



Just the Ticket

The Cycle-Rail Awards exist to recognise and foster better bike-rail integration. **Cherry Allan** reviews the 2007 winners

More than 60% of us live within a 15-minute cycle ride of a railway station.

Taking part of a longer journey by rail is – should be! – a viable option for lots of cycling activities: commuting, touring, family days out, or getting to the start of a race, charity ride or mountain bike trail.

This is why CTC supports The Association of Train Operating Companies' (ATOOC) National Cycle-Rail Awards. Also backed by Cycling England and Sustrans, the awards recognise progress and also help publicise best practice for others to follow. The fact that a quarter of the 2007 nominations were made by CTC members shows just how much cycle-rail means to us.

Getting bikes onto trains easily is just part of awards' scope. They

encompass *anything* that makes for a robust and workable relationship between cycle and rail.

RIDE AND PARK

Having assessed cycle storage capacity at hundreds of railway stations for the Department for Transport in 2005/06, CTC was proud to sponsor the Station of the Year category in 2007. The winner was Haddenham and Thame Parkway in Buckinghamshire.

The station is a long walk from Haddenham itself and, noting that many customers were driving, Chiltern Railways threw their weight behind cycling as an alternative. The company wanted to reduce local traffic, relieve the strain on car parking facilities, and improve the local environment.

First they spoke with local people. Then, collaborating with the Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling Group, Chiltern Railways installed 45 sheltered racks close to the platforms, visible to ticket office staff. They also put on a cycling awareness day with free coffee for cyclists and guided rides from Thame to the station to show how short the journey is by bike.

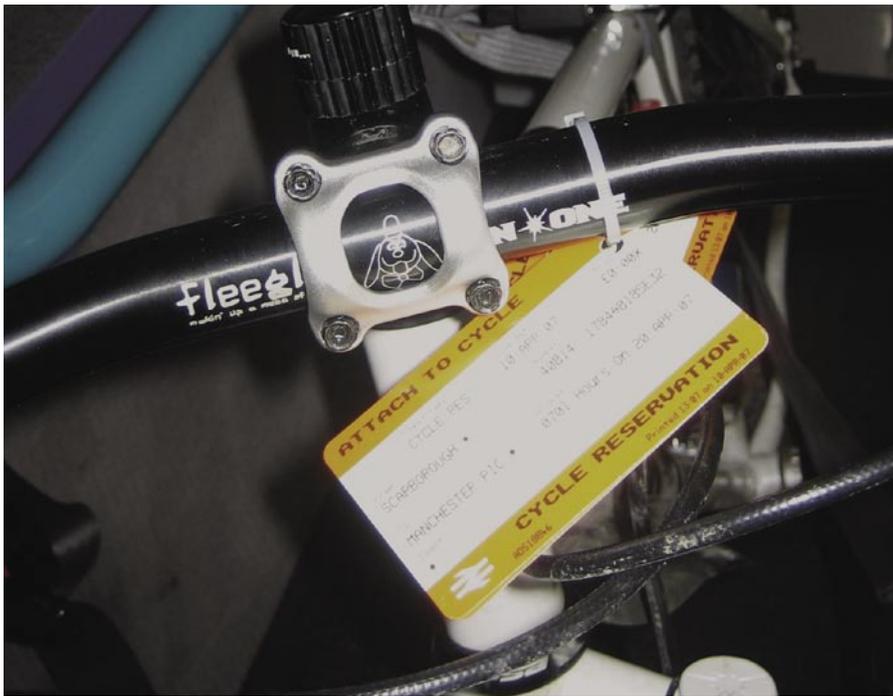
Chiltern's Chairman Adrian Shooter said: 'We're delighted by this award, but we're not complacent and realise that there's still much more to do.' The company will continue to sponsor awareness groups and highlight the benefits of cycling to customers. To meet demand they'll increase the number of cycle racks and they'll go on supporting a community petition for improvements to help cyclists negotiate a daunting road between Haddenham and Thame.

VALUED PASSENGERS

Train operating company 'one' won the award for customer service excellence. 'one' ran a 12-coach special train from Southend to Stratford for the exclusive use of people and cycles on their way to the British Heart Foundation's London to Southend charity ride. For those returning to London, all scheduled services ran with eight coaches instead of the usual four.

