

Bikeability & Regional Radio – Guidance on how to attract attention

1.0 Introduction

In September 2019 Bikeability featured on BBC Gloucester over several weeks, with Bikeability instructor Mel Glass.

Mel has kindly provided some handy hints and tips, as outlined below, regarding how to attract attention from a regional radio station for Bikeability promotion. We hope you find this useful in your own promotional endeavours.

2.0 Why local radio provides such a great PR opportunity

Local radio stations operate on a tight budget and are constantly seeking outside 'help' to create interesting topics for broadcasting. That means:

- Topics that are current, maybe in the national interest, and that affect the local area. For example: health, fitness, well-being, environment, transport, climate, cost savings
- Topics that can have an impact on a large proportion of their listeners – e.g. cycling and travel.
- Topics that work on radio – cycling training is very vocal.
- Radio loves kids!

Bikeability training works for all of the above.

3.0 How to attract attention

A radio station presenter may have a personal interest in cycling and that's great, but the radio station is really interested in topics and content that will maintain and increase listener numbers. This will help BBC stations to meet their listener number targets and will help commercial stations attract more advertisers.

You must make it as easy as possible for the radio station to take you on. There needs to be as little work for them as possible, so you must be prepared to 'work' for them.

Objectives

- To create a strong relationship with a local radio presenter
- To develop a program of regular broadcasts promoting cycling/Bikeability.

Step 1: First contact

First contact will be with a researcher who works for a presenter and is responsible for finding suitable topics to develop into content for broadcasting. First contact approach is a phone call or a personal visit to the station and a conversation with a researcher.....be prepared to talk in short bites in a way that will convince the researcher you are worth investing some time in.

Don't be shy, you're dealing with a radio station, they want to talk to people, it's their business!

So introduce yourself right up front:

'Hi – my name is (insert name) and I'm a National Standards Qualified Cycling Instructor teaching children and adults in (insert region) to ride bicycles safely and confidently.'

Introduce the topic, you need 3 soundbites, for example:

Cycling is BIG right now, as I'm sure you know. I helped teach x,000 (insert region) schoolchildren to ride last year.

This training program, Bikeability, starts NOW in (insert region) schools, aiming to teach another x,000 and more in this coming academic year.

I want to come and speak to you about this exciting program that's changing kid's lives in (insert region).'

You'll know you've made a good first contact if you're asked to put something together that the researcher can examine and share with the presenter.

Step 2: Follow up.

Provide the researcher with a summary of your proposition. You will send this as an email for example....

'I'd like to talk to your listeners about cycling in (insert region). Training in local schools starts this month. New guidelines for the cycle training programme Bikeability, provide an opportunity to talk to (insert region) parents about the benefits of children getting on their bikes.

But it's not just about the kids. It's about getting families and communities out cycling in their neighbourhoods for leisure and every day journeys, joining clubs, taking part in cycle events and races and having fun. And cycling instructors will help to train adults too!'

I'd love to be your cycling correspondent, to share all the exciting news about cycling in (insert region) and to tell your listeners how they can get involved.'

Send and wait.

Step 3: Don't wait long and follow up again!

After 3 or 4 days, if you haven't had a response, pick up the phone and call the researcher or send another follow up.

'Hi – still very keen to get involved with you around cycling.

Did you know that 1.6m adults ride every day or nearly every day, and that 36m adults never ride a bike!

Did you know that men make 3x more cycle journeys than women?

Did you know that the number of bike journeys has doubled in 10 years?

Let's talk about how I can train your presenter; maybe try a few routines in your car park, to bring to life for your listeners what we are doing for children.'

Again you will know if you've done a good job if they say 'Yes!'.

Step 4: Deliver! OK...you're on.

- Be available. Make it easy for your contact to talk to you and meet you. This is a good investment of your time and should take a high priority.
- Be ready to talk. Suggest running through a few circuits of Bikeability Level 1 with a presenter.
- Turn up for meetings looking bike-smart; clean gear and bike and new hi-viz for example, logo'd with your employer.
- Take tools, in case the presenter's bike is not good.
- Be ready to lend a bike, yours or from a local bike shop, if the presenter doesn't have a bike.
- In the car park, start with the ABC check! Tell them it's ABC so the kids can easily remember.
- Layout some cones (they love cones!) and send the presenter round, asking to ride with 1 hand, touch helmet, look behind etc – stuff that we do with the kids on day 1. This will be 2 or 3 minutes.
- Shout out instructions and encouragement – remember this is radio!
- Talk about next steps: Level 2, out of the car park and onto the roads. Make it sound exciting but always emphasise safety. Talk about continuous assessment and progression through starting and stopping a journey without parked cars, to the same WITH parked cars, performing U-turns, managing turns in and out of T-junctions, using cycle paths (very important).

Challenges

- The biggest challenge is making contact. It requires pleasant persistence! Keep calling. Keep emailing.
 - In your call or email of make cycling worthy of attention. If something happens locally relating to cycling (ideally not an accident) tell the researcher and be informed.
 - In your call or email be an expert. Rehearse some stats...there's plenty of material on the web. Get yourself to the top of the pile because there will be other folks trying to do similar on other unrelated topics.
- An equally daunting challenge is talking live on air with a microphone shoved up your nose!.....either you can or you can't...but if you imagine you're talking to the kids at school it's easy.
- Avoid politics! Even if you're politics savvy.

So don't be shy, see what you can do with your local station!

The publicity you will get is useful in so many ways. For instance, to encourage schools to offer Bikeability, to encourage trainees (and their families) to take part, to increase the profile of the Bikeability industry in general, to encourage local businesses to support cycling activities locally, to encourage local councillors and officers to support (and fund!) Bikeability and adult cycle training. And, of course, to raise the profile and reputation of your business!