

Hello everyone, I am Saskia Heijltjes and I was recently appointed as the first Bicycle Mayor of Bath.

I've used a bicycle to get from A to B in Bath for nearly ten years now. Not much has changed on the roads, apart from an increase in traffic and me becoming a mum of two children. I applied to become Bicycle Mayor of Bath and founded Kidical Mass Bath because I see cycling as a non-polluting, cheap, and easy way to get where I need to be. I also applied because I became frustrated by the lack of cycling infrastructure in Bath.

You currently have to be a very confident person to cycle around Bath because there is no safe cycling infrastructure along key routes.

The traffic-free paths we have along the river and canal, and to Bristol, are fantastic, but are mostly for leisure, not for getting to the shops, library or friends. They are also unlit, so not useful after 4pm in winter.

Whenever a motorist overtakes me and my children on a busy road, I fear for our lives. On most roads in Bath, we are not protected from fast-moving traffic, which is obviously very dangerous.

This is not just about me and my family though.

It's also about my 60-something-yr-old friend who cycles into town because walking is too painful on their joints.

It's about the parents driving their children to the park to practise cycling, because there are no safe spaces to cycle where they live.

It's about the 13 yr-old school student cycling to Ralph Allen School and having to experience close passes every single day.

It's about my colleague driving to work because they think they'd be too slow cycling up the hill and drivers would not give them enough space.

It's about my other colleague, looking for a cycling buddy to cycle from Bristol to Bath because the railway path is not lit.

It's about the 17 yr-old girl not allowed to cycle home from town in winter because the river path is not safe because it's unlit.

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To reach the council's climate emergency targets, we need to reduce car miles by 25% by 2030. Cycling can play an important role in this, alongside better provision for walking and public transport.

Some good steps have already been taken to enable Bath to become a better place for walking and cycling in the future. But not much actual change has happened yet and I am concerned not enough will happen in the next 2 years.

I very much welcome the Liveable Neighbourhoods and look forward to finding out more about the plans and the consultation. Liveable Neighbourhoods would be a good step in the right direction. We also need safe cycling infrastructure along key routes.

Enabling more people to cycle could address the climate emergency while improving quality of life for everyone. There's strong public support for urgent action on climate change. You have a mandate. Please be bold.