

# Bike Repairs

Whatever way of travelling we choose, things can sometimes go wrong, or disrupt our regular pattern. So cars get broken windows or need servicing or get stuck in traffic jams. Public transport can be delayed. One of the reasons why many people say that they prefer to cycle to work is because it is less prone to going wrong and therefore a more reliable way to travel. But that does not mean cycling escapes the odd upset entirely: riding a bicycle is a wonderful, liberating experience until it gets a puncture. A better serviced, better maintained bike is less likely to encounter unforeseen problems and be a safe bike to ride. That is why the cycle to work guarantee asks employers to offer a bike repair service on or near site.

For sites with a very large number of employees, it might be feasible to offer an on-site daily bicycle repair service that can cope with both emergency repairs (a snapped brake cable or a puncture) or pre-booked servicing and other repairs. This is already offered by Glaxo Smith Kline and BSkyB to their staff, with the labour costs of the repair being borne by the employer. However, many organisations will not have the space to offer this, or the number of employees to keep the bike repairer busy. In such cases, it might be more feasible to have a bike shop visit or an arrangement with a mobile bike repair service, who can visit the site at a pre-arranged time, or when staff request their services. The greater the number of employees, the more frequently we would expect to see a bike repairer visit – in some cases once a week would be about right, whilst in smaller organisations, once a month might be more realistic. Another alternative might be to have an arrangement with a bike shop, if that is very close to where employees are based.

In addition to this, it would also be helpful to leave a bike pump, and if possible, a basic set of tools and some instructions on basic bicycle maintenance near the cycle parking (or at some other suitable place) so that staff can more easily carry out their own repairs if necessary.

## **Training, targets and incentives**

Some staff will already be keen and regular cyclists. Some staff will not ever venture onto a bicycle. And there will be some staff between these two categories – who perhaps would like to give it a go but are nervous about cycling in traffic. Cycle training can boost the confidence of those wary about cycling, and can also improve the road skills of more experienced cyclists. This might be something that staff would like to take up individually, or it might make for a novel team building experience or awayday. Cycle training is widely available through local authorities and through independent providers. The Department for Transport has been funding cycle training – Bikeability – for children but there is no reason why the same course cannot be offered to adults. A list of training providers, by local authority area, can be found at

[http://www.bikeability.org.uk/what\\_is\\_bikeability\\_\\_\\_/bikeability\\_near\\_you.php](http://www.bikeability.org.uk/what_is_bikeability___/bikeability_near_you.php)

Some cycle trainers will offer cycle training that meets the “National Standard” and this will offer the same high standard of training as Bikeability. We would not recommend training that does not meet the “National Standard”.

And for details of cycle training opportunities in London, including a list of companies that offer cycle training, visit <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/cycling/11689.aspx>

In planning your cycling provision, you may want to think about future growth in the number of cyclists and how you might achieve that. You might want to set a target. You may wish to survey your staff to find out how many of them cycle currently and how many may be tempted to do so. You might also want to plot their homes on a map to see how many are within a reasonable cycling distance of their place of work – perhaps five miles. This should help you to decide whether future growth is possible, and to what extent. We are aware that people often reflect on their travel choices at a life change moment – such as having a baby or moving house or getting a new job. It may therefore be that encouraging new members of staff to take up cycling is particularly fruitful.

There are a number of incentives that organisations can offer to encourage cycling. For example, Glaxo Smith Kline's cyclists are registered on a 'bike miles' scheme and collect a sticker from security staff each day they arrive by bike. These are worth £1 per day and are collected in a book which can be redeemed for vouchers to pay for equipment or new bikes from reputable dealers. After filling the first £260 book, equivalent to a year's cycling, cyclists progress to a gold and then platinum book which comes with a special card bringing added benefits.

But there are also more simple and straightforward incentives – perhaps you could:

- hold an annual competition for those who cycled the furthest, or the greatest number of days
- designate a few days each year as "cycle to work" days and offer breakfast or other refreshments
- offer cycle maps, to show good routes

Transport Direct – which allows people to plan a journey by car or public transport from postcode to postcode – is steadily extending its cycle journey planner. This can already recommend cycle routes in the following areas, and more will be added shortly. See [www.transportdirect.info](http://www.transportdirect.info)

- Derby
- Exeter
- Greater Bristol
- Greater Leicester
- Greater Manchester
- Lancaster
- Merseyside
- Oxford
- Peterborough
- Worcester