



CYCLETŌPIA

STORAGE

RENTABIKE

BIKE CO-OP

BIKE FACTORY

SCHOOL

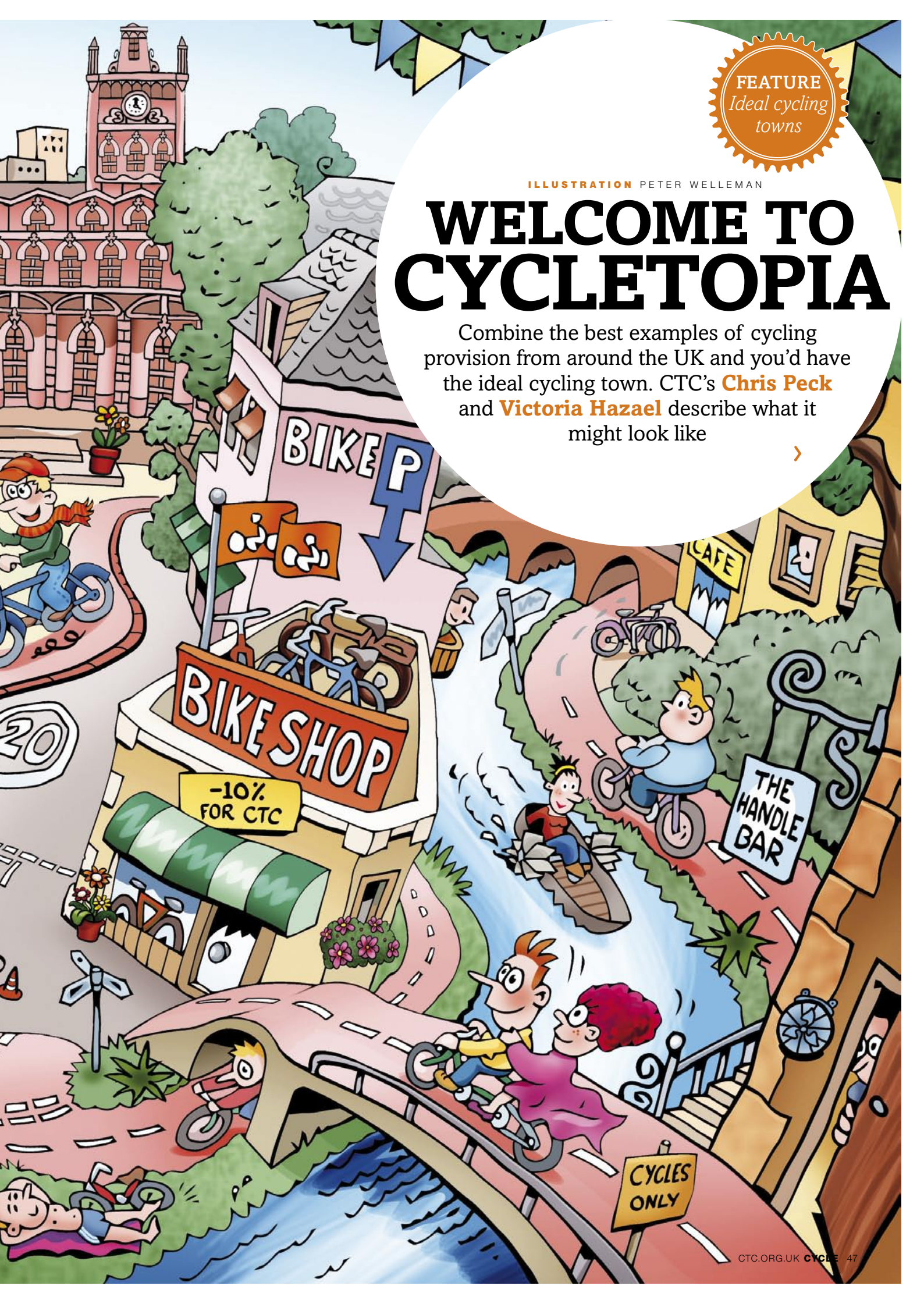
BIKE-ABILITY

FEATURE
Ideal cycling towns

ILLUSTRATION PETER WELLEMAN

WELCOME TO CYCLETOWN

Combine the best examples of cycling provision from around the UK and you'd have the ideal cycling town. CTC's **Chris Peck** and **Victoria Hazael** describe what it might look like



We'd all love to live in a place with perfect cycling conditions. Imagine cycling home from work through a traffic-free town centre, then along a main road with a wide cycle lane, and finally reaching your destination through a whole area where cars don't go faster than 20mph. This is not a dream and it's not the Netherlands or Denmark. 'Cycletopia' is closer than you think.