'There's a history of rail support for this ride,' said David Holladay, CTC's public transport specialist, 'but this year 'one' really went to

As well as bikes on trains (above) the awards encompass cycle parking, access to stations by cycle, and any other aspect of catering for cycling customers



WHO WON WHAT

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE:

'one' Railway, for supporting the London to Southend charity bike ride with a special service and extra coaches.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: First Capital Connect's investment in rail-cycle integration at 33 stations and improved security for cycle storage areas.

BEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION – SPONSORED BY CYCLING ENGLAND: Fife Council for the Markinch station to Glenrothes cycleway.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Surrey Council for its work with the county's train operators delivering a major expansion of secure cycle parking at stations.

MOST INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO CYCLE/RAIL INTEGRATION: National Rail Enquiries for introducing a web-link to train operators' cycle policies.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: OYBike for its self-service bicycle rental stations; and Go Pedal for helping people explore London by bike by delivering machines where and when they are needed.

PEOPLE AWARD: PC Jerry Isterling for educating people on avoiding cycle theft at railway stations.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Martin Bright and Simon Geller for an extensive survey of cycling facilities linked to Northern Rail's operations and stations.

STATION OF THE YEAR – SPONSORED BY CTC: Haddenham and Thame Parkway (Chiltern Railways) – see article. **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Guildford station, South West Trains, for its new cycle racks.

TRAIN OPERATOR OF THE YEAR:

Northern Rail for developing a strategy (www.cyclingengland.co.uk/engineering.php) that should be a blueprint for other operators.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Chiltern Railways for working with local authorities and cycling groups to provide better facilities for cyclists at its stations.

The awards were presented by Tom Harris MP, Under Secretary of State for Transport, with Christian Wolmar of Cycling England. Tom Harris said: 'We are all working towards a sustainable, integrated transport network that allows people real choices in the way they travel. Bringing bike and rail services together is an important element in achieving that goal.'

town!' The example is there for other companies to follow: 'one' has proved that there's no need, logistically or otherwise, to shy away from large groups of cyclists who want to use their services.

The Cycle-Rail Awards don't just focus on organisations; they also recognise the impact dedicated individuals can have on the cycle-rail experience. The 2007 People Award was won by British Transport Police Crime Reduction Officer, Jerry Isterling. Jerry worked with three train operating companies, Network Rail and national cycle retailer Evans Cycles, to organise cycle surgeries at cycle theft hotspots at railway stations across the South and South East. Cycle owners learnt how to avoid having their machines stolen.

Highly commended in the People category were Martin Bright, a retired teacher and Simon Geller, an IT consultant, for their voluntary work on an extensive survey of cycling facilities linked to Northern Rail's operations and stations. The information they gathered and how they gathered it remains a useful resource for others (see the Northern Rail section at www.atob.org.uk).

BIKES ON TRAINS

Simon, who is a CTC Right to Ride representative, was equally delighted to see Northern Rail win Train Operator of the Year for its cycling strategy, dubbed by the judges 'a blueprint for other train

operators.' Together with Martin again, who's a Sustrans volunteer, Simon has invested much time in Northern Rail's Cycle Forum. One of the things that they got out of the strategy was a relaxation of the two bikes only per train rule, giving guards discretion over whether to apply it or not.

Northern Rail cater for cyclists in other ways too: their trains carry cycles for free, with no need to reserve; and when rolling stock is up for refurbishment, they look into providing additional 'flexible' space for cycles. What's more, Northern Rail has been improving the cycle-friendliness of stations with secure storage and safe cycle access.

Another prize-winner was National Rail Enquiries for introducing a link on its website to each train operator's cycle policy. More than 100,000 people have used it so far, testament to the need for reliable, up to date information when planning any cycle-rail journey. See: www.nationalrail.co.uk.

Physical links are as crucial as electronic ones. Hence the prize, in the Best Local Government Contribution category, to Fife Council for the New Cycleway from Markinch Station to Glenrothes. This £500,000 partnership-funded cycleway makes combined cycle and rail travel easier for Glenrothes residents by joining up with the existing cycling network in the town.

For more on the awards see: www.cyclerrail.co.uk.