



Our Newsletter aims to provide access to what we call the ‘long read’, that is more substantial articles on all manner of things that concern cycling. In the Winter 2025 edition you will find an update on what is happening in relation to the proposals for reinstating the railway over the Monsal Trail; Information on some exciting developments in terms of community-led cycle workshops and much more besides in both Derby and Loughborough; and an interview with Sam French, whose video “Beyond The Bike Lane” is featured on our website, see address above.

DCG would also like to keep you informed about what happens at our monthly meetings, currently being held in-person at the West End Community Centre on Mackworth Road, Derby DE22 3BL, at 19.30pm on the first Tuesday of every month; members are most welcome to participate. We post information about the outcome of discussions in these meetings on the website, and any other topical news items on the Derby Cycling Forum Facebook page. We would be very happy to hear from our members if there is any news/articles/exciting happenings in relation to all things cycling, or indeed any feedback from the newsletter. Please send a mail in the first instance to

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Monsal Trail threat (again)



Headstone Tunnel—Ian Dent

Periodically there are calls for the Monsal Trail to be reopened as a railway and, recently, we've seen another spate of publicity to this end.

The Monsal Trail is a traffic-free route for walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders and wheelchair users through spectacular limestone dales with incredible views from places like the iconic Headstone Viaduct (as often seen from Monsal Head). It is the most popular walking and cycling trail within the most popular [National Park](#) in the country.

The route is relatively flat (railway line flat) and includes six spectacular tunnels and breathtaking views. It forms a key part of Derbyshire County Council's [White Peak Loop](#) which was formally opened earlier in 2025.

There has been a long running campaign to have the route reopened as a railway which, in 2018, was led by the Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership (MEMRAP). There has subsequently been some splintering of the reinstatement campaign (smacks of The People's Front of Judea / Judean People's Front)! And there are now two organisations campaigning for removal of the Monsal Trail: MEMRAP and the Campaign for the [Peak Line](#). The campaigns' call for an assessment of the viability for reopening on the railway has been rejected by the Government but they are proceeding with their campaigns.

The campaigning groups have been arguing for a while that closing the Monsal Trail for walkers and cyclists isn't a big problem as they can suggest an alternative route ("that is just as good"!). It is hard to accept that the alternative route is an adequate replacement for the existing Monsal Trail. The Peak Park and Derbyshire County Council have previously stated that they would not support

reinstatement of the railway without the provision of a replacement walking and cycling route that is just as attractive as the current Monsal Trail. The new regional Mayor has stated this summer that "EMCCA has no current plans to reinstate the railway between Matlock and Buxton".

The main driver behind the reinstatement campaigns is from the quarry companies around Buxton who are keen to reopen the line to allow goods wagons carrying building stone to have an additional or easier route to large developments in the south of the country (e.g. new airport runways, new motorways...). There have been various messages about how the new line will provide for passenger transport into the Peak District and how the trains will include cycle friendly carriages but these vague intentions are all "pie in the sky" and likely to disappear if the reinstatement project proceeds. This opinion is backed up by the current existence of a railway line to the east of Buxton (The Great Rocks Line) connecting Buxton, Dove Holes and Peak Forest. This line has zero passenger transport and is purely used for stone movement. Vague promises of future passenger benefits would have more credibility if the [Great Rocks Line](#) first supported passenger and cycle transport.

If a solution can be found that produces a cycle / multi-user route as good as the existing Monsal Trail and also provides other benefits such as a railway then the reinstatement proposals are to be supported. Until that time, vague promises from the railway reinstatement campaigns should be challenged wherever they are encountered. Permitting the railway plans to progress on the basis of future, uncommitted and unfunded promises could lead to the loss of Derbyshire's most popular leisure trail.

So, it's good to keep an eye on what the campaigning groups claim and also good to pull them up on anything that isn't totally true. People in positions of power should be well informed about the significant objections to the railway plans before offering their support.



(Near Chee Tor, Peak District National Park–Ian Dent)



At the 2025 East Midlands Cycle Forum in Chesterfield I was fortunate to meet Joe Ward, a student of Mechanical Engineering at Loughborough University. Joe has set up a business and organisation at Loughborough called [Two Wheel Campus](#). It all started with what Joe called ‘bike flipping’—which sounds both acrobatic and perhaps also slightly dubious... in actuality, Joe was refurbishing bicycles and selling them on. He was supported by the University in setting up the organisation, although Two Wheel Campus goes beyond the campus: it is “a community-centred project that aims to make cycling more accessible to Loughborough locals as well as Students and Staff at Loughborough University.”

