



# Vote Bike!

What do the political parties promise for cycling, and how can you find out if your would-be MPs are pro-bike?

**Victoria Hazael** has some answers

The general election is approaching fast. Brown and Cameron are already fighting it out in the papers. Soon there will be party political broadcasts on the TV and local politicians will be out kissing babies. Before one of your prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) hotfoots it to your doorstep to ask for your vote, you'll need to know what the different parties are promising to do to improve cycling and how you can play a key part in supporting CTC's new campaign, Vote Bike.

Vote Bike aims to get the word out about cycling to PPCs, many of whom will become MPs and will soon be voting on issues affecting cyclists in the next parliament. Even those who don't win a seat in Parliament are important, as they tend to also be local councillors or have connections in local politics.

'It's vital we know which MPs and Peers support cycling, so that we can assist them with the information and research they need to effectively make the case for cycling in Parliament,' said CTC's Adam Coffman, who coordinates the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group.

You can see if your PPCs support cycling by contacting them directly through CTC's Vote Bike. The new online campaigning tool makes it easy for cyclists to send emails to their PPCs, asking them to express their support for CTC's Vote Bike manifesto. The site will show how PPCs have responded and any comments they've supplied.

Meanwhile, what do the main political parties propose on cycling? This – in alphabetical order – is how they replied to CTC's questions:

### Conservative

'Encouraging cycling will be an important priority for a future Conservative government, as it already is for the Conservative



Each year the All Parliamentary Cycling Group goes on a study tour to look at cycling best practice

administration in London. We recognise the benefits cycling can bring for tackling congestion, reducing emissions and improving public health.

'Conservatives want to change the culture of highways planning to push the concerns of cyclists up the agenda of the professionals who manage our roads. By encouraging DfT officials to "think cyclist" we would aim to create a culture that would permeate down to officials and councillors who are responsible for managing roads locally. Our goal would be to make cycling a safer and more attractive transport option.

'To boost the take-up of low carbon travel, a Conservative government would also change the way transport schemes are appraised. We would reform the current model NATA, which is the DfT's cost benefit analysis for appraising the value of transport projects, in order that it reflects the benefits of low carbon schemes like cycling. And we would introduce a moratorium on building on any disused rail lines still in public ownership. This will keep open the possibility of re-opening them for cycle use in the future.

'Not only will we encourage officials to prioritise cycling, but we will also reform the much-criticised Transport Innovation Fund. These funds would then be available to create a Transport Carbon Reduction Fund to support sustainable travel. Local authorities will be able to use the funds to encourage the development of new green transport schemes such as cycle routes and corridors.'

### Green Party

'On average, a bicycle moves only 2mph slower than a car through

the streets of London. Since 2000, Greens on the London Assembly have tripled the money available for supporting cyclists and walkers for £21million to £63million. To make cycling safer, the Green Party wants a 20mph limit throughout built up areas, including villages.

This would reduce the need for specific traffic calming measures everywhere.

'To promote cycling, the Green Party recognises we need to reduce the need to travel long distances for work, leisure and shopping. We need to improve road conditions to make them safe and convenient, and bicyclists need more road space.

'We would push all large employers and organisations to have space for bicycles and belongings that are safe, secure and dry. This should also apply to council and private housing. Elected Green MPs will encourage government tax relief for work-related cycling, on a scale no less generous than car allowances.

'Finally, all rail stations should have secure high quality cycle parking provision, with new rolling stock designed to easily carry bicycles, as demand rises.'

### Labour

The Labour Party didn't give us the response we asked for but instead sent us various press releases and a reply to our manifesto (see table). This is a summary of what they sent.

- The achievements of the last Labour government have been to introduce Bikeability (cycle training standard) and the Cycling Towns programme, results of which have shown a 27% increase in cycling.
- The current Secretary of State for Transport Lord Adonis appears to be very strongly in favour of cycling and has pursued several cycle-friendly policies since he took office, including: new investments in cycle-rail interchanges and the Cycle to Work Guarantee – a scheme for major employers committing them to encourage commuter cycling. The Guarantee includes a commitment to implement the Cycle to Work tax-incentive scheme, perhaps the single most useful long-term policy in support of cycling to have emerged from this government.
- At a recent event hosted by

Like 'safety in numbers', the more MPs there are who support cycling, the safer it is for all of us.

