



# Campaigning Handbook

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## 1. Introduction

Cycling UK has championed the cause of cycling for over 140 years, advocating the interests of all cycle users, regardless of background or ability.

Campaigning is at the very heart of what we do. We represent the interests of our members, plus all current and would-be cyclists. Whilst our dedicated campaign officers work tirelessly to influence decisions made at the very highest levels of government, it's our network of volunteer Local Campaigners who protect and improve cycling for their local community.

As a Local Campaigner, you'll join us in our mission to inspire millions more people to experience the joy of cycling. From promoting its benefits to decision-makers to liaising with the local media, there are countless ways to get involved.

All this may seem daunting, but with the help of Cycling UK it can be rewarding and fun.

### 1.1. The Cycle Advocacy Network

The Cycle Advocacy Network brings together people with a shared interest in creating the conditions that enable more people to cycle, including better infrastructure for cycling and safer roads, to share information, support each other, and provide a louder and more effective voice for both those who cycle already and those who might, if it looked and felt safer to do so. The Network is intended to be a broad church, but the expectation is that people within it will reflect the values of Cycling UK and promote our policies and views as and when appropriate.

See our website for more: <https://www.cyclinguk.org/cycle-advocacy-network>

### 1.2. About this handbook

The aim of this handbook is help you to become an effective campaigner. It is a reference book you can dip in and out of. You do not have to do everything that's written here – if you do you won't have time for anything else in life. Think about what you'd most like to achieve in your locality, and use this to guide you to your goal.

## 2. Getting Started

### 2.1. Step One: Contact key people

When first starting up, it's a good idea to contact and, if possible, meet as many useful and influential people in your area as you can. These may include:

#### 2.1.1. Other members of the Cycle Advocacy Network

You're not alone. There are hundreds of other individuals and campaigning groups in the Cycle Advocacy Network. Cycling UK's Volunteer Forum makes it easy to connect with activists locally and nationally. This is available to all our volunteer Local Representatives – if you're already on board you will have the link. If you want to find more information or become a Local Representative please visit <https://www.cyclinguk.org/cycle-advocacy-network> .

#### 2.1.2. Local cycling groups/clubs

You may already be a member or know of cycling groups in your area, including those who may well be affiliated to Cycling UK. Many actively campaign but, even if they don't, their members can still be a great source of local knowledge and support and, with a little encouragement, may be interested in getting involved.

#### 2.1.3. Other local groups

It's also worth introducing yourself to other groups representing relevant interests with a view to giving each other mutual, cohesive and concerted support that will strengthen your calls: e.g. pedestrians, disability groups, horse-riders, environmentalists, slower speed campaigners etc.

There is a suggested list of national organisations that might have local campaigners or campaigning groups at <https://www.cyclinguk.org/cycle-advocacy-network#links>

#### 2.1.4. Local businesses/employers

If you want to help boost commuting in your area, contact key people in local businesses and set up a dialogue. If you work locally, don't forget to include your own.

#### 2.1.5. Local authority contacts

Note: job titles vary between local authorities, but these are the most likely:

##### 2.1.5.1. Cycling or Active Travel Officer

Potentially one of the most important contacts you can make with your local authority, these officers should be able to tell you about the authority's:

- 🚲 Cycling Strategy (if it has one), and how it's getting on
- 🚲 Any Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP, England – see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plans-technical-guidance-and-tools> )
- 🚲 Your Local Authority Active Travel Network map (Wales)
- 🚲 Cycle or Active Travel Forum (if it has one), who sits on it and how to take a seat yourself (see below)
- 🚲 Any other relevant plan and the cycling initiatives within it.

The Active Travel or Cycling Officer is usually operating on a limited budget and, in some cases, cycling may only be a small part of their entire role. This means they may be grateful for your assistance - with the support of local cyclists, they might feel better able to lobby councillors and senior managers for more funds and material action. See also 'Effective working with Cycling Officers' below.

### **2.1.5.2. Rights of Way Officer**

These officers are responsible for all the authority's footpaths, bridleways, byways and other off-road tracks that are popular for cycling (England & Wales). They're good contacts if your specialism is off-road riding and/or you'd like to see more off-road links to improve the coherence and accessibility of your overall local cycling network.

### **2.1.5.3. Road Safety Officer (RSOs)**

RSOs will be able to tell you about the authority's Road Safety Strategy (if they have one) and about their targets for reducing casualties. They may be interested in your perspective as a cyclist. They are often responsible for delivering cycle training.

### **2.1.5.4. Safe Routes to School/School Travel Officer**

Some authorities employ officers to encourage sustainable travel to school. They may be interested in pressing for infrastructure improvements that will help not only children but also adults feel more confident about cycling locally.

### **2.1.5.5. Road traffic, transport planning and highway engineering departments**

These departments are responsible for planning and designing the road layout. Their officers can be essential contacts and should be able to arrange for you, as a Cycling UK campaigner, to receive notifications of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs – see below) so that you can respond to proposed changes to the highway.

