



# women on wheels

A handy guide to cycling for women in the  
Lancaster District.

LANCASTER  
CITY COUNCIL

Developing Life, Coast & Countryside



celebrating cycling  
in our city, coast & countryside

school - work - pleasure - take your bike

[www.celebratingcycling.org](http://www.celebratingcycling.org)

# introduction

Cycling is an ideal activity for today's time-pressed women keen to keep healthy. Cycling to work, with the kids to school or to the shops means you exercise as part of your daily routine.

Cycling is great for both physical and mental health and it doesn't demand much in the way of expense or fitness levels to get started.

However there are far fewer women enjoying the benefits of bikes. According to the 2001 census, less than 2% of women in the Lancaster district regularly used a bicycle to get to work, as opposed to nearly 6% of men.

During May and June 2008 350 women completed our survey to help us find out why they choose to cycle (or not) and what would help to increase cycling levels for all types of journeys. Here is a summary of our findings:

- 79% of respondents owned a bike (or had one available to them)
- 20% said cycling was their main mode of transport, while 55% used the car most
- 40% cycled at least weekly, while 8% never cycled - 27% regularly cycled to work
- 2% regularly take children to school, while a further 9% do so occasionally or would consider doing so
- 62% were confident or average cyclists; 33% were not confident and 4% couldn't cycle
- The five main advantages of cycling were: physical health (97%), environmentally friendly (85%), low cost (82%), being outdoors (77%) and mental health (65%).
- The five main disadvantages were: weather (77%), road safety (74%), carrying loads (63%), personal safety (49%) and bike security (43%)
- 83% were interested in cycling more

Keep an eye out on our website or e-bulletin\* for news on forthcoming (women friendly) events such as training, advice sessions and rides.

\*Subscribe to our e-bulletin by emailing [celebratingcycling@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:celebratingcycling@lancaster.gov.uk) with 'subscribe' in the title to receive regular updates on all things cycling.



Research commissioned by Cycling England in 2008 revealed that many women are missing out on the benefits of regular cycling

due to concerns about post-cycling appearance.

The poll suggests that the perceived effect of cycling on appearance, together with a lack of confidence in cycling on the road, is behind the fact that three times more men cycle than women.

In fact women are three times more likely to cycle indoors on an exercise bike than to cycle to work. When it comes to commuting, it seems not looking ones best in front of colleagues is an off-putting factor. Among 18-34 year old women:

- 58% don't want to arrive at work sweaty
- 50% are worried about getting wet in the rain
- 38% don't want to have to carry a change of clothes
- 38% say there is nowhere to shower at work
- 27% are concerned about 'helmet hair'

Concerns about appearance were replicated across women of all ages. See the 'Looking Good' section on page 4 for tips on clothing etc.

Safety concerns were also a factor for just over half of the women, while 42% said they lacked the confidence and skills to cycle on the road.

Concerns about safety are understandable especially as today's roads are often busy, but we need to remember that on-road accidents are in long term decline, and with the right skills you are much safer.

We offer free training to all ages and at all levels - from complete beginners to advanced riding on busy roads. Cycle training isn't just about learning how to ride a bike but about equipping you with the skills and confidence to ride in different environments. See [celebratingcycling.org/training](http://celebratingcycling.org/training)



## cycling and health

Cycling is one of the easiest and simplest ways to get fit, and in the Lancaster area with our great network of cycle paths it's often a quicker way to get around too.

Regular cyclists have the general health and fitness of someone 10 years younger and riding a bike works wonders for your thighs!

Research from the Department of Health has shown that physically active people have a 20-30% reduced risk of premature death and up to 50% reduced risk of major chronic disease such as heart disease, stroke and cancer.



For women particularly, leading a more active lifestyle has many health benefits; improving bone density to reduce the risk of osteoporosis, preventing high blood pressure, and enhancing mood and quality of life during menopause.

Regular exercise can also help reduce stress and improve sleep.

All good reasons to get on your bike!

Cycling is 'low impact' as your body is supported by the bike, so it's easier on the bones and joints than activities such as running. The intensity of activity can be easily adjusted from a gentle pedal - along the Canal towpath - to a powerful uphill surge - through

## profile Dr Laura Kornos

I'm a lecturer in Physics at Lancaster University. I live in Lancaster and often cycle to work via the canal path - a distance of about 4.25 miles. My job can be very stressful - on days when I'm worried or frustrated I find that cycling home through the gorgeous countryside, even if it's windy or raining, is both calming and exhilarating.

