

RESPONSE TO ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY CYCLING GROUP INQUIRY, 'GET BRITAIN CYCLING'

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INTRODUCTION

Surveys, reports and studies consistently show that latent demand for cycling is suppressed by a combination of factors, of which the most significant is the perception of danger, and concerns about safety. Further deterrents to cycling include a lack of convenience, particularly compared to the use of the private car, and the perception of abnormality.

Both of these barriers to cycling are closely related to the first; cycling is especially inconvenient for those who do not wish to cycle on the busier and more intimidating roads, particularly those with children. Likewise cycling is seen as an abnormal activity because so few people cycle, and also because of the safety equipment that many cyclists feel compelled to wear.

If cycling was made an inviting prospect - a safe, attractive and obvious way of getting about - these secondary problems would disappear.

THE PROBLEM

Nearly 40% of all British trips under 2 miles are made by private motor car (Department for Transport, 2011b). This is an eminently cycleable distance for a good proportion of the British population, yet just 2% of trips under this distance are made by bike. Similarly, a 2010 Transport for London report identified 23% of all trips by all modes in London as cycleable. (This is most likely a large underestimate; trips by those under 5 or over 64 are excluded from being 'cycleable', as are trips over 8km, and those that involve heavy loads.) Despite this great potential, cycling still accounts for only around 2% of all trips in London. Two-thirds of these trips identified by this TfL report as 'cycleable' are currently made by car.

The potential for cycling for short trips is recognised by the British population themselves; 43% feel that the bicycle is a suitable alternative to the car for short trips of less than 2 miles (National Centre for Social Research, 2011). Yet the opportunity to get more people cycling, represented by the proportion of short trips in Britain that continue to be made by motor vehicle, is not being realised. The percentage of short trips cycled compares extremely poorly with European countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark - 37% of trips under 2.5 km are cycled in the Netherlands, for instance (Pucher and Buehler, 2008).

There are a small number of interconnected reasons that lie behind the failure of decades of government policy to shift a significant proportion of short trips to the bicycle. The Understanding Walking and Cycling (UWAC) Report (Pooley et al., 2011)

found that while attitudes towards cycling are generally positive or neutral, people who would like to cycle more failed to do so for three reasons –

- 1) Concerns about the physical environment, especially safety, when cycling.
- 2) The difficulty of fitting cycling into household routines, especially with young children.
- 3) The perception that cycling is an abnormal activity.

These reasons are worth exploring in more detail.

1) The environment, and safety

The perception of danger will have a major influence on people's transport choices. Respondents to the UWAC report described cycling as being a 'bad experience' using existing roads, and voiced concerns about the need to negotiate difficult road junctions. Poor safety was voiced as a key reason for not cycling by 80% of respondents. Respondents were most concerned about the dangers posed by motorised traffic.

it is clear that traffic is a major deterrent for all but the most committed cyclists. Potential cyclists, recreational (off-road) cyclists and occasional cyclists are discouraged from using their bicycles for everyday urban journeys because of their fear of cars and heavy goods vehicles.

The findings of the UWAC report are consistent with many other studies. Transport for London's *Analysis of Cycling Potential* (Transport for London, 2010) found that the greatest barriers to increasing cycle trips among infrequent or non-cyclists are as "safety, traffic and lack of facilities".

Research exploring the barriers to cycling and the factors which would encourage people to cycle more found that frequent cyclists were more likely to be put off by their experiences with traffic and other road users and to mention practical barriers, such as a lack of suitable parking or shower facilities (TfL Cycling Behaviour Survey 2010). For all groups, including frequent cyclists, safety was the most significant barrier to cycling in general and for specific trips. This suggests that, in order to realise the remaining potential from existing frequent cyclists, practical measures to increase safety and improve the provision of facilities will be the most effective.

Further Transport for London research in 2011 found that 'safety concerns are most likely to be cited as a deterrent to increasing/taking up cycling', that 92% feel cyclists are vulnerable to other road users, and 90% believe traffic makes people afraid of cycling on the streets of London. (Transport for London, 2011). Safety was the deterring factor for

69% of those considering taking up cycling.