Campaign for Better Transport, Lord Adonis said: ‘To be honest, our record on cycling in the past has been mixed, at best. But I am determined that cycling should be at the heart of all our efforts to put local transport on a more sustainable footing. I have also placed particular emphasis on the importance of cycling – not as an occasional travel option, but as a mainstream form of transport. Increasing numbers of people are discovering that there is no healthier, more sustainable and cheaper way than cycling.’

- The recent Active Travel Strategy has promised to create a ‘Decade of Cycling’ and sets out strong support for a significant increase in cycling.

**Liberal Democrat**

‘The Lib Dems will promote a transport hierarchy, with the least polluting forms, walking and cycling, at the top, working down to the most polluting at the bottom. We will then look to invest in the most environmentally friendly forms, whenever possible. Our specific plans for cycling include:

‘Working with boroughs to develop a cycle recycling scheme enabling more people to have access to bikes. Introducing legislation, which requires new office blocks and other major places of employment to have proper facilities for cycling, including parking and changing facilities. Promoting expansion of the National Cycle Network, particularly off-road routes as research shows that cycle routes when separated from roads have far higher usage levels than those which form part of roads. Ensuring cycling is built into all local transport plans and signage for cyclists is improved. Improving facilities for parking and cycle storage at stations.

‘We would introduce a cycling ‘Gold Standard’ award for all rail and bus stations meeting minimum cycle facility standards, including adequate provision of secure cycle parking and information on local cycle routes. Improving road safety, road quality and reducing traffic levels to make cycling easier, safer and more accessible to all.

‘Promoting cycling competency schemes. Supporting the adoption of large scale bicycle rental programmes. Making 20mph the default, but not the mandatory,

speed limit in residential areas. We also support variable speed limits near schools. We would also look to improve road safety by lowering the drink driving limit from 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood to 50 milligrams, in line with many other European countries. Along with parking and changing facilities.’

**Plaid Cymru**

‘The things that can be done to improve cycling are largely devolved in Wales to the National Assembly, and therefore not an issue for a Westminster Election. Plaid Cymru AM Alun Ffred Jones is the Welsh Assembly Government’s Heritage Minister with responsibility for sport and tourism. As part of his work as Heritage Minister, he has secured extra funding for improving cycling, for example £2.8m extra in European funding to improve the Valleys Cycle Network.

‘We are also working to improve cycling opportunities at a local government level. The Plaid Cymru coalition in Cardiff City Council has invested in a new bike share scheme to allow people to hire bikes cheaply for use around the city.’

**Scottish National Party**

‘Since coming to power in 2007, the SNP have championed a healthier, greener Scotland. As cycling cuts down on harmful carbon emissions and boosts activity levels, encouraging more Scots to get on their bikes is a major part of realising that goal.

‘The SNP Scottish Government

have backed numerous projects in communities across the country aimed at widening access to cycling including the Bike Station bike recycling project in Edinburgh.

‘Through Cycling Scotland, we have also backed National Bike Week, which has seen participation soar in recent years. [www.chooseanotherway.com](http://www.chooseanotherway.com) is a great SNP backed resource which promotes cycling as an alternative to cars and buses.

‘Supporting cycling requires long-term commitment across Government so in addition to these great initiatives, the SNP also published a draft of the first ever Cycle Action Plan for Scotland in May 2009. This document sets ambitious targets to increase the number of journeys undertaken on bikes to 10% by 2020. This is a major undertaking but Scottish Ministers are already behind the plan and are examining ways to make this ambition a reality.’

**And now... Vote Bike**

Vote Bike gives you a quick way to get in touch and make your voice heard. It is maybe a bit simplistic to look at one issue when you decide whom you should vote for, but the more MPs in parliament who are aware of all the benefits cycling will bring, the better the chance will be of an increase in cycling levels across the UK. It’s a bit like the ‘Safety in Numbers’ effect - the more MPs who support cycling, the safer it is for all of us!

The Vote Bike website is: [www.ctc.org.uk/votebike](http://www.ctc.org.uk/votebike)

	<b>Conservative*</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Lib Dem</b>
Better quality cycling conditions and higher quality cycle facilities.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tackling bad driving and lowering speed limits (20mph on most urban streets)	No	Yes	Yes, where appropriate	Yes
Cycle storage and cycle training at all schools	Yes	Yes	Yes - we support Bikeability	Yes
Creating better access for cyclists to stations (secure cycle parking) and onboard trains	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Opening up green spaces to cyclists (including access to coastal paths)	No	Yes – on a case-by-case proposal with consultation with local residents	No comment	Maybe – wherever practical

\*Responses gathered from material sent by the Conservative Party press office