My first incentive to get into cycling came several years ago, when two of my older brothers suffered heart attacks in their mid-40s. I decided that as part of an active life-style I would cycle, rather than drive, to campsites in Canada (where I lived at the time). So I began taking yearly trips by bike, with panniers packed and tent strapped on the rack.

the Trough of Bowland - it's all beneficial.

Cycling can also improve mental health, offering opportunities to 'get away from it all' and enjoy some fresh air.

So if you're looking to get fit and healthy, forget expensive gyms or faddy diets that make you hungry

- just get on your bike! Try cycling to work, to the shops, or simply for fun, and see how much better you feel.

More details on the health benefits of cycling are available from [www.activetravel.org.uk](http://www.activetravel.org.uk) or [www.cyclingengland.co.uk/health.php](http://www.cyclingengland.co.uk/health.php)



### Is it safe? What sort of clothes should I wear?

Don't I need to be really fit to cycle?

### What sort of bike should I get?

What route should I take to work?

What help is available...?

What's so great about cycling...?

### How do I get started.....?

Whatever your question we're here to help.

You'll find lots of information, including route guides, local profiles, bike shops and much more on our website.

Or just send us an email, letter or give us a call (see contacts on back page) and we will try to answer your query as soon as possible.

This has proved to be more enjoyable than I could have believed.

With my partner I've cycled the Coast to Coast (C2C) trail and other Sustrans routes.

We typically travel by train (with our bikes) to the start of the trail, and return home by train. This allows us to

explore regions of the country in a reasonable amount of time without pushing ourselves too hard, stopping at campsites along the way.





## Profile Sam Southwart

Cycling to work is going really well. During my first week I drove the children to school (we live too far to walk), then I ditched the car and cycled along the canal from Slyne to Lancaster Town Hall, which took about 30 minutes.

A nice journey, without the worry of other traffic. This caused a dilemma one morning when I received a phone call from school telling me that my daughter was unwell and could I collect her asap. With having young children, I really need to be able to reach them quickly from time to time, so after taking the children to school, I park at my parents house in the north of Lancaster.

I used many excuses to keep travelling by car but it only takes me 15 minutes to cycle into the city centre - less time than driving round the one way system. I used the council's Bike Buddy service and got help to work out an alternative route from using the canal. Using my bike means I get some exercise, I'm keeping my car out of the slow city centre traffic and cutting down my petrol costs. Even the rain isn't tempting me to bring my car into work, I can't say that I will never drive into work again (I still need to shop) but it didn't take me long to realise how enjoyable cycling to work is.

## looking good

Cycling isn't just about tight lycra and all the gear. Here's our guide to what to wear when out and about on a bike!

$\frac{3}{4}$  length trousers (or pedal pushers) are the perfect hassle-free way of looking chic on a cycle without the need for bicycle clips - great in the summer, and team with opaque tights and ballet pumps in the winter. Skinny jeans are also handy for shorter trips, as the close fit means no material to get caught in the bike cogs. Alternatively there are now lots of smart shorts around that would look good on and off your bike. And don't forget legwarmers can double as cycle clips on colder days. *Check out [www.cyclechic.co.uk](http://www.cyclechic.co.uk) for some great ideas on clothing and accessories.*

For longer trips it's worth considering wearing something more comfortable, preferably of a breathable play-dry material to reduce sweating. Like walking it's good to 'layer up' rather than wear something too warm - layers can always be stored in panniers or bags (*see luggage and accessories section opposite*).

Invest in waterproofs. A waterproof jacket and trousers are invaluable (we do live in the north of England after all), and can be worn over your regular clothes so on arrival at your destination you can just peel off and go. These - especially jackets - are available in a wide range of colours and types, and many also incorporate reflective strips too. You don't need to get a cycling-specific jacket (although the long tail does come in handy) a good alternative would be a 'pac-a-mac' or lightweight shell that can fit easily in your bag in case of rain.



There is also a much better range of styles and colours of helmets on the market. Just make sure you fit it correctly and wear it far enough forward on your head. Remember damaged and old helmets must be replaced.

Similar to driving it is possible to cycle in sandals etc but you might find it easier to wear something more substantial with a harder sole like trainers. Trainers are ok for shorter journeys, as long as they have a good tread, however investing in specialist footwear is a good idea if you plan to spend a lot of time in the saddle - again there's lots of choice.