## **2.2. Step Two: Identify mechanisms**

What mechanisms are there to help you campaign for better provision for cycling in your area? Here are some suggestions:

### **2.2.1. Networking**

When you join the Cycle Advocacy Network, you'll be put in contact with the volunteer Campaign Coordinator for your region. They act as your link to Cycling UK and will be able to advise you on what's going on in your area.

Support and advice from your fellow Local Campaigners is vital, so a priority should be to introduce yourself, easily done through Cycling UK's online Volunteer Hub.

If the campaigners in your area are not already holding regular meetings, we strongly recommend that you either prompt one or arrange to meet other representatives yourself. The Coordinator for your region should be able to help (see also 'Campaign groups' below).

### **2.2.2. Cycle or Active Travel Forum**

Your local authority may have a Cycling or Active Travel Forum that meets regularly with relevant council officers, councillors and other interested parties to discuss and further the cycling agenda. Ideally, it will feed directly into the authority's policies and plans for cycling and transport in general. It therefore makes sense to go along as a Cycling UK Local Campaigner.

If your authority doesn't already have an official Cycle or Active Travel Forum, seriously consider kick-starting the process of establishing (or reviving) one. First, contact your local authority's Active Travel or Cycling Officer. They should be able to advise, help compile a list of local people/groups who will probably be interested in joining, and initiate and arrange the first gathering (meetings usually take place at the council offices).

### **2.2.3. Traffic Regulation / Road Orders**

In certain circumstances, local authorities issue official 'orders' when they want to alter the road or introduce a new road layout. This gives the general public and user groups an opportunity to comment on the proposal. In the event of objections, the plans may go to Public Inquiry where an inspector hears evidence from all sides and then produces a report either recommending or rejecting the scheme.

As a Cycling UK Local Campaigner, you can contact your highways department and request to receive copies of the orders for new proposals. You can then check them and decide whether to respond to the consultation.

Why? Changes to existing road layouts or the introduction of new features may dramatically impact on cyclists and their safety. Take care not to get bogged down or aggravated by single small issues, though, as it's important to influence the engineers and highways department to become more cycle-friendly as a whole and maintain a good relationship with them. This is where befriending the Cycling Officer or sitting on your local Cycling Forum can prove very useful.

For more on Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), see: <https://www.cyclinguk.org/about-TROs>

### **2.2.4. Rights of Way (RoW) Orders - England & Wales**

Rights of way include footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic (BOATS). Cyclists can use all of these except footpaths.

Local authorities may decide (or be asked) to alter, create, extinguish or divert RoW in their area, and must abide by a process to do so. This includes issuing RoW orders.

Schedule 16 of the wildlife and Countryside Act 1984 permits any person to request, via the rights of way department, to be notified of such orders. This is a useful step for any campaigner, as it saves having to scan local newspapers on a weekly basis.

Monitoring these notifications gives you the opportunity to review and assess their impact on local riders, but be selective. Many are mundane – e.g. temporary diversions or closures for works or safety reasons. Others, such as proposed extinguishments or permanent diversions, require more scrutiny.

For more details, see our advice on campaigning on off-road issues, which also looks at how to help develop new routes and deal with obstructions.

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/article/campaigning-road-issues>

### **2.2.5. Local Access Forum (LAF) - England & Wales**

Local Highway Authorities and National Parks have to set up Local Access Forums by law under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. Their role is to advise decision-making organisations (such as local authorities) about making improvements to public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel.

Members are not allowed to represent an organisation but should be able to represent their interests knowledgeably.

Meetings are organised by the authority (county or district) and are typically attended by council officers, councillors and people from user groups such as Cycling UK, the British Horse Society, CPRE, Open Spaces etc.

Details about future meetings, the minutes of previous meetings, how to become a formal member, and the Forum's aspirations for the future should be available on your local authority's website.

A full briefing on Local Access Forums is available in the 'Views and Briefing' section of the [Cyclinguk.org/campaigning](https://cyclinguk.org/campaigning). See also our guide on campaigning on off-road issues for more.

### **2.2.6. Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) – England & Wales**

Rights of Way Improvement Plans were introduced by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 and all local authorities (apart from inner London authorities) must produce them.

In their RoWIPs, local authorities must state the action they propose to take for the management of local rights of way, and for securing improvements.

By applying for membership of your Local Access Forum (see above) or attending LAF meetings as a member of the public, you can help support cycling initiatives within the RoWIP.

There is no duty to implement RoWIPs, so it's important to identify the cycling positive statements in the current version, and lobby to get them implemented.

A full briefing on RoWIPs is available in the 'Views and Briefing' section of the [Cyclinguk.org/campaigning](https://cyclinguk.org/campaigning)

### **2.2.7. Planning consultations/applications**

Planning decisions may lead to significant changes to traffic patterns/volume (e.g. because of a new housing estate or supermarket). Planning applications can also affect rights of way (e.g. by diverting or extinguishing them).

