

Dear Minister,

Many thanks for meeting us during Bike Week. It was really useful to discuss matters with you, however we thought it might be helpful to perhaps press you and offer support on three issues.

Firstly, as you know changes were made to the GB version of the highway code in January primarily to improve safety for people walking and cycling, though most road safety campaigners would argue the changes brought safety benefits for all road users. You mentioned that a decision hadn't yet been taken on whether to introduce these changes or variations of them in Northern Ireland now, or delay their introduction to incorporate wider changes to the code which are likely to be needed in the coming years.

We understand why that question has been asked, however the reality is that with the introduction of new forms of micro mobility, e-scooters, and the increasing automation of motor vehicles, it is inevitable that the code will have to be changed a number of times in the coming years. We would therefore respectfully suggest that delaying the introduction of changes which could improve road safety now for vulnerable road users, until further clarity is obtained on what other changes might be needed in due course, would risk perfection being the enemy of the good.

Accordingly, we would urge you to expedite any consultation process needed to move forward with changes to the code similar to those introduced in the GB code. Having been involved in the process that led to those changes, we would be delighted to liaise further with your officials if that would be beneficial.

Secondly, we discussed the benefits of introducing an Active Travel Act. This was of course a core element of our election manifesto for cycling, and a policy which every MLA in both Sinn Féin and the Alliance party pledged to support, along with the leader of the DUP and indeed the majority of elected MLAs. In summary, it has cross party and majority support within the Assembly.

An Active Travel Act in Northern Ireland would ensure that walking and cycling remains a key consideration, regardless of the Minister in the Department for Infrastructure. and would also be vital in times where the Assembly is not sitting, giving all departments a clear direction and mandate to consider and improve provision for active travel.

Of course, there would need to be discussion and consultation on the detail of such legislation. Cycling UK were involved in discussions concerning the introduction of similar legislation in Wales, and indeed the drafting and review of guidance to support that legislation, and we would be very happy to support the consultation process in Northern Ireland.

We appreciate that legislation can't be passed until the Assembly is sitting, however the work to scope out what such legislation could achieve, and how it might be drafted, could start now. If you would find it useful, we would be very happy to send further thoughts or proposals to your officials on the potential impact of such legislation and what it might look like. Please do let us know if you would like us to arrange this.



Lastly, could we perhaps press you for a timescale for progress on the Limestone/Cavehill road cycle lane decision. You mentioned that the outcome of the second consultation was still to be presented to you. Whilst this clearly predates your involvement, there is considerable frustration regarding the lack of progress with this scheme, which is a key part of 'phase 1' of the Belfast Cycling Network delivery plan. We would therefore hope that the department would be in a position to present matters to you for a decision within the next month, which would be a positive indicator of the pace set for completion of further phases.

Again, many thanks for meeting with us and for your consideration of these matters.

Kind Regards,

Andrew McClean

Engagement Officer for Cycling UK in NI