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Doncaster, Sheffield and York school pupils begin their Tour de France

Eleven schools from across Doncaster, Sheffield and York will be competing against each other in this years Virtual Tour de France bike race. The race has been organised by Bike It officers from the sustainable transport charity, Sustrans. It aims to motivate hundreds of children to cycle to school. Bike It is one of the UK's leading projects that encourages children and young people to choose two wheels instead of four for the journey to school. In 2008 they have doubled the levels of cycling in over 400 schools.

The race started on Monday 1st June and will run until June 29th. Each day of the competition will represent each of the 21 official race stages.

The schools will battle it out to win as many stages as possible. The school with the most cycle journeys completed each day will be awarded twelve points; the second school will get ten points with decreasing points being awarded to the lower placed schools. The winning school at the end of stage 21 will be treated to an awesome stunt show from the UK's very best trial bike riders, including world champion rider Ben Slinger and European Champion Danny Butler.

Bike It Officer, Jim Cole who organised the event said: "It is great to see the Sustrans Virtual Tour de France race go from strength to strength. Over the past few years it has been great fun and has got lots of children on their bikes. Last year it created a staggering 4,500 extra journeys to school by bike. I am confident we will easily beat that this year.

"The progress of all the schools will be posted on www.bikeit-vtdf.com. Good luck to everyone taking part!"

Currently there are 12 schools in Doncaster and 10 in Sheffield taking part in the Bike It project. Participating schools across England have seen levels of double over the last year – bucking the trend in declining numbers of children cycling to school.

NEWS
RELEASES

Bike It is a nationwide scheme, managed by sustainable transport charity Sustrans. Nationally the project is funded by Cycling England, and the cycle industry through the Bike Hub. Locally Bike It is supported by the Big Lottery Fund and Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council and Sheffield City Council.

Further information about Sustrans and Bike It, including other news releases and detailed online route mapping, is available through our website: www.sustrans.org.uk

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Photo Librarian – Jonathan Bewley (0117 915 0120)

ISDN line available for radio interviews

NOTES

- Schools taking part in the race:
Doncaster - park Primary, Castle Hills Primary, Carcroft Primary, Bentley New Village Primary, Bawtry Mayflower Primary, Hexthorpe Primary
Sheffield – Emmanuel Junior, Wisewood Primary, Rivelin Primary, Trolley Junior
York – Archbishop of York Primary
- Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity. Its vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. It is achieving this through innovative but practical solutions to the UK's transport challenges
- Bike It is a nationwide scheme, managed by sustainable transport charity Sustrans, aiming to increase the number of young people cycling to school and on other journeys
- Over the 2007/08 academic year there was a doubling of cycling levels in schools taking part in the Bike It programme
- There are currently 43 Bike It Officers across England and Wales working with over 400 schools and 89,000 children
- The project receives funding from Cycling England with the support of the Department for Transport, Bike Hub – the cycle industry levy, the Big Lottery Fund's Well-being Programme, the National Assembly for Wales, Transport for London and support from partner local authorities
- Sustrans' Bike It in Doncaster and York are part of a portfolio of projects being delivered by a consortium of leading walking, cycling and health organisations and funded through the Big Lottery Fund's Well-being Programme. The Programme provides funding to support the development of healthier lifestyles and to improve wellbeing
- The Consortium is lead by Sustrans and includes British Cycling, CTC, Cycling England, Living Streets, London Cycling Campaign, the National Heart Forum, the National Obesity Forum, the Ramblers' Association, Campaign for Better Transport and Walk 21. It is delivering a portfolio of projects that will enable 2 million people to become more physically active by walking or cycling as part of their daily lives

- The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004
- Cycling England is the expert body set up by Government to promote cycling nationally. Further information about Cycling England can be found at www.cyclingengland.co.uk