If you are out for a longer ride a pair of padded cycle shorts might save your aches and pains the next day. Believe it or not it is better to not wear underwear under these - this prevents any 'chafing'. Baggy shorts with built in padding are becoming increasingly popular and are the perfect way to be comfortable and look good off the bike.

Looking good and riding a bike do go together so you don't need to give up on your favourite clothes or buy lots of new gear. If you're worrying about helmet hair or looking hot and sweaty - then don't. A little planning is all it takes to overcome any worries you might have about looking fabulous on your bike. *See our find out more section for some useful links.*

## luggage and accessories

Carrying loads, or children, by bike needn't be tiresome with our top ten tips!



1. Panniers- Nowadays these come in a variety of shapes and designs - from floral to business chic - and attach to a luggage rack at the back of your bike (front loaders are also available). Old style box bags (these sit on top of the rack) are also still available.

For Work: Carrying laptops or files needn't be a barrier to getting on your bike - try briefcase panniers that are large enough for all your work items.

*Rachel Scott, CDT Project Co-ordinator says "I bought myself a pair of Carradice panniers (Lancashire made) a couple of years ago and haven't looked back. They're great for everyday work stuff, plus I can fit loads of shopping in them. I even gave cycle touring a go last year and fitted everything I needed in them. They feel much better than carrying heavy loads in a rucksack - just be careful when carrying your fully laden bike up steps etc."*

2. Baskets- Perfect for your city bike. Baskets are a practical way of carrying shopping on the front of your bike, and are available in wicker or in more industrial metal mesh.

3. Bags- If you would prefer to accessorise yourself rather than your bike, why not try a rucksack, waist bag, or extend the straps on your handbag and wear across your chest.

Wedge bags are smaller bags that sit under your seat and are the perfect size for carrying your mobile, money, keys and lipbalm.

4. Child Seats- These are a good cheaper option for carrying younger ones, prices start from around £20. Seats are a quick and simple method of transportation but increasingly parents are opting for more useful trailers.

*For useful, impartial advice on cycling with children visit [www.whycycle.co.uk/cycling\\_with\\_children](http://www.whycycle.co.uk/cycling_with_children)*

5. Trailers- With some designed to carry children and others to carry loads,



you'd be surprised how quickly you get used to them. *Bee Scott, our Workplace Cycling Officer 2006-8, used a trailer for transporting leaflets and equipment to events. She said "I was apprehensive at first as I thought it might be unstable, but I hardly notice it's there. I have no problems with corners etc and I've even used it for the occasional shopping trip too!"*

6. Tag-Alongs- For 4-9 year olds why not try a tag-along bike which attaches to the seat post of the adult's bike. Tag-alongs have a back wheel and pedals but no steering mechanism. This is the perfect way to get your child used to the sensation of cycling whilst making it easy for you to keep an eye on them! See *Pamelas' profile overleaf*.

*If you fancy trying out a tag-a-long or trailer contact Sunshine Cycle Hire in Morecambe on 01524 414709*

7. Keeping clean- To avoid mud and splashes try fitting mud guards to the front and rear wheels - there is a large variety available on the market for your type of bike.

8. Keeping hydrated- The most popular and cheap choice is a waterbottle cage attached to the frame of the bike. Alternatively, for longer/more active journeys, you could opt for the hands-free option of a hydropack. These are rucksacks with an integral water pack that includes a self-sealing mouth-activated tube so you can drink on the move!

9. Keeping Secure- There are a range of different locks out there and few (if any) are 100% secure so always think about where you are leaving your bike. 'D' locks are said to be the most secure but they can be quite heavy so get one with a bracket so it can be attached to your frame when you are cycling.

10. Keeping Safe- It's important to be visible so wear something fluorescent/bright to ensure you are seen during the day, and reflective at night. There's a whole range of accessories out there from fluorescent jackets to Sam Browne belts (strips that go diagonally over your shoulder).



## getting started

Do I need to buy a women specific bike?

No, but that's not to say they don't have their advantages. Women specific frames are made with a shorter reach to the handlebars, particularly useful if you're buying one with dropped handlebars or are going to be spending a lot of time out and about.

You can also buy bikes with a step-through crossbar (traditionally called 'ladies' bikes'). These are good for easy dis/mounting.

Not all bikes come in a 'ladies option' so don't be put off - the best thing to do is to try out several to see which suits you best.

