



BEST VALUE IN
IMPLEMENTING
CYCLING POLICY

Invitation for Regional Benchmarking

In February 2000, the CTC launched this major new UK wide initiative, which uses the technique of benchmarking to introduce and support a network of local authorities in the implementation of a model cycling policy, measure their success and disseminate results.

The process entails assessing policy and practice to determine what actually works in encouraging cycling, and probing into the processes behind examples of good practice to understand the key factors that contribute to their success. The initiative fits in very well with many of the best value reviews being undertaken by councils.



Having embarked on the third year of the initial project, which has been funded by the Ashden Trust, we are now working with 27 local authorities, bringing together a wide range of experience on both hard and soft cycling policy issues in urban, rural and metropolitan authorities. Already the response is very positive.

The newly appointed English Regions Cycling Development Team (ERCDDT) recognises the value of the benchmarking initiative as supporting its work for the National Cycling Strategy Board, and with the co-operation with the Team we are now offering a slightly reduced regional version.



The project has attracted keen interest from the National Cycling Strategy Board, which has given it enthusiastic endorsement.

This invitation outlines the project and encourages local authorities to avail themselves of the benefits.

“It is important that authorities should make the most of opportunities to share their experiences and learn from others. In their 2nd APRs all authorities should report the actions they have taken to improve their performance by learning from others and disseminating their own good practices.”

Guidance on LTP APRs (2nd Edition),
DfT 2002.

“Devon County Council is pleased to have been involved with the Cycle Benchmarking Project from its inception. Analysing, sharing and exchanging best practice is a good way of highlighting the challenges which need to be tackled in order to achieve local and national targets for cycling. The project will enable the County Council not only to focus on its cycling strategy and policies but to determine the priorities for cycling through a greater appreciation of what actually works in practice.”

Dr Ian Harrison , Deputy Environment
Director, Devon County Council

“As a keen cyclist and regular cycle commuter I found the benchmarking process really useful. It was invaluable to have a panel of experts tell us how we could improve our performance. It was also nice to get a pat on the back for the things we’re doing well. Above all the process was very practically based and the recommendations could easily be translated into action.”

Chris Reed, Deputy Chief Executive,
Eastleigh Borough Council

“With the requirement of Best Value you could not find a more valuable and structured approach to rapidly gaining knowledge and peer assessment.”

John McIlroy, Principal Planner,
Sandwell MBC.

“The project gives a useful insight into the implementation of good quality, achievable cycle policy and infrastructure.”

Sally Killips, ex-Cycling Officer,
Leicester City Council, now ERCDT
Regional Cycling Development
Co-ordinator for the East Midlands

“It is now more apparent what elements of the Council’s Cycling Strategy are working well and which elements require further attention.”

Allan Maclean, Glasgow City Council.



Objectives

The overall objectives of this project are to:

- develop and manage a network of local authorities learning from each other’s experience;
- agree a set of measurable performance indicators pertaining to cycle policy;
- identify best practice in cycle policy from a process of peer review;
- develop and monitor the implementation of action plans for a range of local authorities;
- disseminate and publicise the results.

Scope

The project contributes to all aspects of cycling policy, from promotion to engineering design, and from training to maintenance of cycle paths. We have found it helpful to group these under the following headings:

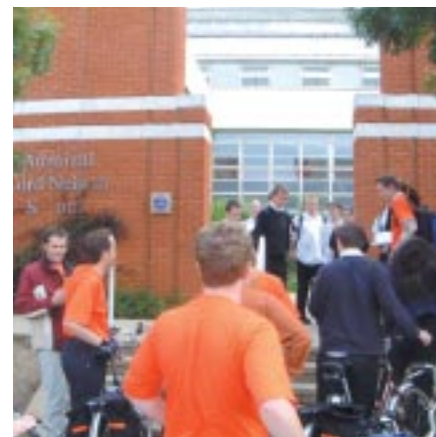
- Leadership
- Resources
- Policy & Strategy
- User Focus
- Infrastructure for cyclists
- Danger reduction strategy
- Integration with public transport
- Promotion & education
- Other partnership projects
- Monitoring & evaluation

Who should take part

We are looking for local authorities:

- committed at a senior level to increasing the amount of cycling;
- with an enthusiasm to network and share experience with other authorities; and
- ready to learn from the experience of others.

It will help to have experience in implementing elements of a cycling strategy.