The picture is the same across Britain as a whole. A large Department for Transport survey, published in 2010, found that safety concerns, and fear of traffic, were a key barrier to cycling. 63% of respondents who could already cycle felt that cycling on the roads was 'stressful'. 60% felt it was 'too dangerous to cycle on the roads.' These figures were worse for older age groups, and females. Cycling was felt to be the least safe mode of transport, in terms of risk of accidents, by respondents. (Department for Transport, 2010).

The 2011 British Social Attitudes Survey found that 67% of those surveyed were 'not at all confident' or 'not very confident' about cycling on Britain's roads (National Centre for Social Research, 2011). Further surveys by Brake (2012) and Sustrans (2012) have also found that a clear majority of people do not feel that Britain's roads are safe to cycle on.



Cycling is clearly not seen as an attractive or safe way of getting about by the majority of the British population. While training and education can go some way towards ameliorating the dangers faced by cyclists on Britain's roads, they do little to address people's subjective perception of risk, which is the main barrier to cycling. Rather than continuing with policy that is focused around educating and training cyclists to behave like motor vehicles, action is urgently needed to address the way roads and streets are designed, to make them safe - and *feel* safe and inviting - for cycling trips. At present, cycling is only available as an option for the 'traffic tolerant' section of the population, which evidence suggests is a distinct minority.

2) Inconvenience

Increasingly complex household structures, and changing work patterns, have affected the abilities of those who might wish to cycle to do so on a daily basis. The car often becomes a default option, even for very short trips. Almost all of the households with young children surveyed in the UWAC Report stated that the presence of children made travel by bicycle more difficult or impossible. Parents also have safety concerns about letting their children cycle on the roads – including those parents who already cycle themselves. The report argues that getting more people cycling should not therefore be about changing attitudes, but about making cycling easier to do in the context of busy everyday life.

For those who do try to cycle with children, or who do not wish to cycle with motor traffic, the alternatives to cycling on busy roads - where they do exist - are often circuitous routes, or involve cycling on pavements with frequent stops, or obstacles.



As long ago as 2001 it was already being observed that cycling levels in urban areas were effectively being suppressed not just by hostile road environments, but also by the poor quality of UK cycling provision, particularly lack of continuity, circuitousness, and conflict with street furniture and pedestrians on shared use paths (Jones 2001). This problem is a direct consequence of current Department for Transport guidance, LTN 2/08 *Cycle Infrastructure Design* (DfT 2008), which argues that

Some cyclists are more able and willing to mix with motor traffic than others. In order to accommodate the sometimes conflicting needs of various user types and functions, it may be necessary to create dual networks offering different levels of provision, with one network offering greater segregation from motor traffic at the expense of directness and/or priority.

If cycling is to become an option for short trips for those with children, or for children themselves, we cannot continue with policy that argues separation from motor traffic should come at the expense of directness and priority. We need guidance that makes cycling direct, convenient, *and* feel subjectively safe. There should not be a trade-off between these options.

40% of all trips made by children under 17 in the Netherlands are made by bike; the equivalent figure for the UK is just 2% (Buehler and Pucher, 2012). This is a clear reflection of the care and attention that has been paid in the Netherlands to making cycling the most obvious and easiest way of allowing children to make trips. Conversely, cycling with children in the UK feels dangerous, and remains difficult and inconvenient.

3) Abnormality

Most people prefer not to stand out. Using a mode of transport different to most other people, wearing odd clothes, or arriving slightly dishevelled, were all cited as difficulties of perception that people were reluctant to endure in the Understanding Walking and Cycling Report.



Research by Aldred (2012) has found that many cyclists choose to wear reflective equipment and helmets not just to protect themselves but in order to present themselves as 'competent' or 'proper' cyclists, under the impression that this would earn them respect from motorists. Yet it is precisely this kind of equipment that marks a cyclist out as odd, or unusual. In turn cycling is associated with the need for special equipment, or sportswear, rendering it unattractive for many people.

