



CycleAdvocacyNetwork
supporting you to speak up for cycling



Rachael on her hybrid:
"nothing special, but it serves me well"

Campaigner

RACHAEL WIGGINTON

*Frustrated by the fact that her daughter couldn't safely get around by bike, **Rachael** joined the Cycle Advocacy Network*

Cycle campaigning: that's what other people do, isn't it? Cyclists with experience of taking planners and councillors to task? In reality, any of us can contribute by becoming involved with the Cycle Advocacy Network. Rachael Wigginton has been doing just that in Leicestershire since joining Cycling UK in lockdown in 2021.

"The reason I joined was because my daughter cannot ride around safely in the local area to see her friends or participate in her activities without me taking her there and back," she said. "I take her by car to the next village, two miles down the road, because it's not safe for her to cycle on the fast country road. That's one parent doing eight miles of unnecessary driving. I felt I had to get into campaigning to put pressure on the local authority to do more for children's health and wellbeing."

Rachael had no prior history of cycle campaigning. "I knew nothing about campaigning, the government's position on cycling, or how things work at a local level," she said. "CAN has given me an awful lot of knowledge and a great network with lots of experience and expertise. There's always someone who has got a helpful answer to a question I have."

Her cycling background is more 'bicycle user' than 'cyclist with a capital C'. "I have always cycled," she said, "as a child, as a student, and as I've got older. I've always considered cycling to be a means of transport first and foremost. I use my bike mostly to go to the local shops, the dentist, doctor, local pubs and cafés. It gave me great freedom as a child and that sense of freedom when I cycle remains."

That's what she says she wants others to be able to experience: unfettered, enjoyable utility cycling. "At the

moment cycling seems to be seen more as a health and leisure pursuit," she said. "I want the local authority to put cycling at the heart of their transport strategy. I see myself as a local 'agitator' – to get people to think differently about where and how we live and get them thinking about how much better it would be if more people walked and cycled."

Rachael primarily uses social media to get her message across to councillors and residents. "I have set up 'Better Biking for Blaby District' on Facebook," she said. "We now have 220 members, which outside of the village Facebook (FB) groups is probably the biggest in the area, and it's growing all the time."

"I'm finding Facebook and Twitter very powerful tools. Several councillors follow me and are on the FB group. I also post things on the village FB groups about cycling. The majority support what I'm trying to do, but there are people who can't see how things could be different."

Some of those people, inevitably, are councillors or council employees. "Leicestershire is the lowest funded county in the country and pleads poverty," Rachael said. "However, it's more the lack of ambition that is the real issue. There have been opportunities to bid for funding."

Rachael regularly challenges the council on social media when they promote parking for local events but don't say 'walk or cycle if you can'. That message is finally getting through. "The biggest change we've seen recently," she said, "is one of the county councillors in a video talking about how residents can help by swapping local car journeys for walking or cycling journeys. That's the first time we've heard that actually articulated by a councillor in Leicestershire." ●

You CAN too

Do you want to help get more people cycling? Do you want to share the joy of riding a bike? Do you want to see real change – with separated cycle lanes, safer roads, and shops, offices and homes accessible by bike? So do we! The Cycle Advocacy Network (CAN) brings together people with a shared interest in creating the conditions that enable more people to cycle, including better infrastructure for cycling and safer roads. For more information, visit cyclinguk.org/can

More info

Rachael's Twitter account is *Leicestershire Loves Cycling*: @LeicsCountyBike