You can't move there yet, so don't put your house on the market. Cycletopia is a CTC creation, a place composed of the best examples of cycling provision, promotion and protection from towns and cities across the UK. The media often ask CTC to suggest the UK's model cycling town. We tell them there isn't one – yet! But there are plenty of great schemes and projects that show you don't have to go abroad to look for examples of good practice.

So, together with CTC's network of local campaigners, we've highlighted local authorities and organisations that are doing things right; things that, if brought altogether in one place, could create cycle levels similar to Groningen in the Netherlands, where over half of all trips are made by bike.

BUILDING CYCLETOKIA

■ Fewer cars...

The first step is to reduce motor traffic, especially from town centres. Quieter, cleaner streets that are free from cars mean more visitors and a more vibrant economy. Full pedestrianisation isn't the best solution: cycles can mix safely with pedestrians in town centres, even during busy periods. An example of where this is already working well in the UK is Cambridge. In the busy city centre, bikes and pedestrians are permitted – and can share the space happily – but cars or delivery lorries are restricted for all or part of the time. Road closures with cycle gaps can also open up cycle routes on quiet streets, creating a time-advantage over driving as well as a safer and pleasanter journey.

■ ...and fewer lorries

Lorries are a serious threat to cyclists and a major deterrent to potential cyclists. After many years of badgering, the idea of cycle training for lorry drivers is now gaining ground, as is the fitting of cameras and sensors (plus mirrors). But removing lorries from busy streets at the busiest times would have far greater benefits. This in turn would boost the number of companies now



1



2

Photos: Geoff Waugh, David Earl

In the photos

- 1 London has seen cycling numbers rise rapidly in the last decade
- 2 A good quality cycle path in Cambridge that goes where cyclists want to travel

delivering goods by cycle during the period when motor vehicles are banned, providing safety benefits for pedestrians too. CTC is working with Outspoken Deliveries, a freight operator based in Cambridge that uses cargo cycles and bikes to deliver goods within the city and even to London (with the help of the train!).

■ Lower speed limits

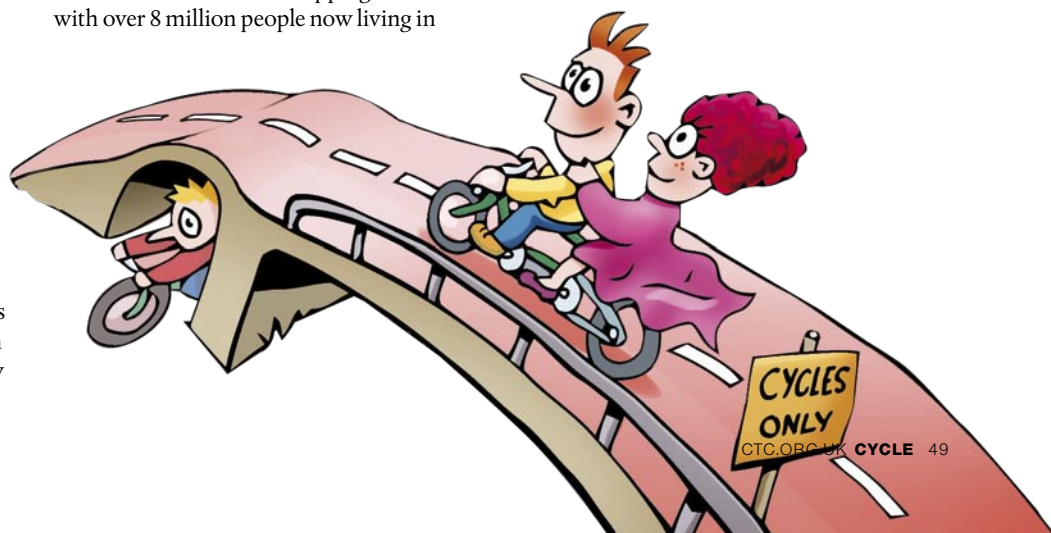
In residential areas and busy shopping streets outside town centres, 20mph should be the normal speed limit. This is a speed at which most people feel safe to mix with motor traffic when cycling. Three quarters of Dutch residential streets are already 30km/h (18.5 mph), mostly without the need for additional cycle facilities. Lancashire is powering ahead with introducing 20mph to residential areas over the whole county. Furthermore, many towns and cities have also adopted 20mph as the normal speed limit for residential and shopping streets, with over 8 million people now living in

places with lower speed limits in place or on the way.