By responding to applications, Local Campaigners can help avert damaging consequences for cyclists and, ideally, encourage the authority to enhance any development by actively promoting cycling, and ensuring that it's easy to cycle within, into and out of it. This can sometimes be done through 'planning gain' or contributions from the developers themselves.

The best way of involving yourself with local planning is to contact your local planning authority to ensure that you're listed as a community contact who needs to be consulted.

### **2.2.8. Cycle routes and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS – England)**

Your local authority may be working on or already have an overall plan/network for the area (e.g. an LCWIP in England). Your Cycling Officer should be able to explain how you can get involved, and it'll probably be discussed at your local Cycle Forum.

Ideally, networks need to be as direct, continuous, safe, convenient and coherent as possible, and all the infrastructure involved should be designed and built in accordance with best practice.

### **2.2.9. Cycle routes and Active Travel Network Maps (Wales)**

Every Local Authority in Wales has a duty to map existing active travel routes, and to map proposals for future improvements to the walking and cycling network.

They also have to deliver year on year improvements for active travel routes and facilities. specific design and delivery guidance to be followed to ensure compliance with standards and integration with both the overall network plan and public transport.

Your local authority has a duty to consult on improvements to the network and when it reviews the ATNM. The Active Travel or Cycling Officer should be able to let you know how you can get involved.

## 3. Campaigning skills and tactics

This section covers general skills and tactics for Local Campaigners.

### 3.1. Campaign groups

#### 3.1.1. Forming a cycle campaigning group

When it comes to campaigning, the saying ‘there’s strength in numbers’ is especially true. You may well already have an active campaigning group in your area that you can join. If not, here’s a few tips on how to get a group up and running:

- 🚲 Organise an initial meeting: just find a local suitable venue such as a pub, council room or community building, and make a booking. It’s best to organise the meeting on a weekday after 6pm, as this when people are most likely to be free.
- 🚲 Get the word out: if you let Cycling UK know the details around a month in advance, we can contact all the Cycling UK members in your area for you. You can also approach local cycling groups, and place adverts, posters or leaflets in local shops and cafés popular with cyclists.

#### 3.1.2. The first meeting

First impressions are very important, so a well-organised, friendly and structured meeting is essential:

- 🚲 Arrive early and be prepared to introduce yourself, your ideas and aims.
- 🚲 Make sure that everyone knows who everyone else is.
- 🚲 Take names, phone numbers and email addresses for future contact (but ensure you comply with regulations on data use – see: <https://cyclinguk.org/groups-gdpr>)
- 🚲 Try to involve people as well as organise them. Have a (flexible) agenda ready. You don't want to put off potential supporters with waffle either from you or anyone else, but do give everyone a chance to contribute and enough time for a good discussion/debate.
- 🚲 Try to arrive at a consensus on the group's name, aims and structure (see below); ensure these are written up in draft and circulated later so that people can comment further.
- 🚲 Ensure you have clear action points and names assigned to them by the end of the meeting.
- 🚲 Find out what days/times suit the majority for future meetings.
- 🚲 Take brief notes (of action points, if nothing else) and email them round the group afterwards.

Don't worry about low turnout - you can't make everyone aware of the group immediately. At this stage you should be aiming for core, active, committed members - less active members can be gathered later.

#### 3.1.3. Your group’s aims and objectives

A formula many people use is to divide objectives into aims, strategies and tactics: aims are your overall intentions; strategies are the means of achieving aims; and tactics are methods of implementing strategies. For example:

- 🚲 Aims: to make your area a safer place for cycling and to encourage cycling for transport and recreation.
- 🚲 Strategies: calming city centre traffic; obtaining a local authority commitment to spending on cycle schemes; having beginners’ rides promoted by council.
- 🚲 Tactics: writing letters to the local press; making links with sympathetic councillors and local authority officers; petitions; organising beginners’ bike riders and courses.

### 3.1.4. Creating a group identity

A name, logo and slogan give your group its legitimacy. Individual members can then be branded and easily identified as spokespeople, press officers, campaigners etc. These are all roles that decision-makers should be able to relate to.

- 🚲 Choose a simple, geographical name for your group that clearly expresses your intentions, e.g. Utopia Cycle Campaign. While a clever acronym may make your group more memorable, be careful that it doesn't trivialise or confuse your campaign message. It is up to your group to decide but remember that your identity defines how others will view you.
- 🚲 A logo can help the public identify and remember your group. Keep it simple, and make sure that it looks okay in all likely formats (leaflets, website, headed paper, press releases etc.)
- 🚲 Develop a web presence – linked social media accounts can be a great start if you don't yet have the time or resources to set up a dedicated website.
- 🚲 Set up a group email address, directing messages to someone who'll be able to pick them up promptly. A standard group email-signature gives you a professional look, and saves individuals having to set up their own.
- 🚲 Don't worry if this is beyond your skill set. This is a great task to delegate to someone else within the group, or identify a friend or family member with creative skills.

