

Supplementary evidence to the Transport Committee Inquiry into the Government's Strategic Framework for Road Safety

Introduction

- 1 I was grateful for the opportunity to give evidence on behalf of CTC, the national cyclists' organisation, to the above inquiry. This supplementary note has five purposes:
 - It updates on some evidence on the relationship between road infrastructure and cyclists' safety, which I referred to in my oral evidence – this was published since our original written evidence was submitted. It notes the particular importance of speed reduction measures at major junctions, and notes with concern the remarks of the Road Safety Minister expressing the hope there are no cyclists using the roads for which he is responsible.
 - It references what we believe to have been misleading statements given to the House by the Road Safety Minister, prior to his decision to implement a trial of longer lorries on UK's roads. CTC urges the Committee to question him about this – he should at least be asked to put the Hansard record straight.
 - It addresses the question of improving road safety in deprived areas. I confess I failed to hear correctly that Q52 on this point referenced the previous question, and that I therefore answered a much wider question – although most of the points I made could quite legitimately have been linked to the issue of cyclists' safety in deprived areas.
 - It provides an answer to a question raised in oral evidence about cuts to roads policing.
 - Finally, it also references the evidence I mentioned on the proportion of cyclists' fatal and serious injuries which involve red-light jumping or disobedience of junction controls by cyclists and drivers respectively.
- 2 I would reiterate that the four key issues which need to be addressed in order to improve cyclists' safety are:
 - Speed and speeding (see our written evidence paragraphs 13-14 and response to Q50 in our oral evidence);
 - Road traffic law and enforcement (see paragraphs 17-23);
 - Cycle-friendly planning and design, particularly in relation to major roads and junctions (see paragraphs 15 and 31-33);
 - Lorries (see paragraphs 28-30 and responses to Q52 and Q55-57).

CTC is concerned that, despite the strategic framework's aims to incentivise more as well as safer cycling (through the adoption of rate-based and perception-based indicators, which we support), it is weak on all four issues.
- 3 As noted in our written and oral evidence, CTC strongly supports the provision of cycle training to the Bikeability national standard, whose development we initiated. We are pleased that the Government's strategic framework for road safety reiterates a commitment to provide dedicated funding for child cycle training. We nonetheless believe that the provision of cycle training for teenagers (when they are beginning to travel further and use busier roads) and for adults (who wish either to discover or rediscover cycling later in life) has an enormous potential role in promoting more and safer cycling, thereby contributing not only to road safety but also to the Government's wider health, environmental and other objectives.

The links between road design and cycle safety, particularly at major junctions

- 4 In answer to Q50 in the oral evidence session, I mentioned a Government-commissioned report on the relationship between road infrastructure and cyclists' safety¹, which was published since our written evidence was submitted. In essence, it finds that the measures with the strongest evidence of safety benefits for cyclists are those which involve reducing traffic speeds. There is good evidence of benefits from 20mph schemes – not just for cyclists but for other road users too – and also from a variety of measures to reduce speeds at junctions. These include speed tables at more minor junctions, raised pavements across side-road entry-points, signalling roundabouts and other major junctions, or redesigning them to reduce the maximum potential speed through the junction (e.g. by requiring drivers to perform a turn as they enter the junction, rather than being able to take a “racing line” through it).
- 5 Cyclists' fatalities at major junctions have attracted significant news coverage lately^{2 3}, with prominent campaigns for junction redesigns at Bow Roundabout and Kings Cross, following recent cyclist fatalities at those locations⁴. 75% of reported cyclist collisions occur at or near junctions⁵, and this proportion is higher on built-up than non-built up roads (e.g. it is 79% in London⁶). It is therefore essential to focus on junction safety, particularly on more major roads. We note incidentally that, whilst Transport for London's proposed redesign of Bow roundabout is still far from perfect, at least it now has the potential to be developed into what could become a model solution for other major roundabouts around the UK.
- 6 CTC was concerned at a parliamentary answer given during transport questions by Road Safety Minister Mike Penning MP. Asked about the provision of infrastructure for cyclists, he said: “*Most of the roads I am responsible for are part of the national road infrastructure, and I hope there are no cyclists on that part of the infrastructure*”.⁷ CTC notes that, whilst cyclists are banned from motorways, they are generally entitled to use trunk roads – indeed there are some cases where the nearest alternative route involves a detour of several miles. In any case they will often need to cross both these road networks at junctions, including in urban settings e.g. parts of the West Midlands and Greater Manchester. Our written submission included figures showing that cyclists are 28 times more at risk per mile cycled on non-built-up A roads than on minor urban roads, a discrepancy which is far greater than for other road user groups. It has also been reported that 49 cyclists were killed or seriously injured on the Highways Agency network in 2010⁸. The hazards and barriers to movement caused by trunk road and motorways (including their junctions) are often very difficult to avoid, for pedestrians and cyclists alike. There is a huge need to address the severance they cause.
- 7 We therefore call for the reinstatement of the Highways Agency's Non-Motorised Users Crossings Programme, whose funding was axed in 2004. We also hope the Department for Transport and Highways Agency will also take note of developments at Bow roundabout, as they may well be of wider application.