Cycling should not require significant effort, nor reflective equipment and helmets. The fact many British cyclists feel the protect themselves, and to treat cycling as a form of sporting activity, is a consequence of the nature of the environment for cycling. Unfortunately cycling on British roads requires a high degree of skill and experience, a degree not needed while cycling in, for instance, the Netherlands.

Cycling fast is identified as a way of keeping safe in official UK guidance (Franklin 2007)

A good cadence to aim for is about 80, while a sprint speed of 32 km/h (20 mph) will enable you to tackle most traffic situations with ease.

Cycling at this kind of speed is not possible for many people, nor is this kind of exertion attractive. The environment must be adapted to allow people to cycle in a slow and relaxed manner, at their own pace. In turn, a more attractive environment for cycling would render the need for stigmatising safety equipment increasingly redundant. The problem of abnormality will evaporate if cycling is prioritised as a serious mode of urban transport.

THE SOLUTION

The Understanding Walking and Cycling Report (Pooley et al., 2011) notes that these latter two reasons why cycling is difficult for many people - inconvenience and abnormality - are largely contingent on the first, the perception of safety. It argues that

There is clearly a need to move towards a virtuous circle where the physical environment is made as welcoming as possible, and walking and cycling are made as easy as possible so that more people engage in sustainable travel, thus making walking and cycling seem normal... We suggest that as walking and cycling are made more normal, more households will develop strategies and systems to more easily accommodate walking and cycling into their ordinary, everyday movements.

The key recommendation of the report is to redress the balance; to make cycling safe, easy and comfortable, and the obvious mode of transport for short urban trips, while conversely making car use abnormal for travel around urban areas.

This must involve separating cyclists from motor traffic on busy roads; restrictions on through traffic, and traffic speed, on all residential streets, and those streets that don't have cycle tracks; and changes to spatial planning so that services and facilities are easily accessible by bike.

We have a clear illustration of how these policies have worked to make cycling the most obvious mode of transport in urban areas, *for everyone*, only a few hundred miles away in the Netherlands. However, our current guidance for cycling deprecates the employment of one of the most important aspects of Dutch-style infrastructure, cycle tracks, suggesting that they should be considered last, regardless of the function of the road (Department for Transport, 2008, 2012). This guidance also continues to recommend the conversion of pavements to shared use, with all the attendant problems of conflict with pedestrians, and lack of directness and continuity. It must be revised, with clear rules for Highway Authorities to follow for cycling provision that are based on the intended function and characteristics of roads and streets, and that employ

measures based on speed/flow diagrams.

In particular, cycling infrastructure must be designed to be suitable, universally, for *all* categories of users. There should no longer be guidance that trades off convenience and directness against comfort and separation from motor traffic, and suggests that different categories of cyclists require different kinds of provision.

SPECIFIC RESPONSES TO SOME OF THE AREAS REQUESTED BY APPCG

Ministerial leadership

We believe that cycling is still not taken seriously as a viable alternative to the car for short trips, highlighted by a consistent emphasis on cycling as great way to keep fit or to stay healthy, or as being good for the environment, rather than as a sensible mode of transport in its own right.

A dedicated section of the Department for Transport should take responsibility for cycling policy and delivering increases in cycling. It should channel investment through both the Highways Agency and Local Authorities and other organisations (such as Sustrans). Overall, cycling should be given 5-10% of the overall transport budget. The department should recruit leading international expertise in cycling provision with a proven track record of bringing about mass cycling. The DfT should also have responsibility for developing mandatory standards for cycling provision and co-ordinating between Local Authorities to ensure networks are coherent across administrative boundaries.

Funding and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund

The Netherlands currently spends €37 per person, per year on cycling infrastructure alone, plus an approximately equal amount on bicycle parking and noninfrastructure programmes (Furth, 2012). This is a country that already has an extremely well-developed network for cycling. By contrast, in London - which represents the most well-funded area of Britain for cycling provision - funding stands at around £10 per capita, per year (GLA 2012).