### 3.1.5. Running a campaign group: momentum & membership

Whether you've recently created a campaign group or are helping to reboot an existing group, maintain momentum and energy so that members stay motivated and keep coming back.

- 🚲 During your initial meeting, take note of the sort of cyclists who've come along: are they commuters, Sunday racers, mountain bikers, 20mph campaigners or parents who want their children to cycle? Make sure that your group works for its members, rather than the other way round. It's much easier to keep people motivated when they are campaigning on issues that matter to them.
- 🚲 Appreciate your members by thanking them and celebrating any successes.
- 🚲 Put on events, and go to summer fairs etc.
- 🚲 Keep your website up to date – press releases from two years ago and nothing since are not a good look.

### 3.1.6. Membership

Attracting and retaining members is crucial. If you decide to ask for subscriptions, the income will be useful and, perhaps more importantly, a good body of supporters gives you extra clout when you're talking to decision-makers.

- 🚲 Make it as easy to join as possible, preferably online.
- 🚲 Consider an open invite to all meetings and, when you can, theme them / invite speakers etc, advertise it as a public event and take the opportunity to sign up new members.
- 🚲 Be welcoming to new members, avoid cliques, and don't expect newcomers to turn up to every meeting.
- 🚲 Involve new and existing members by delegating tasks that will interest them
- 🚲 If you decide to ask for a subscription, keep the fees as low as possible whilst still covering costs.
- 🚲 Remind people before their membership lapses and give them more than one chance to renew.

- 🚲 Use your successes, no matter how big or small, to attract more members by notifying the local media.
- 🚲 Try to keep turnover low and mount membership drives as often as you can
- 🚲 To maintain a community spirit, arrange social activities such as weekly group rides or a Christmas meal.

For advice specific to forming a 'Bicycle User Group' (BUG) at your own or another local employer see: <https://www.cyclinguk.org/BUGs>

Cycling UK also runs a Cycle Friendly Employer scheme:  
<https://www.cyclinguk.org/cyclefriendlyemployer>

## 3.2. General campaigning strategies

There are several different ways to raise your/your group's profile and apply pressure on decision-makers to affect positive change. The tactics you choose will depend on who you want to influence. While a demonstration might persuade your local council to install a crossing point, for example, mass protest may not go down so well if you are asking your boss to provide some cycle parking.

### 3.2.1. Public pressure

Demonstrating that the public is on your side makes it harder for decision-makers to ignore and deny widespread demands for change. Sometimes, in fact, local councillors may be looking for a good cause to help them raise their own profile.

- 🚲 For maximum participation, ensure your mass message is well-communicated, professional, reasonable, catchy and broad enough to appeal to as many people as possible. Avoid ranting.
- 🚲 Direct the pressure at the right person or department, and don't swamp them. Overused tactics may become blunt, easily dismissed instruments.
- 🚲 If you are contemplating a serious action, pay special consideration to its legality and contact a lawyer for advice. Also consider whether the action is appropriate and beware of damaging relations with the public or your target. If you're planning to carry out the action in Cycling UK's name, please contact us first.

#### 3.2.1.1. Letter writing campaign

Filling a decision-makers' postbag or inbox with messages about cycling may prompt them to act:

- 🚲 Explain the issues and crucial points carefully and concisely to your potential letter-writers.
- 🚲 Keep the letters you're asking them to send short and restricted to two or three main points.
- 🚲 Providing a standard letter helps overcome inertia, but encourage people to add their own personal touch.
- 🚲 Get in touch with Cycling UK if you need help on a very important issue.

#### 3.2.1.2. Petitions

Petitions, usually online nowadays, are a simple way to show support for your campaign, although they may lack the depth of a well-planned letter-writing campaign.

Check your council or other authorities' rules on petitions - they may require a certain number of signatories before it's considered.

### **3.2.1.3. Demonstrations**

These can take place anywhere and in many forms, from a silent vigil to a march through the town centre to the council's offices.

- ☞ Make your purpose clear. Print explanatory leaflets and hand them out along the way.
- ☞ Be imaginative. An eye-catching focus will make your demonstration more effective and help grab the media's attention.
- ☞ Have one or two well-informed and articulate members standing by to talk to people who challenge you or show interest.
- ☞ Keep the atmosphere as light-hearted as circumstances allow.
- ☞ Inform the media, either by sending out an embargoed press release beforehand, and/or once you are underway.
- ☞ It is a legal requirement to make the police aware of your intentions in advance (they may decide not to allow you to protest).

## **3.2.2. Professional pressure**

Essentially, this means helping people do their jobs, or even doing them yourself, ideally in a helpful and constructive way.

Some of the following tactics may not only yield useful information to stimulate action, but also give campaigners an idea of the difficulties that decision-makers and officials face.