■ Cycle provision on busy roads

Nearly every cycling trip around town will involve using busy main roads at some point. In these places, traffic or speed reduction are less likely to be politically realistic options. Instead, these roads normally require high quality cycle facilities, such as wide cycle paths that have priority over side roads and that have separate traffic lights on major junctions.

CTC has been lobbying to improve the standard of cycle facilities for many years and, although overall the standard of provision is still far below where it should be, there are signs of improvement on the horizon. Brighton has just introduced new 'hybrid' cycle lanes along one of the main roads in the city. These lanes have priority >



Over traffic turning out of side roads, and at main junctions cyclists are given a few seconds head start with a separate signal.

Junction improvements are, if anything, even more important. Three quarters of cyclists' injuries happen at or near junctions. The – as yet – small budget of £30m (£15m for London and £15m for the rest of England) to tackle major junctions is an opportunity to test innovative, high-quality cycle facilities in a few locations where cycling is currently just too hostile for the majority of people.

Off-road routes

Of course, where possible, well designed, signed and maintained cycle routes through green, motor-traffic free areas provide the most pleasant cycling experiences for most people. Cycle paths following disused railway lines or waterways were a key feature of Sustrans's early work. More recently, their Connect 2 project has focused on creating bridges or other links to overcome obstacles such as rivers, major roads or railway lines, making cycling journeys quicker and more direct than the car or public transport alternatives. York's Millennium Bridge links two residential areas across the River Ouse – enabling short trips to be made without having to negotiate the heavy traffic on the rest of the city centre bridges.

ENCOURAGING A CYCLING CULTURE

Changes to the layout of our streets and town centres to make them better for cycling are vital if we are to make Britain into a cycling-friendly place, but creating a cycling culture is also fundamental, especially in the shorter term before the infrastructure can be built. In recent years, cycling groups have been developing a range of 'smarter choices'

ON THE DRAWING BOARD

Our artwork on the opening pages shows most of the elements we'd include in Cycledopia, but we couldn't fit in absolutely everything – because there wasn't room and because some things that are vitally important in making conditions better for cycling are difficult to get across in a drawing.

These include:

- A more rigorous and regular driving test that includes elements of cycle awareness
- Taxation to make sustainable travel the preferred option
- Financial incentives to promote cycling, such as the Cycle to Work scheme
- Promotion and marketing schemes that emphasise the benefits of cycling
- Well maintained streets and cycle paths
- Housing designed with good cycle parking as standard
- Strong, well enforced traffic law that keeps bad drivers off the streets
- A civil law structure that better protects vulnerable road users



In the photos

- 3 Cycling bridges stop rivers, railways and major roads being barriers
- 4 Brighton's new bike lane has priority over side roads
- 5 Hire bikes get more bumps on saddles

Photos: David Earl, Graham Smith, iStockphoto.com

measures – e.g. CTC's Cycle Champions and Bike Club projects or Sustrans's Bikelt programme – to promote cycling in schools and workplaces, for women, health patients and other disadvantaged groups and communities. This promotion is not just through information and publicity but by offering targeted opportunities for people to give cycling a try.

Cycling to work

Having cycle-friendly employers means employees are encouraged to ride to work. Good storage, tax incentives and supportive management all help to make cycling the first choice for commuting or business trips. CTC's Workplace Challenge pits businesses against one another to see who can get the most people cycling – one medium-sized employer in Lewes managed to get over two thirds of its employees cycling over the two weeks. Businesses involved in the cycle trade or manufacture of bikes or parts for bikes often have a higher proportion of staff who cycle regularly and these workplaces can inspire others.

Cycle training

Schools that offer good quality (on-road) cycle training and storage, and that promote cycling can achieve spectacular results. Recent research suggested that adults are more likely to take up cycling again if they had cycle training as a child. In the north east of England, there were Bikeability places for almost 80% of the Year 6 children

in 2009/10. Nationally, just 1 in 50 pupils travels to school by bike, but in some places the figures are far higher: almost 60% of pupils cycle to Cherwell School in Oxford – and only 10% travel by car. This school runs cycle maintenance workshops, there's an active cycling club, and they even campaign to improve road conditions for cyclists.