It's important to get a bike that fits, is comfortable and suited to your needs ie don't get a full suspension mountain bike if you're just going to be riding along the prom.

You may find that swapping the saddle is a good idea as women's saddles tend to be a different shape to men's.

You've got a bike - now what?

If you're feeling particularly nervous then we can help you with free training, either 1-2-1 or small group sessions. We can also set you up with a Bike Buddy who can offer route advice and riding tips as well as riding the route with you - all for free.

We've got maps and guides of local routes, we can offer personalised advice - remember your journey by bike might not be the same as by car or bus.

Even if you don't have a bike we can still help you to get cycling. We have a few bikes available for loan for 1-2-1 sessions and women on wheels rides. If you would like to book one please get in touch on 01524 582392 or by email.



Want to start cycling to work?

Commuting by bike means you're unlikely to get stuck in traffic plus you get exercise whilst travelling. It's also cheaper than other modes of transport.

*So how to start.* First of all, if you have colleagues that already cycle why not ask them for advice or to cycle in with you for the first few times. Failing that we can set you up with a Bike Buddy to help you get started.

If your workplace doesn't have much in the way of facilities then direct them to us for advice. Many will install parking etc if they think it's going to be used.

A lack of showers is one issue often quoted as a barrier to cycling to work - but do you really need one? If you wear breathable gear, ride slowly and change when you get to work, this should remove the need for showering.

Getting out and about

Check out our website for details of local cycling rides and events as well as clubs and route guides.

For the last three years we have run monthly Women on Wheels cycle rides (see opposite), plus a range of other women only events.

## Profile Mary Hodges



*There are lots of reasons why I ride a bike. Here are a few.*

Firstly a bike costs much less than a car; no vehicle excise duty and MOT for a start.

When I had a part-time job, buying a car to get me to work

would have eaten up most of my salary, so I made the sensible choice to commute by bike.

Then there is the fitness angle. If you're a real keep fit fanatic you may take out a gym membership and spend hours working out, but cycling to work is less sweat and more fun.

If you want to be eco-friendly a bike has got to be your

chosen means of travel. It's also a friendly way to get about. You can easily stop and talk to people on the way and you have more time to see and appreciate the world around you.

For a non-driver a bike gives you freedom. You don't need to be always asking for lifts or spend hours waiting at bus stops.

Riding a bike is financially rewarding, it keeps you fit, helps reduce your carbon footprint and gives you the freedom to go where you want when you want - and above all it is fun. Why not give it a go?

*Remember:*

In a car you're bound and fettered  
But a bike can not be bettered  
As a way to get yourself from A to B  
So, I beg you, do not drive  
Breathe fresh air and feel alive  
Get on a bike and ride along with me!

## women on wheels

*"Women on Wheels is a fun, friendly and supportive way to explore the local area, meet new people and work off the week's stress (or chocolate)"* - Gemma Barker



We started the Women on Wheels rides back in 2007 and numbers have steadily increased.

This programme of easy paced and interesting rides generally follow routes featured in our *Cycling for All Guide* (call 01524 582616 for your copy or download at [www.celebratingcycling.org/maps](http://www.celebratingcycling.org/maps)).

The rides aim to encourage all women - whatever their ability - to get out and about with other like-minded women and explore our area by bike.

*March 1st - Crook o'Lune and Lune Valley*

*April 5th - Glasson Dock and Lune Estuary*

*May 3rd - Sunderland Point*

*June 7th - Brief Encounters in Carnforth*

*July 5th - Hest Bank and Morecambe*

*August 2nd - Halton and the Bay*

*September 6th - Cockerham*

*October 4th - Mystery Ride*

All rides start at the Millennium Bridge (Lancaster end) at 11am. No need to book - just turn up!

A few bikes are available to borrow to take part in these rides. Please call us on 01524 582392 at least a few days in advance to arrange.

*"As a relative newcomer to Lancaster I've found Women on Wheels to be a great way of getting out into the local area and meeting a great bunch of women I might not otherwise have met."*

- Sarah Cruickshank

## Profile Pamela Doran

Over the years, we have transported our two children in various ways from rear child seats to a double trailer. However, when they outgrew the trailer, I needed to find a way of getting the three of us to and from school, and for other journeys too.



They each had a single tag-along which was great when four of us went out, but I was mainly looking for a solution for the school run. Walking takes around 25 minutes, the journey by car was always unpredictable - even just to find a parking space could take longer than the bike ride itself, whereas cycling takes less than 10 minutes.