### **3.2.2.1. Surveys**

Producing and circulating surveys and questionnaires can be a great way of providing evidence of public support for your campaign, as well as providing valuable insights into issues that matter most to local people. This is best done online even at events like summer fairs, if you have the technology.

- ☞ The questions you ask will determine what answers you receive, so think about them carefully, making sure they reflect the aims of your campaign and that the results will be as easy as possible to interpret.
- ☞ Avoid long and intimidating surveys, and leading questions.
- ☞ Distribute the survey as widely as possible.
- ☞ Make sure you have the means to collate, analyse and circulate the results.
- ☞ Highlight your most persuasive findings in a press release.

### **3.2.2.2. Cycle-counts**

Establishing the volume of cycle traffic generally, or at a specific location, helps give you the support you need for any infrastructure improvements, especially if you've already submitted ideas and they have been officially rejected because the council thinks there's no demand.

When conducting a cycle count try to:

- ☞ Do it in the summer or fair weather
- ☞ Do it during morning rush hour
- ☞ Don't fudge the figures

Distribute the finding wisely and don't let the council (or other target) bury it – a press release may stop that happening.

Also, remember that logging only a few cyclists at a location doesn't necessarily mean there's no demand for improvements – people might want to cycle there, but don't because they think it's unsafe or inconvenient. A companion 'black spot' survey may help establish this.

### **3.2.2.3. Site visits**

Take relevant officers to visit sites needing improvement. Inspect them by bike, if at all possible.

### **3.2.2.4. Model cycling plans and policies**

If your council (or other targeted organisation like a local business) doesn't have robust cycling plans and policies (or if their plans and policies are outdated), think about presenting them with a draft to discuss and adopt. These documents can be as detailed or skeletal as your resources permit.

- 🚲 This could prove a big task, so be realistic about your capacity and chance of success before embarking.
- 🚲 If you go ahead, proceed professionally and realistically.
- 🚲 Present the easiest and most popular proposals as top priority.
- 🚲 Circulate your model and ask for comments.
- 🚲 Present it to relevant committees, managers, etc.

### **3.2.2.5. Model resolutions**

Related to model policies, model resolutions are appropriate to councils, political parties, unions, etc. The idea is for campaigners to write a resolution and persuade an ally to present it for adoption.

- 🚲 Take advice from allies within the targeted organisation on the best way to draft and present your resolution.
- 🚲 In local authorities, friendly officers may help with background information and advice, both technical and political.
- 🚲 Be sensitive to local political circumstances.
- 🚲 Commitments requiring immediate expenditure by the ruling party will meet resistance. It is sometimes better to make progress in stages - getting a policy adopted in principle before working to translate it into expenditure and activity.
- 🚲 Research the background extremely thoroughly.

## **3.2.3. Working effectively with Cycling Officers**

By working together, Cycling Officers and campaigners can achieve many benefits for cycling, but an effective working relationship is not always straightforward to establish.

Note: when we refer to 'Cycling Officers', we mean council staff who are either totally or partly responsible for cycling.

### **3.2.3.1. Problems and Opportunities**

Opinions and views on cycling-related issues are not always homogenous, even amongst fellow cyclists. Bear this in mind when working with Cycling Officers and other campaigners to make sure that passions are channelled in a positive, consensual and constructive manner.

Combining the efforts of campaigners and Cycling Officers can, for example:

- 🚲 Enable concerted action towards a unified goal
- 🚲 Establish strength in numbers
- 🚲 Maximise the use of everyone's time and effort
- 🚲 Create a professional image for cycling

It's also important to remember that Cycling Officers are employed by your local authority and are responsible for implementing its set policies. Working in such an environment can be very bureaucratic, and different council departments may have conflicting objectives, perspectives and constraints. Getting the go-ahead for anything at all can thus be extremely time-consuming and frustrating.

On a more positive note, there may well be other people within the authority in other departments and elected members who cycle and / or are in favour of cycling. Forming a good working relationship with these people too can be very beneficial for both Cycling Officers and campaigners.

### 3.2.3.2. Why is it sometimes difficult to work together?

Nearly always, there will be two points of view in any working relationship. By considering the other party's position, though, differing opinions can be much easier to overcome or work around. The table below outlines some common issues that may affect the relationship between Cycling Officer and campaigners, as seen for both sides.

Campaigners may:	Cycling Officers may:
Fundamentally disagree with the local authority's strategy and on principle disagree with everything else the authority does.	Feel isolated and find it difficult to keep motivated in what may be an unsympathetic or even hostile environment in the council.
Believe that the work the authority has done to date is misguided and ineffective.	Have to work within constraints resulting from historical decisions and other factors.
Conclude that nothing is happening. Feel bewildered by the local authority's systems and structures.	Be working very hard but struggling with the bureaucracy and producing no immediate results.
Consider the person in the Cycling Officer role lacks crucial skills and experience.	Feel intimidated as campaigners appear to know the local area better than they do; be more proficient cyclists; and have stronger relationships with councillors
Be exasperated by inaction on small matters that are cheap to fix & make a big difference to cyclists.	Have a massive workload as the only person in the authority who deals with cycling issues - they must be ruthless about prioritising.
Feel aggrieved that they, as 'cycle users', were not consulted about schemes and that people with little or no expertise in cycling have installed substandard 'facilities'.	Be frustrated as they were not consulted on schemes, or were consulted but none of their views was taken on board.

