

# Sustrans Active School Travel news

## Children Ditch the Dark on the School Run



To raise awareness of safe travel to school as the days became darker, special **Ditch the Dark Days** were held at schools with children cycling, scooting and walking to school in their very brightest and decorating their bikes and scooters to be super bright.

Despite the rainy October weather, **over 200 children** travelled actively to St Joseph's Primary School in Carryduff to celebrate their Ditch the Dark Day with prizes being awarded for the best and brightest outfits and bikes!

## Winter Wheeling

Hundreds of children from schools across the greater Belfast area took part in various **active school travel challenges** this winter showing that cycling, scooting and walking is the best way to get to school even in the colder winter months.

At St Joseph's Primary School in Ballyhackamore, **115 children** completed the **Journey to Santa** challenge. Children braved the cold, rain and wind to complete the challenge of cycling, scooting or walking to school 18 out of 23 possible days in November and December.



## I'd love to hear from you...



I'm Beth Harding, Sustrans' schools officer for Belfast. Please get in touch if you have any great school stories or would like to find out more about our schools work.

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is back! Join hundreds of thousands of pupils between **3-14 March** for the UK's biggest school cycle and scooting event. The more you scoot and cycle, the more Wheelies you collect and the more powerful they become – **can you make them all the way to superheroes?** There are loads of **amazing prizes** for the best schools across the UK, plus new **categories like the most improved school** and even for early registration! Enter the whole two weeks or just try out our challenge days. Details and registration at [www.bigpedal.org.uk](http://www.bigpedal.org.uk)

Sustrans is the charity that's enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. It's time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today. [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

## Heard this term...

“We are delighted to be working with Sustrans this year in the Active School Travel programme. This project complements the school’s work in promoting healthy lifestyle choices. There is also a benefit to the environment with fewer children travelling to school by car and the resultant reduction in pollution. We hope the remaining events planned for the rest of the year will be as successful as this one.”

**Dominic Donnelly, Principal of St Joseph’s Primary in Carryduff,**  
after over 200 children travelled actively to school for the Ditch the Dark Day held in October.

“This Silver Award is a major achievement for our school community. It represents a journey over the past three years from where we started with zero children travelling to school by bike or scooter to now a significant number of children travelling actively to school. Now, let’s aim for Gold!”

**Stephen Harrison, Principal of Gilnahirk Primary School**

## First Silver Award in Northern Ireland



**Gilnahirk Primary School** has become the first school in Northern Ireland to achieve the **Sustrans’ Silver School Mark Award**. A special ceremony was held at the school where professional BMX athlete Captain Matt G and parkour expert Paul Allen, both from T13, performed some exciting tricks for their enthusiastic audience and then presented the award to congratulate children, parents and teachers for their efforts in increasing pupils cycling, scooting and walking to school.

Sustrans began working with the school in September 2010 to encourage children and parents to choose an active journey to school. Gilnahirk Primary School has achieved a significant, sustained increase in the number of children cycling, scooting and walking to school. Well done Gilnahirk Primary!

## Welcome new schools in greater Belfast!

Carr’s Glen Primary School

Forth River Primary School

Knocknagoney Primary

Rosetta Primary School

Seaview Primary School

Scoil an Droichid

St Joseph’s Primary School, Slate Street

St Joseph’s Primary School, Carryduff

**Did you know?** The [CMO report](#) estimates the cost of a range of preventable health and social outcomes faced by young people is £4 trillion over 20 years

## Impressive numbers across the UK...

As 2013 draws to a close, Sustrans currently has over **130 officers** working with over **2,200 schools, colleges and universities** across the UK to encourage walking, cycling and scooting – up from 1,600 last year.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, their work has led to a **doubling of regular cycling** in the first year of engagement, from an average of **8.4% to 16.6%**. In our teacher survey, 88% said they had seen cycling numbers increase.

Of course **reduction in regular car-use** is another key indicator – and this has dropped from **47.7% to 43%**. Again, feedback from schools showed that 67% believed that fewer children were driven to school.

Meanwhile in Scotland, Sustrans’ I-Bike project saw **regular cycling increase** from **11.5% to 17.3%** and **regular car-use drop** from **49.3% to 45.4%**.

Our **School Mark** accreditation scheme to acknowledge excellence in sustainable travel continues to be popular. At last count, 571 had achieved Bronze, 42 Silver and 9 Gold, with a further 311 working towards their Bronze level—good luck!

## Active School Travel Programme is Launched

Transport Minister Danny Kennedy and Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Elizabeth Mitchell jointly launched the major £1.2 million sustainable transport initiative to encourage more children to cycle, scoot and walk to school safely in October at a joint event with St Joseph's Primary in Ballyhackamore and Strandtown Primary. The Active School Travel programme is funded by the Department for Regional Development and the Public Health Agency and will be delivered by Sustrans.

Sustrans will be working with 180 schools across Northern Ireland over the next three years to develop a culture of active travel within schools. Cycling and walking to school is a great way for children to keep physically active and healthy. More active journeys to school will benefit the environment and reduce congestion around school gates. And of course, it's fun!



### Photo competition



Shiny Superhero Teacher from Carr's Glen Primary School!

