



Feature

KIDICAL MASS

MONTHLY MASS RIDES BY CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS SHOW THE DEMAND FOR CHILD-FRIENDLY, CYCLE-FRIENDLY TOWNS AND CITIES. HILARY SMART IS ONE OF THE ORGANISERS



HILARY SMART

Hilary is one of the organisers of Kidical Mass Reading (kidicalmassreading.co.uk). She rides a Tern GSD

Climate change is something I remember learning about in school. This, we were told, would be our generation's problem to solve. At the time, this felt very unfair. I was 10, hadn't caused this problem and had no clue where to start. Where were all the adults in the room?

Thirty years later, it's now my generation doing the teaching – and the messaging hasn't changed. Many children are acutely aware that the future of the earth hangs by an ever-thinning thread. They know it's 'their problem' to address. Yet they are given no power to cause meaningful change.

In September 2023, families across the world took part in Kidical Mass action rides and bike buses. More than 30 rides

took place here in the UK, involving over 3,000 riders – double the number from the previous event in May. These rides enable children and families to send a clear message to decision makers: we want to be able to cycle safely around our cities.

FREEDOM TO RIDE

Transport makes up about a quarter of UK emissions. Cycling is a very low emission form of transport and is also very child friendly. Given the right infrastructure a child on a bike can have the freedom of their city as soon as they are mature enough to handle it. How many of our towns and cities have the right infrastructure?

Here in Reading, we don't, although things are improving. We moved here when I was pregnant with our eldest