Disagree amongst themselves. Be angry as they are giving up their time voluntarily for cycling and perceive that public money is being misspent.	Find it difficult to set up a constructive dialogue with campaigners as they have differing views or a representative spokesperson.
Take a 'single issue approach' that only considers cyclists and not other road users (this can backfire).	Be working to wider policy objectives that reduce car traffic and will ultimately benefit cyclists (e.g. increased bus use)

### 3.2.3.3. Communication

Tension between Cycling Officers and campaigners can often build up simply because of ineffective communication. If you feel that the means of communication is hindering progress, it's worth evaluating your methods.

- 🚲 Emails may be quick and easy but meaning and intentions can often be lost or misconstrued. While face-to-face meetings may seem like a logical alternative, Cycling Officers may have other responsibilities taking up a large amount of their time. Alternatively, campaigners may only be available in the evenings, outside of the Cycling Officer's working hours. So, make a point of talking to them about options that suit everyone involved, and establish agreed, efficient and effective communication channels, and review them regularly.
- 🚲 It's also much easier for a Cycling Officer to maintain effective lines of communication with a campaign group acting as a single entity as opposed to dozens of fragmented Local Campaigners.

### 3.2.3.4. Be sensitive to your Cycling Officer's situation

Local Campaigners operate more freely than Cycling Officers who may be constrained by lack of funding and bureaucracy and need to proceed with projects diplomatically to avoid being embroiled in public controversy.

They can rarely act alone and can be subject to whims of elected officials and departments less sympathetic to the cause of cycling. The most desirable outcomes can often be found when campaigners focus their efforts on these roadblocks rather than bemoaning a Cycling Officer who may be caught between a rock and a hard place.

### 3.2.3.5. Adopt and maintain a constructive mindset

If local authority officers, campaigners and local cycle users devise an effective way of working together, are willing to discuss their differences, find common ground and present it coherently, it becomes more likely that senior council officers and councillors will engage positively with cycling, with a win-win result.

## 3.2.4. Working with local councillors

Your first step should be to determine where your local councillors stand on cycling. Party-political allegiance and personal sympathy will probably influence this. The sympathies of councillors can be gauged from their public pronouncements, by writing to them or attending public meetings or

their 'surgeries'. Cycling touches on many policy areas; transport, health, leisure and tourism, the environment, so choose which aspects to emphasise according to each councillor's interests.

Sympathetic councillors can be very useful in a number of ways, including:

- 🚲 Inside information
- 🚲 Representing your case to the council and in committee
- 🚲 Local party influence
- 🚲 Influence over officers

For less sympathetic or neutral councillors, your task is to persuade them to take it seriously. Some ways of doing this are:

- 🚲 Personal approach: talk to them - as one campaigner put it: "The secret is getting their 'ear', then pouring friendly, constructive ideas into it."
- 🚲 Informing them: make sure they subscribe to Cycling UK's monthly online campaigning newsletter, Cycle Campaign News; ask Cycling UK National Office for guidance to pass on to them, when needed
- 🚲 Referring to the councillor's party manifesto: your councillor should fulfil promises made by his/her party's manifesto. An important tactic therefore is to get pro-cycling statements into the local manifesto of all parties in the first place – lobbying for a good few months before a council election is highly recommended (information on election timings should be available from the council's website – or give them a call).

Key Points:

- 🚲 Councillors are very busy, so give them clear, concise information – avoid swamping them with pages and pages.
- 🚲 Establish yourself as a reliable source of information
- 🚲 If proposing a meeting, set an agenda and take notes (or minutes, if more formal)
- 🚲 Be aware of a councillor's reputation before allying yourself too closely with them
- 🚲 Speak their language, making the case for cycling in terms they understand (eg. economy, best value, air quality)

## 4. Media Advice

A major part of modern campaigning involves working with the media.

Cycling-related stories and issues can be very divisive, though, and how your local media portray cycling can have a huge impact on public support in your area. Receiving favourable coverage, therefore, means establishing good relationships with representatives of the media.

But remember the only way to guarantee editorial control is to pay for an advertisement. Once you have sent journalists your press release/story, it's up to them how they report on it. They may miss out key aspects, or even turn it around completely. The following pointers should help you minimise the risk of this happening.

### 4.1. Placing and targeting your message

Effective media relations start with effective targeting:

- 🚲 Think carefully about your audience and which media it uses. Is it local cyclists you're trying to reach, a school, council or the wider community? If in doubt, research your local community.
- 🚲 Local newspapers and broadcast media are often the most approachable.

