



## Sustaining Dunbar

### Travel Advice Factsheet 19 - Getting Your Bike Ready for Winter



The clocks have gone back and it's definitely dark and colder, and you might be tempted to put the bike away till Spring. But with just a little bit of preparation and care, you can carry on cycling, even in the snow. Cycling to work in cooler weather is often more convenient as you don't get as sweaty. Here's a suggested 'to do' list to get you ready for winter cycling:

#### Clothing

- Selection of warm, windproof layers in addition to a waterproof jacket, gloves, footwear and overshoes - these will fit over regular shoes, and keep your feet warm and dry.
- A thin hat/balaclava that will fit under your helmet, or some ear warmers.
- Make sure you can be seen; jackets with reflective or fluorescent detailing are excellent as are high-viz vests. Additionally put reflective tape on your helmet, bags and bike.

#### Bike and Equipment

- Fit some mudguards to keep backside dry, feet drier and keep winter muck off your bike.
- Make sure your lights are working. New LED lights are great for visibility and batteries last a long time. Rechargeables are recommended especially for the front light. A hub dynamo is an expensive option but provides super bright reliable lighting without the worry of batteries failing.
- Pedal reflectors give out the message "it's unmistakably a bicycle" - excellent safety feature.

The law states that you must have the following when cycling in the dark:-

- **Front Light** - One white light is required, positioned centrally or offside, up to 1500mm from the ground, aligned towards and visible from the front.
- **Rear Light** - One red light is required, positioned centrally or offside, between 350mm and 1500mm from the ground, at or near the rear, aligned towards and visible from behind. This can be a flashing LED light.
- **Rear Reflector** - One is required, coloured red, marked BS6102/2 (or equivalent), positioned centrally or offside, between 250mm and 900mm from the ground, at or near the rear, aligned towards and visible from behind.
- **Pedal Reflectors** - Four are required, coloured amber and marked BS6102/2 (or equivalent), positioned so that one is plainly visible to the front and another to the rear of each pedal.

#### Wet Weather

Obviously waterproof clothing will make cycling in the wet more comfortable. As always, mudguards will keep you much drier. Check your brakes are adjusted correctly as stopping takes much longer in the wet.

#### Cold Weather

A warm pair of gloves is a must in the cold weather. Mitts are even warmer although some people might find it harder to use the gears and brake. An alternative are Breeze blockers, a plastic

guard which will help to keep your hands warm. Thinner layers of clothing will keep you warmer than thicker, and you can easily take off layers if you get too warm. Stick to the main roads that will have been gritted. Off-road paths invariably are untreated and more difficult by bike. If it's icy on the roads, which is rare, you can fit studded tyres, but these are expensive, from around £30 each tyre. They are heavier, slower and relatively noisy, but absolutely secure. Otherwise, find an alternative means of transport, cycling is too dangerous on ice.

## **Snow**

Snow often means disruption to public and road transport meaning that cycling could be the best alternative for getting to work. However, cycling in the snow does need a bit of care and preparation:-

- If you have a set of knobbly tyres, put them on your bike.
- Let some air out of your tyres; softer tyres will give a bit more grip.
- Cycle slowly and use your rear brake rather than your front. A skidding front tyre is harder to control than a rear.
- Try to relax and sit back a bit, cycling hunched nervously over the handlebars while gripping on to them probably means this isn't for you.
- As ever, anticipate hazards and brake early, preferably using the rear brake.
- Steer slowly and smoothly; avoid sudden sharp movements and be careful as you turn from snowy minor roads to clearer main roads as this is where you might find icy ruts.
- Wear warm old clothes and get changed once you've arrived.
- If you don't normally wear a helmet, it is advisable when riding in snow and ice.

For more advice or practical training, contact [dan@sustainingdunbar.org](mailto:dan@sustainingdunbar.org) We run free courses on bike maintenance and cycle training from beginners to advanced.



**KNOW WHEN IT'S JUST TOO DANGEROUS TO CYCLE - IF IT'S VERY ICY OR YOU FEEL UNSAFE ON YOUR BIKE THEN FIND AN ALTERNATIVE.**