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Train operators, stations and local authorities crowned winners at annual cycle-rail awards

Partnership, co-operation and consultation are at the heart of this year's ATOC National Cycle-Rail Awards.

Entries received from all over Britain revealed the sheer scale of the often unheralded work being carried out by organisations up and down the country to promote the integration of cycling and rail travel.

That work includes a range of initiatives from large scale and long-term projects to smaller single station works.

The recurring theme for the 2005 awards has been a partnership or collaborative approach to integration, with local authorities, train operators and passenger or cycling user groups working together to achieve sustainable results.

The independent panel of judges praised all those who entered the awards, sponsored for the first time by the Association of Train Operating Companies, for their dedication and determination to make the use of bikes and trains a viable option.

The winners of the ATOC National Cycle Rail Awards 2005 are:

Station of the Year – Ely (one) and Brighton London Road (Southern)

Best Local Government Contribution - West Sussex Country Council

Highly commended – Brighton & Hove Council

Customer Service – First ScotRail

Highly commended – GNER

Innovation – GNER

Highly commended – South West Trains

Derek Twigg, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, will present the ATOC National Cycle-Rail Awards in London on Tuesday 7 November 2005.

Derek Twigg said: "It's extremely encouraging to see so many examples of improved facilities for cyclists across the rail network. Interest in cycling is high amongst commuters, which is why we've supported cycle parking and CCTV at over 100 stations and leisure users are also benefiting from our investment.

ATOC Director General, George Muir said: "It is ATOC's aim to make rail easier to use for cyclists. In doing so, the industry can offer an acceptable and healthy alternative to the car.

"Recent figures suggest that approximately 40,000 people a day are using bikes to access railway stations in London and the south east alone. That number is growing, as is cycle usage throughout the rest of the country as better facilities are provided.

"Today's awards prove what can be done to improve facilities and care for cyclists using the railway. My congratulations to all entrants and especially to the winners, who fully deserve the accolades for their hard work."

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For further information, please contact:

Paul Lawson at Woodhouse Communications on 01444 473588 or 07767 655610
or ATOC Press Office on 020 7841 8020

Notes to Editors

Details of the ATOC National Cycle-Rail Award winners 2005

Station of the Year

Winner - Ely

Ely station's cycle facilities have been boosted significantly by a £15,000 investment from train operator 'one' and partnerships with local and national government. There are now over 200 cycle parking spaces, 80 of which are covered, with ramped access to all platforms at the station, which has CCTV coverage.

The judges were very impressed by the scale of the investment made by 'one' and the number of spaces for cycles at a station of its size and location and applauded the commitment of all involved in the various schemes.

Winner - Brighton London Road

Brighton London Road station has benefited from a partnership approach this year. Southern Railway, Brighton & Hove City Council and Network Rail have delivered more cycle parking spaces with better access and integration into the existing local cycle network thanks to a £40,000 investment scheme. Cycle and pedestrian usage at the station grew by 20 per cent over the three months up to the awards as a result.

This well thought through project to improve a small station and to help relieve road congestion was applauded by the judges for the scale of investment and its results. It was, they said, a good example for stations of a similar size.

Best Local Government Contribution

Winner - West Sussex County Council

West Sussex County Council's partnership with Southern Railway has led to the creation significant numbers of cycle parking spaces, more cycle shelters, better access and security and CCTV right across the county. With significant sums of money invested – over £330,000 over the past three years – the various projects contribute substantially to achieving the Council's Local Transport Plan targets.

West Sussex County Council and Southern should be praised, said the judges, for their commitment to achieving their goals, for the sheer scale of investment, for the scope of the various projects and the number of stations improved as a result.

Highly commended - Brighton & Hove City Council

Working with Southern and Network Rail, the Brighton & Hove City Council has developed schemes that have improved station facilities, which in turn have led to improved usage of cycles at Brighton London Road station.

The judges felt this small unitary authority had made full use of its limited budget and praised the Council's commitment to encouraging integrated use of cycles and trains.

Customer Service

Winner - First ScotRail

First have made significant improvements in conditions for cyclists since taking over the ScotRail franchise. First's initiatives include a free bike rescue service for cyclists on a bike/rail journey, more bike space on trains, free carriage of cycles on ScotRail services, including the Caledonian Sleepers, increased parking at stations and helpful publicity material.

First ScotRail's programme of initiatives to make life easier for cyclists was praised by the judges for being well thought through and for making good use of best practice.

Highly commended - GNER

GNER welcomes and encourages cyclists on its services. It has introduced a wide range of measures to help people with bikes, including those with different machines such as tandems. With an online booking cycle reservation system, website information and customer friendly staff the overall package of measures is a success. *GNER's overall approach to customer service for cyclists is good, said the judges, and deserves recognition for its scope and comprehensiveness.*

Most Innovative Approach to Cycle/Rail Integration**Winner - GNER**

GNER introduced in August 2005 a dedicated section for cyclists on its website. The section includes information about taking cycles on trains and cycle parking and includes an online cycle reservation form. The site has a feedback link that encourages groups or individuals to submit constructive comments.

The judges suggested GNER's online service for cyclists set a benchmark for other operators. The scope of the service offered by GNER, including online bookable space for tandems, was also welcomed.

Highly commended - South West Trains

When South West Trains refurbished its class 455 trains they consulted widely with cycling groups to ensure that the opinion of cyclists and passengers and all options for bike storage and passenger usage were taken into consideration.

Judges said South West Trains' approach to this project was clearly a success. The refurbished vehicles are being welcomed by users, they have maximized the number of cycles the trains could carry and improved the on board flow of passengers.

Ten key facts about how train operators are working to help cyclists

1. Around half of all railway stations already have cycle parking facilities, and this number is growing all the time
2. 85% of the busiest stations and 71% of medium sized stations have cycle parking facilities.
3. 'one' provides over 2,000 cycle storage spaces across its network, and cycle parking is now available at over 80% of the 167 stations it serves
4. The carriage of cycles is free on most train operators.
5. ATOC publishes a useful National Rail guide called "Cycling by Train" which provides regularly updated information on a TOC by TOC basis of rail-cycling information. It's available at railway stations or on line at www.nationalrail.co.uk
6. First ScotRail and 'one' railway have introduced Cycle Rescue services. Working with the Environmental Transport Association, this provides a breakdown service for cyclists travelling by train, and will get them back to their nearest station, a cycle repair shop or home.
7. GNER has introduced an on-line reservation system for bikes, so you don't have to go to the station to book space in advance.
8. Cycle hire facilities are now available at many stations including Bath, Brockenhurst, Lancaster, Cromer, North Walsham and Southminster.
9. Folding cycles are carried free on any train without restriction and without charge.
10. The National Cycle Network was extended to 10,000 miles in September. Many of these routes link stations and many are built on former railway lines.

[Source: SRA Cycling Policy, Nov 2004; train operator websites]