Somewhat like our very own [AYUP Bikes](#), Two Wheel Campus run a repair workshop every week where one can have your bike repaired or—these are university students after all—learn to make your own repairs! All those involved are volunteers. Where the acrobatics come in is around the sport of Bike Polo, which has three players per side. Using bikes with one gear and just a front brake, “...riders use mallets to pass and shoot a small ball, aiming to score goals whilst manoeuvring on bikes with precision and control.” See the web site above for pictures; Joe is very keen to encourage us all to become actively involved, and they can lend us the equipment as required. Wearing a helmet is highly recommended. There are Bike Polo teams in many major cities in the U.K., and the World Championships have just taken place in Taiwan. Two Wheel Campus are still flipping bikes; they have a presence on both Facebook and Instagram and it’s well worthwhile having a look at what is a totally inspiring and sustainable initiative by these students. When he graduates, as a passionate advocate of sustainable travel, Joe is looking to become involved in the Rail Industry. The article below has been written specially for our Newsletter by Joe Ward. Thank you Joe!



Pedals, Polo, People: What’s Happening at Two Wheel Campus?

Two Wheel Campus is a student-run, non-profit cycling project that has steadily grown into a friendly and practical part of the Loughborough community. Although it is organised by Loughborough University students, everything the project does is open to everyone—local residents, students, families, and anyone who’s interested in bikes.

How It All Started

The project began with Loughborough student Joe Ward, who started out selling second-hand bikes and offering repairs to fellow students who needed an affordable way to get around.

As Joe's interest grew, he began visiting and learning from other cycling groups around the UK. He met with bike polo clubs in London and Sheffield, and visited other community-focused projects like Women in Tandem and the Sheffield Community Bike Project. Seeing how these groups brought people together helped shape his vision for something similar in Loughborough—practical, open, and community-driven. That idea became Two Wheel Campus.

Sunday Afternoon Workshops at Fearon Hall

Every Sunday afternoon, Fearon Hall becomes a relaxed, hands-on repair space where anyone can bring their bike for maintenance or learn to fix bikes themselves!

All tools and equipment are provided, and volunteers are on hand to guide people through repairs at their own pace. A small membership fee helps cover workshop costs, but the focus is on learning, building confidence, and helping people keep their bikes in good working order.



Loughborough Bike Polo

In the evenings, the activity moves to the Ball Park on Loughborough University campus, where bike polo runs twice a week.

Bike polo is a fast-paced, mixed gender team sport where players ride bikes and use mallets to score goals. The community is international, with teams across the UK, Europe, America and Asia! All equipment is provided—bikes, mallets, and balls—funded by our small membership fee. The sessions are open to complete beginners as well as experienced players, making it easy for anyone to give it a Go!



Refurbished Bikes for Affordable Transport

Two Wheel Campus also refurbishes and sells second-hand bikes that have been donated by people in the community. Volunteers repair and tune them up so they're ready for daily use. Buying a refurbished bike is an affordable and sustainable option, and it helps support the project's non-profit work.

A Non-Profit Project with a Clear Purpose

Everything Two Wheel Campus earns—from membership fees to bike sales—goes straight back into tools, spare parts, and equipment for workshops and polo sessions. The aim is simple: make cycling accessible, affordable, and enjoyable for as many people as possible.

Get Involved !

Whether you want to learn repairs, try bike polo, buy a refurbished bike, or just meet new people, Two Wheel Campus is open to all.



Website: <https://www.twowheelcampus.co.uk/>
Instagram & Facebook: @twowheelcampus

Ayup Bikes

Ken Timmis

When Life Cycle Hub, a bike charity located near to the railway station, closed in December 2024 the staff and volunteers were unceremoniously made redundant (if a volunteer can be made redundant)! Most of the volunteers found a welcome at Derby Refugee Solidarity, a local charity which support refugees and the local community, where our skills were put too good use refurbishing and repairing bikes. The closure of other bike shops in the city convinced us of the need for a cost effective bike maintenance and repair service for the local community.



The organisation was formed as a not for profit workers cooperative and acquired the name Ayup Bikes, a nod to the local vernacular. However, the search for suitable premises proved challenging; after some false starts a modest industrial unit was located close to the city centre at 3 Coburn Place, Newland Street.

Walking into the empty unit in early May our hopes were high, freshly painted walls and floor offered a blank canvas to create our workshop. The space was soon filled with piles of parts, flat pack shelving, office furniture, tools, and inevitably plenty of bikes, as garages and sheds were emptied. The next few weeks were hectic. Hooks were screwed to the wall to store bikes; redundant boarding and worktops were repurposed into workbenches, storage shelving and even a kitchen area created.