Send your favourite photos to:  
beth.harding@sustrans.org.uk

## Hype that site – [madegood.org](http://madegood.org)

Does what it says in the URL! A natty little bike site, with some clear, simple videos on bike maintenance, plus routes to ride and bike news. The videos could definitely be useful in schools to revise skills or to follow in bike clubs.

## Waterside Greenway opens in Derry~Londonderry



The new 3.5 km Waterside Greenway, which runs from the Peace Bridge through St Columb's Park to Waterfoot Park, is the result of over £2m of investment from the Big Lottery Fund facilitated by Sustrans, Derry City Council, DRD Travelwise, DSD and NIEA, as part of the Council's Parks Development Programme. The official launch of the path was on 18 December and to celebrate the event 12 children from nearby Oakgrove Integrated and Ebrington Primary Schools were invited to the launch to check out the greenway for themselves. Children, teachers and parents all got into the festive spirit by blinging their bikes with lots festive decorations and lights for the special occasion. The Waterside Greenway will make a real and positive difference to how people will make their everyday journeys across the city and has helped to meet the objective of a traffic-free route on both sides of the Foyle. Well done to all involved in this fantastic project—what a great asset to the city.

## Top tips for the spring term

- End the term with a bang and take part in the Big Pedal! Two weeks, loads of prizes, hundreds of thousands of pupils and a million bike and scooter journeys [www.bigpedal.org.uk](http://www.bigpedal.org.uk)
- Do our NEW **Big Street Survey** lesson plans. With added elements like **Street Trumps**, this fun, inspiring session allows pupils to discover the area around their school and produce a manifesto for change for national and local decision-makers [www.sustrans.org.uk/bigstreetsurvey](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/bigstreetsurvey)
- There are plenty of **themed weeks, dates or events** to celebrate walking, cycling or scooting in various ways, eg Love Your Bike on Valentines Day, stay bright at Chinese New Year, get mum walking or cycling on Mothers Day...

## Get these resources...

In 2014, the Tour de France heads to Yorkshire for le Grand Départ, so **download our Yorkshire Tour de France pack**. Bright, bold and inspiring, this is first education pack to accompany the Tour de France and ties into **Key Stages Two and Three**, with lesson plans and resources for 11 subjects. - [www.sustrans.org.uk/tdfschools](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/tdfschools)

## Bronze, bronze and more bronze!

Six Belfast schools achieved their **Sustrans' Bronze School Mark Awards** this term. Each of these schools have demonstrated excellent commitment to increasing active school travel and the number of children cycling, scooting and walking to these schools has dramatically increased. For example, the number of children cycling to school once a week or more from these 6 schools increased from **13% to over 33%** during the 2012-2013 school year. The Bronze School Mark Award highlights all the hard work and dedication shown by pupils, teachers and parents from these six Belfast schools.

Congratulations to Brooklands Primary, Cavehill Primary, Currie Primary, Our Lady's Girls' Primary, St Joseph's Primary in Ballyhackamore, and St Vincent de Paul Primary!



## Dates for the diary

### February

**14<sup>th</sup> Valentine's Day** – show how much you love walking, cycling and scooting!

**30<sup>th</sup> Chinese New Year starts** – renowned for their fireworks, what can you do to stay bright and visible on the school journey?

### March

**3<sup>rd</sup> Big Pedal STARTS**

[www.bigpedal.org.uk](http://www.bigpedal.org.uk)

**14<sup>th</sup> Big Pedal ends**

**17<sup>th</sup> St Patrick's Day**

**20<sup>th</sup> Spring Equinox**

**30<sup>th</sup> Mothers Day** – can you get mums on their bikes?

**30<sup>th</sup> Clocks spring forward**

### April

**7<sup>th</sup> World Health Day**

**18<sup>th</sup> Good Friday**

**22<sup>nd</sup> Earth Day**

### May

**5<sup>th</sup> Bank holiday**

**9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> Giro d'Italia Big Start 2014**

[www.girostart2014.com](http://www.girostart2014.com)

In May 2014 the focus of the cycling world will be on Ireland and the Giro d'Italia Big Start with three days of pre-race celebrations in Belfast, followed by spectacular opening stages in Northern Ireland before racing from Armagh to Dublin.

## Thank you for supporting our work

**Sustrans' vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment, and this applies to children just as much as it does to adults.** The positive experiences of all the children that you have read about in this newsletter are the culmination of more than 18 years of Sustrans and our officers working with schools, colleges and young people.

Without your support, many children would not have the opportunity to enjoy independent and active journeys in and around their communities, so a huge thank you from us on their behalf. The long-term benefits of creating healthy and sustainable journeys will be shared by every one of us – in terms of our health, the environment and the wider economy.

If you like the sound of what Sustrans does and think that more schools, colleges and young people in your area could benefit from our work, or you want to know more, please get in touch.

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online [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

  
**sustrans**  
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Sustrans is grateful for the continued support of our schools work in Belfast from the following:

  
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Development**  
[www.drdni.gov.uk](http://www.drdni.gov.uk)

**Travelwise**  
Northern Ireland

  
**Public Health  
Agency**