- 🚲 Don't discount local television. They may seem intimidating, but remember they have airtime to fill.
- 🚲 Regional media are generally only interested if there is a regional angle.
- 🚲 Despite the rise of broadcasting, online and social media, the press remains an important means of communication and there are currently over 2,000 newspaper titles in the UK. Newspapers and periodicals survive because they can cover more stories in greater detail than their broadcast counterparts.
- 🚲 Use trade publications to announce developments and air matters of specialised interest. Don't stop with a press release - with trade publications, it's worth pushing for a longer feature and maybe offer to write it.

## 4.2. Distilling your message

The fact that you feel passionately about your message does not necessarily mean the media, or indeed their readers, listeners or viewers, will be interested too. Objectivity is thus critical when assessing news value.

- 🚲 Try to imagine what will appeal to the target audience and tailor it accordingly.
- 🚲 Remember that whatever a journalist's personal sympathies for your story, they are working for a business that needs to sell newspapers or retain viewers/listeners. Sometimes they welcome or like to stir up contention.
- 🚲 Read your target newspapers to get a better understanding of the stories they cover. Think about what aspect of a story ensured it made it onto the page? Can you replicate it?

## 4.3. Finding a hook

A hook will draw people into your story and make them want to find out more, even if it is not something that usually interests them.

To secure column inches, PR consultancies spend fortunes on engineering 'hooks', by employing a celebrity and/or publishing the results of market research, for example. You may be able to do this too with a poll in your area - local media may be happy with something informal involving only few hundred people. If you do decide to use this technique, formulate your questions to reflect the headlines you are trying to generate.

You can find more information on conducting surveys under 'Public pressure' above.

Even if you don't have the time or budget to pay for market research or a celebrity endorsement, there are ways to emphasise aspects of a story to make it more appealing:

- 🚲 Human interest: a bike ride to promote health in the community may be of little interest, but a man who has recovered from heart surgery and takes part is more newsworthy.
- 🚲 Statistics: whatever you think of statistics, they often make a good headline whether you've gathered them yourself or are citing official sources - see our statistics page at [www.cyclinguk/statistics](http://www.cyclinguk/statistics).
- 🚲 Events: if you are publicising an event or service (e.g. Dr Bike) to benefit your community, ask the local paper or radio station to send a journalist to sample it for themselves and write it up from a personal perspective.

## 4.4. Sending a press release

Most press releases never make it into the media. To maximise its chances:

- ☞ Fill no more than the equivalent of one side of A4 paper.
- ☞ Keep it simple. You can alter the style of your writing to suit the publication and its audience but remember your purpose is to give journalists clear facts.
- ☞ Use a short eye-catching headline.
- ☞ The first paragraph should be short (no more than two sentences) and must summarise your entire message – sub-editors cut from the bottom!
- ☞ Avoid jargon at all costs.
- ☞ Date the release at the top so that the news editor can see that the story is current.
- ☞ Attribute quotes to a named (and if possible, senior) individual, and make sure this person is available for comment. Journalists often want to speak to whoever is named on the release.
- ☞ If possible, include links to hi-res photos to download - attachments can sometimes be trapped in a journalist's spam folder.
- ☞ Include your contact details (name, phone and email) at the bottom of the release.
- ☞ Always proofread the release before you send it – best to ask someone else to double-check it.

#### 4.5. Pitching your story

When pitching to a national media title, you may have no more than thirty seconds on the phone. A journalist who isn't interested will waste no time in letting you know but will rarely resent being called in this way. Whilst local newspapers are a less pressurised environment, some basic rules apply:

- ☞ After introducing yourself, ask if it's a good time to discuss your story – deadlines can make some days, or particular times of the day, extremely busy for journalists.
- ☞ Don't ramble! Write down your ideas before you call. Try to prepare a short press release before in advance. It's useful to refer to and the journalist may well ask to see one.
- ☞ If you aren't sure which aspect of a story may be of particular interest to a journalist, be honest and ask their opinion, but don't lose sight of the message you want to put across.
- ☞ If you are involved in a contentious issue, remember that nothing is ever 'off the record' unless you are dealing with a trusted contact.
- ☞ Journalistic deadlines are not flexible. If you agree to call or send information by a specific time, honour the agreement, and if you can't make it let them know in good time.

#### 4.6. Photographs

Photographs tell their own story and help get it printed/covered online.