Even though they were able to ride their own bikes, neither was competent enough to tackle the ride from our home to school via town. I trawled cycling blogs and websites until I came across an article about the double tag-along. I was anxious at first about how it might feel on the back of my bike but our first journey went smoothly and I felt quite comfortable with the weight and length of the bike.

At first, I kept most of our journeys along the cycle paths but soon after, would often ride through town with both children confidently giving hand signals. They pedal or freewheel when I do, but I always get them to try and go to full pedal power when we go uphill! When we use the double tag-along for school, I leave it there, which leaves me free to then cycle on to wherever I need to get to - unattached.

[www.bikebelles.org.uk](http://www.bikebelles.org.uk) - a new website (by Sustrans) to encourage and inspire more women to get out and about on two wheels. Featuring news, events and useful hints and tips for new, existing and returning women cyclists

[www.bikeforall.net](http://www.bikeforall.net) - the essential resource for everyone who cycles....or is thinking about it

[www.copenhagencyclechic.com](http://www.copenhagencyclechic.com) - hundreds of photos of people cycling in all kinds of clothes and on all kinds of bikes

[www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Press\\_Archive/CTC05.WOW.final.DAN.pdf](http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Press_Archive/CTC05.WOW.final.DAN.pdf) - 8 page guide to cycling for women by CTC the UK's national cyclists' organisation

[www.cyclechic.co.uk](http://www.cyclechic.co.uk) - the modern woman's guide to cycling. Includes advice on buying a bike as well as a fashion section proving that it is possible to cycle and look good

[www.cyclingforfun.co.uk](http://www.cyclingforfun.co.uk) - useful articles on getting started, cycling with children, equipment, maintenance and more

[www.familyonabike.org](http://www.familyonabike.org) - check out Stuart and Kirstie's site for information and inspiration on how families can cycle together

[www.minx-girl.co.uk](http://www.minx-girl.co.uk) - cycle clothing for girls with style and attitude

## useful links

[www.sheactive.co.uk](http://www.sheactive.co.uk) - one stop shop for women's active wear and outdoor clothing

[www.shecycle.co.uk](http://www.shecycle.co.uk) - launched in 2005 as the first site dedicated to everything 'women's cycling.' Contains latest news, shopping, events plus advice and the shecycle clinic where you can post questions re health, fitness and more

[www.wcra.org.uk](http://www.wcra.org.uk) - the Women's Cycle Racing Association's aim is to increase the opportunity for women in all forms of cycle sport and to support them in cycling at all levels in all disciplines

[www.wds.org.uk](http://www.wds.org.uk) - the Women's Design Service 'Cycling for Women' was a year-long pilot project in London seeking to understand and address the reasons why comparatively few women cycle as a means of transport

[www.whycycle.co.uk](http://www.whycycle.co.uk) - impartial advice for potential and new cyclists in the UK

And don't forget to check out our *Cycling for Women page* at [www.celebratingcycling.org/women](http://www.celebratingcycling.org/women)

## maintenance tips



- Keep your bike lubricated especially wires and other metal, moving parts (but not the brakes).
  - Every time you take your bike out, carry out a simple pre-ride check including the brakes, quick releases, tyres, nuts and bolts (basically check anything that might fall off or get stuck).
  - Keep your tyres well pumped up as this reduces the likelihood of punctures. Pumped up tyres take less energy to ride on as they give less drag and wear out more slowly. Check your manual or tyres for the recommended pressure. Also make sure to check your tyres for bald spots and tears.
- Check your brakes regularly - the key to cycling is being able to stop when you want. Brake pads have a wear line, if the rubber's gone then there's nothing left to stop you.
  - Ride strategically. Know your route and get trained.
  - Get yourself a mini tool kit. This should include - a multi tool, a small adjustable spanner, a pump, a puncture kit and spare inner tube.

For details of FREE maintenance courses (some are women only) and drop in sessions call Pedal Power on 01524 65328 or email [pedalpower@furniturematters.org.uk](mailto:pedalpower@furniturematters.org.uk) (or go to [www.celebratingcycling.org/training](http://www.celebratingcycling.org/training)).

*" The bicycle is the most civilized conveyance known to man. Other forms of transport grow daily more nightmarish. Only the bicycle remains pure in heart."*

- Iris Murdoch

## contact us

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