

About us:

Wheels for Wellbeing is an award-winning charity that supports disabled people of all ages to enjoy the benefits of cycling. We do this by running drop-in cycling sessions across south London with our fleet of cycles and our team of dedicated instructors and volunteers. We also increasingly campaign for the recognition and removal of barriers to cycling for disabled people nationwide.

What disabled cyclists have said:

“It’s definitely easier for me to cycle than walk. Walking puts weight on my joints and I tire quicker. Cycling is faster, and I can coast and rest between pedalling. It’s made me more independent as I can go 20 mins with the same amount of energy cycling that I use for 5 mins of walking. And I can put some shopping in my basket” - **Anonymous, disabled cyclist**

“For those people who say they’re too old to start cycling - rubbish! I’m pushing 60 myself and it’s the best thing I’ve done in a long while” - **Linda, previous Wheels for Wellbeing user**

“I have a friend who is learning disabled and has some damage to a leg from a road accident - he is the king of the cyclists and loves the independence he gets, since he is not able to drive” - **Anonymous, disabled cyclist**

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Beyond the Bicycle:

A manifesto for an inclusive cycling policy



Background:

Many aren't aware of the fact that disabled people cycle. Growing numbers do and use standard bicycles, as well as non-standard cycles (such as tricycles, handcycles and e-bikes) to get around.

What barriers do disabled cyclists face?

There are a number of physical, financial and cultural barriers that continue to prevent more disabled people from taking up cycling in the UK. These include:

• Infrastructure

There is a lack of fully inclusive infrastructure across cycling networks: narrow cycle lanes; speed reduction treatments; physical obstacles; barriers and potholes can reduce accessibility for non-standard cycles, which are often wider, longer and heavier than standard bicycles.

• Cost

Non-standard cycles are typically more expensive than standard road bikes, with access to hire and loan schemes also limited. Disabled people are more likely to be on lower incomes than those who are non-disabled, creating a further financial disadvantage when it comes to purchasing the right cycle.

• Facilities

The majority of cycle parking and storage facilities fail to accommodate non-standard cycles. Without reliably available parking facilities (and fully integrated modes of transport) disabled cyclists will be discouraged from venturing out in the first place and from participating in active travel.

• Cycles not recognised as mobility aids

Many disabled people find cycling easier than walking. However, under existing legislation cycles are not recognised as a mobility aid, meaning disabled cyclists may be asked to dismount in places where 'cyclists dismount' signs are displayed (despite the fact that walking an aid, *such as a handcycle*, might be physically impossible for some).

• Imagery and language

Images and photos of non-standard cycles and disabled cyclists are under-represented in cycling, transport and design publications. Disabled cyclists are further excluded from cycling culture through use of the word 'bicycle', which fails to acknowledge the wider range of cycles available; the branding of electric-assistance as 'cheating' and the perception that cycling is for the fit and athletic.

Our policy asks:

1. Better infrastructure

- We will lobby for all cycling infrastructure to be fully inclusive and to meet the specifications of Highway England's 'cycle design vehicle' standard;
- We will develop and champion an inclusive cycling policy 'blueprint', as well as training and guidance for local authorities.

2. Better facilities

- We will work with a number of local authorities to pilot and implement a 'blue badge' parking scheme for disabled cyclists;
- We will work with government, cycle shops and employers to improve opportunities for the hire and purchase of non-standard cycles, such as through the Cycle to Work scheme;
- We will campaign to grow the number of inclusive cycling 'hubs', where disabled people can find opportunities to try cycling, develop confidence and skills.

3. Better recognition

- We will lobby government for legislative change so that cycles are recognised as a mobility aid when used by a disabled person for that purpose;
- We will work with transport bodies to improve the visibility of non-standard cycles and disabled cyclists in policy imagery;
- We will continue to push for behavioural, cultural and political change so that attitudes towards cycling really do go 'beyond the bicycle'.