be taken by local authorities, cycling organisations and businesses.

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