What you will gain from it

Those participating in the project over the last three years have benefited through:

- Exposure to a wide range of conditions in other authorities, and developing a structured approach to evaluating these;
- Seeing what others have achieved, and finding out how they did it;
- Undergoing the experience of having their own progress reviewed by their peers;
- Creation of an action plan, tailored to the needs of their authority;
- Becoming part of a network for exchange of experience / ideas;
- Raising the profile of cycling in their authority;
- Increased confidence in many of their policies and a stimulus for fresh ideas.

In addition to the benefits for participating authorities, the process offers extensive development training opportunities for the individuals involved. This experience will count towards CPD requirements of the professional institutions and can help in the submission of evidence in support of NVQ / SVQ units relating to traffic and transport.

How benchmarking works

The basic benchmarking exercise involves six to ten local authorities over a period of up to one year.

The key elements of the benchmarking process comprise:

- A self-audit by each participant of cycling in their own area
- An initial workshop, introducing participants to the process of cooperative benchmarking
- A series of structured 1 to 1½-day study visits to each authority by participants, to investigate how each is implementing its cycling policy
- A consolidation exercise of the results of the benchmarking process, including a final workshop for each participant to develop an action plan



The study visits provide valuable training opportunities for participants, and concentrate not only on the successes of the host authority, probing the processes behind what has been achieved, but also on areas where they can learn from others' experience.

The key output for each participant will be the creation of an action plan. The

benchmarking exercise will have highlighted opportunities for each authority to enhance its cycling strategy, in the knowledge of the processes and resources involved. This will provide the basis for identifying a set of actions and priorities relevant to its own situation.

On-going Development

Following this, local authorities will have the ongoing assistance of the benchmarking group to take forward the relevant opportunities and actions for their authority over subsequent years. Networking between the participants will continue, with problems, solutions and results being widely shared.

Participants from regional projects will be able to link into the network of authorities participating in the earlier stages of the project. We expect the scheme to continue to develop through the introduction of new activities to participants, such as specialist sub-groups formed to focus on areas of common interest.

We plan to develop the project further by the establishment of a best practice website, and by comparing the results of the benchmarking process to best practice abroad or in non-participating authorities. We have recently obtained approval for a benchmarking visit to other European countries.



What you will need to agree to

Authorities participating will need to agree to:

- Make an ongoing commitment to the programme, the first year comprising the full benchmarking process and in subsequent years taking forward their action plan and continuing to network with other authorities;
- Complete at least five visits to other authorities;
- Commit adequate staff resources to the programme. For the regional scheme we have reduced the time commitment and expect this to be in the range of 15 to 25 days in the first year, plus travelling expenses. A substantially lower level of input will be involved during subsequent years;
- Select one person to participate in the full benchmarking programme, and to take responsibility for involving others in the process. They should be of sufficient seniority to oversee implementation of the resulting action plan;
- Present the local situation honestly as it really is;
- Complete the initial self-audit;
- Host and organise a 1 to 1½-day visit from the group;
- Subject to the agreement of the group, results will be placed in the public domain.

The CTC is in negotiation for core funding to support regional benchmarking. This would avoid the need for participants to contribute towards the facilitation costs of the project.



The role of the CTC

The CTC will act as facilitator, providing technical advice throughout the benchmarking process. As with all participants, the CTC will respect the confidentiality of group members. We will:

- arrange and analyse the self-audit;
- organise and run the initial workshop;
- assist in the planning and running of the visits;
- facilitate the feedback session on each visit;
- report on each visit;
- undertake the consolidation exercise;
- organise and run the final workshop;
- disseminate and publish the results.



What to do if you are interested

We need six to ten authorities to make a benchmarking project viable. If your authority is interested, we would encourage you to canvass others in your region (and possibly adjacent regions) and to relay your interest to your ERCDT Regional Cycling Development Co-ordinator. When there is sufficient interest the CTC will be happy to arrange a visit to present the project in more detail to those interested and to answer any questions.



Further details of the project, including best practice examples, can be found on the CTC website at www.ctc.org.uk

If you would like to discuss the project further, please contact Tony Russell at the CTC.

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The CTC is Britain's national cyclists' organisation founded in 1878 to promote travel by bicycle and cyclists' rights. It has over 65,000 members and affiliate members. The CTC has been instrumental in developing current guidance on cycle infrastructure design and cycling policy.

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