Cycle hire

Public bike share schemes such as London's Barclays Cycle Hire have become a very popular addition to towns and cities. Since the scheme started in 2010, there have been over 14 million trips made. Other cities are looking at the model, with several more schemes likely to appear over the next few years.

Bikes at the station...

In many smaller places, cycle hire facilities based at the railway station are more likely to serve the needs of visitors. Networks of hire points are being planned for stations



FEATURE Ideal cycling towns

in East Anglia and in the north west, while Brompton Docks – which dispense folding bikes from automated lockers – are also springing up around the country.

Closer integration with public transport – particularly the railways – means longer distance trips can be made more easily by bike. The Leeds Cycle Point was the first of its kind when opened a couple of years ago. It provides secure cycle parking with hire and repair facilities, as close as possible to the station. Other stations are now following suit, with over £7m devoted to improving rail station facilities earlier this year.

■ ...and on the train

However, storage and hire facilities won't work for everyone: many people need to take cycles with them on the train, particularly for day trips or touring. Ideally, all railway companies should ensure cycle reservations are easy to make on longer distance trains, while also offering both dedicated and abundant flexible space on local trains.

Merseyrail, the Dutch-operated train company based in and around Liverpool, permits cycles at any time and even promotes cycle routes starting and finishing from their stations. Whereas other rail operators pointedly ban bikes during major events, Merseyrail actively promotes the Liverpool-Chester bike ride, running extra trains to bring the riders back.

■ Bike shops

Having a good, friendly local bike shop that provides a range of bikes for different types of cyclist can make a big difference to an area's cycling culture. We all probably know a bike shop in our town or city where the staff are helpful, knowledgeable and the range of bikes they sell are suitable for all

10 STEPS TO CYCLETOPIA

1. Report potholes and poor road maintenance on www.fillthathole.org.uk
2. Get involved in your local campaign group or contact your local CTC campaigner
3. Find allies, such as health professionals, environmental groups and cycle-friendly councillors
4. Map out the routes cyclists most need, the barriers they face, and where improvements can be made
5. Find out who makes the decisions and who holds the funds
6. Take your proposals to your councillors and local cycle forum (if one exists!)
7. Take your councillors and officers out on bikes to visualise improvements
8. Look out for major planning developments, where much of the funding for better facilities will come from
9. Ask CTC for advice, assistance or resources such as campaigns briefings
10. Don't give up!



In the photos
6 Cyclists can mix with pedestrians
7 'Flexible space' is one solution to cycle carriage on trains
8 Good shops keep people cycling by fixing bikes well and selling suitable ones

Photos: CTC, iStockphoto.com

types of cycling.

Social enterprises that run recycling schemes, cycle training programmes and other promotional events are another crucial part of building a cycling culture. In Edinburgh, the Bike Station started over 10 years ago as a voluntary recycling scheme but now employs over a dozen people and provides skills and support for many more. It also refurbishes bikes to keep them from the scrapheap and gives them to those who need them.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Bringing all this together requires leadership. Key individuals in high profile places can force through the changes necessary and bring together decision-makers, as well as setting budgets which are needed to implement many of these ideas. The Welsh Government is proposing legislation which would require all local authorities to map out cycling networks, and to plan and implement improvements. It is also looking at ways to simplify the cumbersome legal process for creating cycle tracks.

In isolation, all these things will help to encourage some more people to cycle. However, bringing them together in the same town, Cycletopia, could completely transform the health and economy of the community where you live.

Time and time again, those with the power to make decisions have said that cycling levels in Denmark and Holland cannot be replicated over here. But many of

the steps required are already being taken in places around the UK, and they only need to be brought together to create a similar environment for cyclists. That is why CTC is campaigning on both a local and national level to help your local authority to learn from what others are doing.

In the next few months, CTC will be introducing new tools to help cyclists put pressure on councils – and national government – to do more to make cycling easier.

To help make Cycletopia become a reality in your town or city, why not join CTC's Local Campaign network, get involved in your local cycle campaign group, or start one yourself? You'll then see what you and your bike can do to make a difference.

There are hundreds of local volunteers around the country campaigning to make conditions for cycling better. Email righttoride@ctc.org.uk to find out about what's going on in your area and how you can get involved. ☺