However, the picture is considerably worse outside London. £20 million was pledged for investment in November by the Transport Secretary Norman Baker, to go with £30 million in matched funding announced earlier in the year. Even if we take into account Local Sustainable Transport Fund contributions of £140 million a year (of which only a portion will go towards cycling-specific schemes, the rest going on other forms of sustainable transport such as park and ride schemes, bus infrastructure and

rail improvements) this is only a tiny fraction of the amount spent on cycling in the Netherlands - a couple of pounds, per head, per year. To 'Get Britain Cycling' in any meaningful sense will require Dutch levels of funding, just to start catching up.

In addition, these sums do not represent any long-term commitment to cycle funding, being only one-off grants. There needs to be a consistent, guaranteed funding stream for cycling. As suggested above, we recommend that 5-10% of the overall transport budget should be specifically allocated towards cycling.

Behaviour change - including soft measures & marketing campaigns

We are deeply sceptical about the ability of behaviour change initiatives to achieve mass cycling, in isolation. The House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee's report on Behaviour Change (2011) observes that, in the Department for Transport Sustainable Travel Town pilot schemes,

there was a correlation between increases in cycling and bus use and investment in infrastructure, and that **marketing and promotion without changes to infrastructure had little effect**.

Without an environment that feels safe, and that makes cycling a convenient and pleasant mode of transport, we suggest that behaviour change initiatives will have little success. A recent Department for Transport study found that while only 3% of respondents were already 'sometimes' using a bicycle to get to work, up to *twice as many* had relapsed - that is, tried to cycle, but then failed to continue doing so. This suggests that for every three people trying cycling as a way to get to work, two will give up and return to using a car (Department for Transport, 2010).

This picture is reflected in Transport for London research (2010), which found that in London,

although many people have taken up cycling in the past decade, a similar number have stopped cycling - i.e. there has been "churn" but no change at an aggregate level.

Cycling across Britain is plainly fragile; while it seems that people can be encouraged onto bicycles in limited numbers, a significant proportion quickly give up again.

Health

The Department of Health (2004) estimates that, in England alone, physical inactivity costs the NHS £8.2 billion annually, and that a further £2.5 billion is spent annually dealing with the consequences of obesity. The most recent systematic review of the literature on cycling and health suggests a clear inverse correlation between the amount of cycling, and all-cause mortality, cancer mortality, cardio-vascular disease and obesity (Oja et al, 2011). Promoting active transport is an easy and obvious way of reducing the costs of these and other diseases. Cycling, as well as walking, can be built into everyday routines, creating the small amounts of physical activity that would result in huge net savings for the health budget.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence is clear that, while promotion and marketing interventions have their place, it is unreasonable to expect people to change their behaviour without changes in the physical environment that would serve to facilitate and encourage walking and cycling. It is vitally important, they argue, that pedestrians and cyclists are given the highest priority in the development and maintenance of our streets and roads, by the reallocation of road space to allow safe, pleasant and convenient cycling, and by the restriction of motor vehicle access (NICE 2008, 2012).

These changes are important because they would do the most to facilitate physical activity among the groups that are currently most inactive. Recent Department for Transport research in the Cycling Demonstration Cities and Towns (CCTs) suggests there would be 600 fewer deaths annually in these CCTs alone if the inactive members of their populations could become just moderately inactive (Cavill and Buckland, 2012). The most significant health and economic gains come from encouraging those who are most inactive to become slightly more active; not from encouraging those who are already active to engage in more exercise.

<u>Training – including more cycling to schools and workplaces</u>

Cycle training is important, and we believe that, in the long term, it should form part of the school curriculum. However - as with behaviour change initiatives - we are sceptical of its effectiveness at boosting cycling levels in the absence of infrastructure and changes to the environment.

A 2011 Transport for London survey found that while training boosted the confidence of most people, 'training is reported to have a relatively low impact on cycling frequency, with a similar proportion saying they cycle less as a result (27%) of the training as those who say they cycle more (28%)' (Transport for London, 2011). While this is not direct evidence of the total number of cycle journeys being made subsequent to training, it nevertheless demonstrates that it does not seem to have a great effect on cycling

frequency. In addition, people choosing to undergo cycle training are likely to be those already minded to take up cycling, suggesting that the effectiveness of training is likely to be even lower amongst the general population.