- ☞ If you are organising an event, plan the photographs well in advance (if in a campaign group, it's good to know who your expert photographers are, just in case).
- ☞ Keep the composition simple, but try to think of an unusual approach. Will the local mayor attend your event? Are they prepared to swap their official car for a tandem?
- ☞ If you want inspiration on how to make a boring subject matter more engaging, look at the business pages of the national newspapers. Highly imaginative photos of senior executives often accompany business news stories.
- ☞ Try to make the photo tell your story, but don't be too ambitious.
- ☞ Provide a full caption, two sentences long. This should explain: who, why, what, where and when. (The second sentence should always be "why"). Use the present tense and, if you can, include a quote from the photo subject. Add your contact details.
- ☞ Be clear on copyright.
- ☞ If you are inviting press photographers to attend, issue them with a photo call. This should include the date, time and location together with a brief explanation of what can

be photographed. Always follow a photo call notice up with phone calls – including one the day before the event.

Useful tip: if you have a budget, you may be able to employ a local newspaper's staff photographer to cover your event. This is a good way of exploiting their experience and contacts to ensure your photo appears in the paper. With a clear brief, a good photographer should be happy to help you compose your photos.

#### **4.7. Broadcast media**

If you would like to have your event covered by radio or television news:

- 🚲 Contact the newsroom and the forward planning desk.
- 🚲 Call the station to remind them (right up until the day itself) as their schedules change daily, or even hour to hour.

Radio stations often have feature programmes that may cover your story in more detail.

#### **4.8. Making a reputation for yourself**

Conducting your media relations in a professional manner pays dividends. Positive, regular contact with local journalists means that they are more likely to keep you on their books as a useful contact and refer to you when a cycling issue comes their way.

#### **4.9. Interview techniques: broadcast and print**

Journalists may want to interview you directly. This may be a daunting experience, but it can be a great opportunity to get your point across, reaching a wider audience than otherwise.

- 🚲 You should be told why and exactly when they want to interview you, what form the interview will take, how long it will last, if it's a 1 on 1 or if others will be interviewed at the same time. If you're not told, ask.
- 🚲 Prepare carefully. It's essential your presentation and purpose are clear, and your message easy to understand. Try to narrow it down into a single soundbite and write notes to jog your memory (especially over stats).
- 🚲 Interviewers may try to shift the subject of an interview, so don't assume that you will only be asked questions on the stated topic.
- 🚲 If others will be commenting too, try to anticipate what they will say.
- 🚲 Radio stations often interview over the phone, so make sure you're ready at the arranged time and that there is no background noise.
- 🚲 If you have the option, though, carry out the interview in a studio rather than at home. You may be sharper and more attentive, and the quality of your voice will be better for the audience.
- 🚲 During the interview, don't forget to use your notes if stuck! But don't look down too often if you're on television - it can make you look shifty.
- 🚲 Reiterate your soundbite several times, maybe in different ways, as you'll probably not be given much space or time. You'll then get your point across in a punchy, quotable way.
- 🚲 You don't have to answer every question. Watch politicians - they often sidestep and stick to their main point. If you are presented with an irrelevant question, steer it back to your soundbite.
- 🚲 Stay calm. Broadcasting can be nerve-wracking but put things in perspective - you're probably not going to be recognised in the street afterwards. If you are nervous, rehearsal can give you confidence and some people find that deep breathing helps.
- 🚲 Don't be afraid of pauses, and don't gabble to fill them.

## 5. More about councils / local authorities

Depending on where you are in the UK, various layers of councils will govern your daily life, and those councils have different responsibilities. Your life as a cycle campaigner will be easier if you can get to grips with who does what where you live.

Cycle campaigners will often focus on the highways authority, as they have control over most roads and pathways.

- 🚲 In Northern Ireland, the Assembly is the highways authority
- 🚲 In Wales, it's the unitary authorities who are the highways authorities and have responsibility for planning
- 🚲 and in Scotland too, the local councils are the highways authorities and have planning responsibility
- 🚲 In England, the highways authorities are the county councils (in the 'two-tier' system), otherwise they are the unitary authorities, or metropolitan (or London) boroughs.
- 🚲 However, in the parts of England that retain two-tier authorities, the lower-tier district or borough councils are the planning authorities and decide on housing (and other) developments.

Except for Northern Ireland, not every road is the responsibility of the Highways Authority. The Welsh and Scottish governments control some major routes and motorways, and Highways England play a similar role (except in London, where Transport for London is responsible for some major routes).

Across the UK, Community and Parish Councils may also have some responsibilities devolved to them. Some authorities sub-contract service provisions to lower-level authorities – for example verge maintenance and hedge-trimming.

Decisions about developments and planning can be influenced by councillors at various levels.

Local campaigners will therefore benefit from understanding how their various council departments and officers relate to each other on issues of concern. Additionally, it is important to understand who the influential people are, be they councillors or officers at any level, and the relationship between them.

Local political and interpersonal dynamics can play a pivotal role in influencing council decisions, and of course they will differ from place to place. Do not expect every local councillor to necessarily know or, agree with, their national party's view on cycling and active travel.

We strongly recommend finding out when councillors at all levels are up for re-election, and engaging candidates in the run-up to local elections – see the range of 'how to' guides in the local campaigner resources section of the website for specific ideas.

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