We were able to negotiate a space in the freshly renovated Market Hall to present a selection of refurbished bikes, local maps and assorted accessories. This small space became our shop window, where we engage with potential customers, talk about bikes, offer our services, share experiences, offer guidance on what to ride and where to ride (we may even have a map for those new adventures)!

The workshop was soon busy servicing and repairing bikes. A steady stream of customers found their way to the workshop, through contacts made in the Market Hall, by recommendation or through our social media at <https://www.ayupbikes.co.uk/>. Customers arrive at the door with an array of needs, from simple puncture repairs to a full strip and rebuild and/or anything in between.

In addition to repairing and servicing bikes we try to support people who would like to ride bikes by organising regular social rides, starting in Derby. The group will ride on mostly cycle routes or quiet roads to a cafe for refreshment, hopefully returning both refreshed and inspired. Behind the scenes a couple of the team are busy making grant applications to philanthropic organisations, to fund community projects and keep Ayup Bikes busy. Such grants allow us to offer additional activities: training courses, puncture repair classes, simple bike maintenance, test riding balance bikes and Dr Bikes. The Dr Bikes events generally take place at a local employers premises, where a couple of mechanics set up a mini workstation to repair minor faults and adjust brakes and gears. The customer will receive a summary of the repair and any recommendations for further work.

A steady flow of donated bikes has continued to arrive at the workshop. They are sorted into those that can be refurbished, some which are directed to other charities and a few beyond recovery which will be stripped for serviceable parts and the unusable parts recycled. As an organisation run by volunteers we seek more volunteers. Bike mechanics are important, but other skills are also required, from cleaning bikes and sweeping the floor to stock control, IT, marketing, sales, accounts or just talking with customers. Our website has information about us, what we do, the events and how you can help; <https://www.ayupbikes.co.uk/howtohelp>.



As for the future we are working to establish our position and build our customer base. Engaging with community projects and more training courses. We will be promoting cycling as a realistic transport choice for those everyday short journeys, commuting, shopping and importantly fitness, wellbeing and leisure.

“I knew that the topic of cycling had been covered numerous times but I felt as though typically the debate had been presented as two binary opposites—cyclists and drivers being totally different and often shown as being at ‘war’”

Sam French



In his video “Beyond the Bike Lane,” which can be found here on the [website](#), Sam French explores the often controversial issues around transport and active travel mainly through focusing on the perceived antipathy between driving and cycling. Sam is a recent Masters Graduate of Nottingham Trent University’s Broadcast Journalism course; correspondingly his video is an attempt to juxtapose arguments and counter-arguments in order to reveal the complexities of the debates without prejudice, in the interests of letting a viewer or reader bring their own judgement to bear on the issues presented.

“I felt that it was important not to ignore the conflicts that can exist between drivers and cyclists and wished to speak to cyclists who’ve experienced abuse or collisions when riding - these stories are ‘real’ and add ‘emotion’ to the video piece. Throughout the project, I made an effort to acknowledge both sides of the debate. Not because both sides always carry equal weight, but because I felt that understanding the reasons behind different viewpoints could be part of challenging the typical viewpoints.” (Sam French)

Sam has an abiding interest in issues of place; his video is mainly concerned with the infrastructure in medium-sized cities in England such as Leicester, Nottingham, Norwich and Manchester, although comments from cyclists in Derby, Birmingham and London are also included.

“I wanted to explore the gap between lived experience and narratives from government policies etc. and knew that it was important to include a range of different cities. Initially, I wanted to focus slightly more on the nature of urban planning and infrastructure but, as stated—crucially—it became clear that this was about more than just infrastructure. It involves policy, priorities and attitudes.”

(Sam French)

This approach allows for comparisons to be made between particular examples of urban cycling infrastructure and the seemingly ubiquitous bike lanes implemented in these particular environments. The video juxtaposes some very different policies and solutions to the problems presented via the mixture of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle traffic on public roads and pavements. In Brighton the solution to a conflict between pedestrians and cyclists was to remove a cycle lane from the middle of a pavement, and re-instate a two-way cycle lane on the road which meant compromising on the space for vehicular traffic. A similar solution for cycling was instigated in Deansgate, Manchester. In Leicester, in response to a fatal accident which killed a cyclist, cycle lanes were installed in the middle of the pavements on both sides of the road leading to the railway station. Whilst the Active Travel team member from Leicester City Council could frame this as a great success in terms of encouraging and improving active travel opportunities, a cyclist representing Spokes, the Leicestershire cycling organisation, comments that the whole approach to the station needs to be reconsidered in the interests of safety. Yet another comment from a cyclist in Birmingham considers cycling to be ‘great’ in Leicester; whereas in the opinion and no doubt experience of cyclists in Norwich, cycling paths on pavements shared with pedestrians “only work when they are not shared”.