The Olympic legacy

The Olympics, and the Tour de France, have undeniably raised the profile of cycling in this country. However we should clear that it has raised the profile of a *sport*, not necessarily of a mode of transport. Policy aimed at getting more people walking would not be built on Olympic success in running; the two are quite separate activities, and we should be careful to differentiate between the use of bicycles by high performance athletes, and their use as a simple way to cover short distances by ordinary people.

Indeed, there are credible grounds for concern that a consistent identification of cycling with sport, and its promotion as such, may reinforce the impression that cycling is an 'abnormal' activity, for which one must be especially fit, and wear specialised, unflattering clothing.

Safety - including statistics and trends

While our main observation is that it is the *perception* of safety that is the most significant barrier to cycling, it should also be noted that Britain's roads are, objectively, considerably less safe for cycling than many of our closest European neighbours, where roads and streets are designed to eliminate conflict between users. The fatality rate for cyclists in Britain, per billion km travelled, is approximately three times that of the Netherlands (based on 2009 figures). This despite a much greater proportion of cycling in the Netherlands being undertaken by the more vulnerable - the elderly and children in particular - than in Britain.

So not only do Dutch roads and streets provide a subjectively safe environment within which to cycle, they are also statistically safe for cyclists. There were just four 'right hook' deaths of cyclists (where motorists turn across the path of cyclists) in the Netherlands in 2011.

<u>Dangerous roads & junctions – including cycle routes, priority lights.</u>

This is an area where, in particular, we feel there is an urgent need to adopt lessons from continental practice, particularly the Netherlands. At junctions with significant numbers of motor vehicles, the movement of cyclists and motor vehicles is separated, either in time, or space. There are a variety of ways of achieving this. At smaller signalised junctions, simultaneous green cycle phases are used, allowing bicycles to progress from all directions while motor vehicles are held at red.



Larger junctions separate turning movements, holding vehicles wishing to turn at red while cyclists progress straight on, and vice versa.



These designs are hampered under current guidance because at present the Department for Transport does not make provision for smaller cycle-specific lights. This has caused some degree of confusion in London, where Transport for London are trialling what they term 'early start' lights for cycles, where cycle-specific lights control entry to an advanced stop line, and provide an advanced green light for cycles.

Larger Dutch roundabouts also separate the movements of bicycles and motor vehicles, by means of an annular cycle track with perpendicular crossings, typically aligned with zebra crossings for pedestrians.



Courtesy of London Cycling Campaign

Principles of cycle-friendly planning and design

A clear division needs to be made between "roads for transport" and "streets for people", where "transport" refers to both motorised and human-powered transport (albeit on appropriate infrastructure) and "people" means all the social, leisure and and commercial uses of streets. On "streets for people" the objective would be to reduce motor traffic to just those vehicles which need access to the homes, shops and businesses on those streets. These streets would remain permeable to walking and cycling.

Highway Authorities and Local Authorities should be given a duty to categorise roads according to function using the principles of Sustainable Safety ("access roads" giving access to houses, schools, shops and businesses; "distributor roads" taking traffic locally from through routes to access roads; and "through roads" carrying large volumes of traffic between centres of population). Where roads currently have a mixed purpose, over time planning decisions should reinforce the primary categorisation and

minimise any inconsistent uses, with the long-term objective of moving towards "mono-functional" streets and roads. Not only is this is essential for determining appropriate cycling provision, it would more generally make road transport more efficient, help revitalise town centres and encourage other forms of active travel.

20mph and default speed limits

There is considerable evidence for the benefits of lower speed limits in urban areas; residential streets in particular should have 20 mph limits. However, lower speed limits must not be a substitute for good design. 20 mph limits in particular should be used in conjunction with street design that keeps vehicle speeds low, and in areas in which through-traffic of motor vehicles is limited, rather than as a stand-alone measure.

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