

Bike week in Hackney

Sunday 15 June Eastway Cycling Day

A relaxed and sociable afternoon for all ages at East London's premier sports cycling facility, the Lea Valley Cycle Circuit. The circuit consists of a mile-long motor-free road course, and there's also a BMX/MTB course. Activities range from obstacle courses to a panel discussion on sustainable transport, and refreshments will be served.

Lee Valley Cycle Circuit, off Eastway, London E9

Tuesday 17 June Sundown Cool Commuter Wind-Down

Does your route home take you near Green Lanes or Stoke Newington Church Street? If so, pass by our commuter wind-down for some chilled drinks, chilled music and a generally chilled-out velo-vibe.

5.30pm onwards. Location: next to the pavement cycle lane by the Robinson Crusoe pub, jct Green Lanes/Collins Road (opposite the south-west gate of Clissold Park).

Thursday 19 June London Fields Cyclists' Breakfast

Free coffee, juice and fresh pastries on your way to work, school or college. It's well worth getting out of bed early for - and the sun (almost) always shines on this event!

8am-10am, southern end of London Fields, E8, near the crossing over to Broadway Market.



Friday 20 June Homerton Hospital Cyclists' Breakfast

The lively Homerton University Hospital Bicycle User Group (BUG) extends a breakfast invitation to all Hackney cyclists. BUG co-ordinator Brian Leveson will be organising 'buddy' rides for hospital employees who are new to cycling.

8am - 9.30am in the hospital grounds

Saturday 21 June Bike the Bounds

Our borough is bigger and more diverse than you might think, Here's your chance to get the measure of where you live with a counter-clockwise ride around the borough boundary, passing through some lovely green spaces, as well as some of the white elephants built for motor traffic. The total length of this easy-paced ride is about 20 miles. Followed by a social (details to be confirmed). Contact Oliver on 020 8985 7770.

Meet 2pm outside Hackney Town Hall



More than 700 people are members of the London Cycling Campaign in Hackney, and thousands more cycle in the borough every day.

Hackney LCC meets on the first Wednesday of every month at 8pm at the Pub on the Park, London Fields E8.

Social from 7pm. Next meetings: Weds 4 June and Weds 2 July.

Join our email list today! Send a blank message to hackney-lcc@yahoo.com

Every week is bike week in Hackney. National Bike Week is just more so!

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Pitfield Street goes contraflow...

The northbound-only section of Pitfield Street, an obstacle to City-bound cycle traffic for many years, now boasts a contraflow cycle lane, finally allowing us to use the street in both directions.

Up until now, people travelling towards the City on this popular street, which forms part of London Cycle Network Route 10, had to waste valuable minutes undertaking a half-mile diversion – or simply ignore the law and negotiate their way informally against the flow of motor traffic, as literally hundreds per day were doing, according to a traffic count carried out last summer.

With Route 10 now following the same street southbound as northbound, navigation is simplified and journey times shortened.

The £200,000 facility, funded by Transport for London and implemented by Hackney Council's traffic section, was officially opened by Hackney's Speaker, Sharon Patrick, on a sunny May morning. Speaker Sharon herself cycled a section of the contraflow track, having recently learned to ride a bike with the help of Patrick Field of the Hackney-based London School of Cycling (She subsequently used her retiring speech to send a vote of thanks to LCC and Patrick for having helped her to fulfill this lifelong ambition).

Designed to dovetail with the newly two-way streets of the adjacent Shoreditch Triangle, the contraflow runs from the junction with Fanshawe Street near St John at Hoxton church down to the new pedestrian and cycle crossing of Old Street and Great Eastern Street, which leads the LCN route into the quieter streets to the south – even quieter these days thanks to being safely inside the congestion charging zone.

The implementation of the Pitfield Street contraflow has not, however, been uncontroversial. Questions have been raised about the decision to use long sections of kerbing to segregate the facility, instead of 'lighter' approaches such as a simple white line combined with segregating islands at side roads (which would be permitted because Pitfield Street is in a 20mph zone), or Danish-style split-level paving.

However, it is argued that the use of kerbed separation is probably the most effective way of reducing obstruction of the contraflow by abusively parked motor vehicles. Split-level paving is also more liable to be strayed into by pedestrians, while Hackney's engineers point to technical reasons why implementing split-level paving into Hackney's current streets would be difficult and expensive.

There are, though, clear and uncontroversial problems remaining with the current implementation of the facility. Firstly, Pitfield St is still signed with one-way signs. Hackney resident and chair of the LCC's Legal Group Ralph Smyth has written to the council pointing



Speaker Sharon Patrick snips the silk to open the Pitfield Street contraflow

out that one-way signs must be replaced immediately with signs showing the existence of a cycle contraflow.

Further problems brought to the attention of the council by Ralph and others include: the pizza shop parking scooters and dumping rubbish in the lane; the need to make the unsegregated section of the facility into a mandatory cycle lane to deter abusive parking; the folly of pedestrian guard rails being re-erected as part of the scheme (a waste of money and ugly, as well as encouraging faster motor speeds); and the need for the northern part of the facility to be widened before October 2004 when the final part of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 comes into force.

Hackney LCC will, meanwhile, continue to pressure TfL to stop using Pitfield Street as an officially designated rat run.

One-way streets are increasingly recognised as an obstacle and a hazard, increasing the speed of motor traffic as well as forcing bikes to go around the houses. Now that the Shoreditch gyratory system has gone, and a feasibility study is planned to reform the Stoke Newington one-way system, it makes sense to tackle the smaller one-way systems all over the borough.

All things considered, the contraflow facility in Pitfield Street is a significant step in the right direction. We're delighted it's here, and look forward to learning the lessons and seeing more where this came from.

...but not without some controversy