“The video piece raises further questions and that’s because, inevitably, the issues themselves are unresolved. It’s a complex subject and there isn’t necessarily an answer—individuals will also have very different answers on how they feel when cycling. At times, it was slightly surprising to hear the contradictions between some cyclists in the same city, when discussing the effectiveness of infrastructure.”

(Sam French)

In terms of the debate between cyclists and drivers Sam’s video deals with the issue of the visibility and perception of cycling in relation to transport and communities, beyond the individual cyclist in uniform high-vis Lycra. In Manchester, named European Capital of Cycling by ACES in 2024, bikes are allowed on off-peak trams. Manchester group ‘Walkride GM’ say that it’s essential that people learn to ‘see’ city centres as places to drive round, rather than as a destination to drive to and across. Getting to and across the city can be more easily accommodated and accomplished by means of public transport and active travel. In terms of cycling across cities, ‘Women In Tandem’ in Nottingham report that whilst one can travel safely by bicycle from East to West of the city, there are no similar safe routes to cycle North and South of Nottingham, an impediment to encouraging more women to cycle. The video touches upon the paucity of funding for active travel not just in relation to roads, but the recent shift of emphasis towards sustainability focuses more on the provision of public transport than cycling per se. The British Association of Drivers think that it is ‘pie in the sky’ to attempt to get people onto public transport and that the millions spent on barely used cycle lanes rather than on fixing potholes indicates preferential treatment for cyclists; this

despite the fact that cyclists are often also drivers and that both share the roads—and the potholes. Because cyclists are not ‘seen’ in the same numbers on lanes as cars can be ‘seen’ on roads then they are simply not there. Cyclists are also not there in the case of elderly drivers whose eyesight is failing, currently implicated as a cause in the increasing collisions between drivers and cyclists on the roads.

“I wanted the film to be honest–balanced, but not bland. In the end, I framed the narrative as a dialogue and wanted the interviewees to guide the flow and tell the story, with my voiceover tying it together. I don’t claim to have the solutions, but I do believe there is value in simply showing the complexity–without preaching. The title ‘Beyond the Bike Lane’ was intended to reflect that, whilst cycle lanes are visible and often come to mind, it’s about more than just them.”

(Sam French)

Whilst *Beyond The Bike Lane* doesn’t propose obvious solutions to the issues it raises it does encourage responses, albeit from particular perspectives—in this case the perspective of a member of a cycling campaign group. *Beyond the Bike Lane* is a reminder that, despite being seemingly ubiquitous, neither the bike lane nor the term cyclist refers to singular infrastructures or specifically characteristic users of bicycles. It could even be said that particular kinds and designs of infrastructure—or lack thereof—manifest particular kinds of cycling and cyclists. Indeed where the video is most ambiguous-or perhaps even a little devious—is the point where interviewees talk about the bad behaviour of delivery drivers on electric bicycles “with things other than cycling on their minds,” a topic which is introduced by an image of the electric bikes to be found for hire across most major cities. (In Derby, this scheme was abandoned, partially because of vandalism and theft of the cycles.) The correspondence between the image and the continuing dialogue in the video could be seen to imply that bad behaviour is not just the prerogative of delivery drivers. For the campaign group, it’s not about just raising the profile of cycling but also enabling cyclists to use the machines they ride safely and with respect to other road and off-road users. That can only be achieved by talking about Cycling, with a capital C; to recognise its convenience, pleasures and difficulties, and not simply as an adjunct of sustainable travel even as it surely qualifies as such.

“Ultimately, cycling touches on so many aspects of life: public health, climate, community, accessibility, and simple everyday convenience. As a Geography undergraduate and someone interested in transport—it felt like a great topic to dive into. I had many other areas of cycling that I’d like to potentially cover in the future. The gender balance/perceptions of people who cycle, the age profile, how sport cycling differs to leisure cycling and—crucially—a more detailed comparison between the UK and other European cities. I briefly touched upon some of this in this video but, to do them justice, they’d need a separate piece of work. It’s also a topic that’s constantly changing/evolving so it’d be a useful exercise to speak to some of the participants from this piece again in the future for an update.”

(Sam French, [Beyond The Bike Lane](#) 6/10/25)