¹ S Adams and S Reid. *Infrastructure and cyclist safety*. Transport Research Laboratory report PPR580, 2011 (see www.trl.co.uk/online_store/reports_publications/trl_reports/cat_road_user_safety/report_infrastructure_and_cyclist_safety.htm).

² *Cycling campaigners demand safety measures after rise in road deaths*. Guardian, 16.12.11 (see www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2011/dec/16/cycling-safety-measures-road-deaths).

³ *Second fatal collision at cycle route roundabout*. Evening Standard, 14.11.11 (see www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-24009578-second-fatal-collision-at-cycle-route-roundabout.do).

⁴ See <http://lcc.org.uk/articles/xmas-vigil-at-kings-cross-is-stark-reminder-that-londons-streets-must-be-made-safe-for-everyone> and <http://lcc.org.uk/articles/london-cycling-campaign-secures-redesign-of-lethal-roundabout-at-bow>.

⁵ Department for Transport. *Reported Road Casualties Great Britain 2010*, table RAS20006 (see www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/tables/ras20006).

⁶ Transport for London. *Cycle Safety Action Plan*. 2010 (see www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/projectsandschemes/15480.aspx).

⁷ House of Commons Debates, 12 January 2012, c309 (see www.theyworkforyou.com/debate/?id=2012-01-12b.309.4).

⁸ www.localgov.co.uk/index.cfm?method=news.detail&id=104658.

Misleading statements to the House on longer lorries and cyclists' safety

- 8 As noted in my answer to Q52 of the oral evidence session, lorries are implicated in around a fifth of cyclists' fatalities on Britain's roads, and over a half of those in London. It is therefore of great importance to devote serious attention to this specific issue. A range of measures needs to be deployed (are summarised in paragraph 30 of our original evidence, or more fully in CTC's briefing on cycling and goods vehicles⁹), with the Government playing an active role in monitoring their effectiveness and spreading good practice.
- 9 My oral evidence also highlighted what CTC believes to have been two misleading statements given to the Commons by Road Safety Minister Mike Penning MP, before giving the go-ahead to a trial to permit longer lorries in UK roads. On 15th September he said:
"because the turning wheels of longer semi-trailers are at the back, their turning circles are much tighter than those of existing lorries. I know that because I used to drive heavy goods vehicles myself".
- ...and shortly afterwards...
*"We considered carefully whether longer semi-trailers posed a risk to cyclists in particular, and the risk is not there."*¹⁰
- 10 CTC wrote to the Minister asking him to provide evidence for the above statements. Alternatively we requested that he amend the Hansard record if the two statements above could not be substantiated. Regarding turning circles, the Minister's response was that *"The comment that I made, about the benefits of steering axles, reflected my own experience when I had the opportunity to see a prototype of a longer semi-trailer a little while ago."*¹¹ His letter provided no evidence of any specific consideration having been given to cyclists' safety. However a Parliamentary Question was later tabled asking whether the Department had assessed the safety implications for cyclists of the longer lorries trial. The Minister simply replied that *"The revised Impact Assessment published with the Government's Report on the Consultation into longer semi-trailers does not disaggregate the safety risk between different categories of road user."*¹² There has been no correction to the Hansard record.
- 11 CTC is extremely concerned that the trial has been given the go-ahead without consideration of cyclists' safety, let alone any measures to mitigate the obvious potential risks to the lives of cyclists and other road users. The trial could have been an opportunity to persuade operators to adopt the fitting of cameras and sensors, and the provision of cycle training for participating drivers. These are already best practice solutions which probably deserve to become mainstream lorry safety features over time regardless of the success or otherwise of the trial. However these have been left as optional. The criteria for determining the success or otherwise of the trial have not been discussed, hence no steps have been taken to ensure that participating lorry operators have the equipment or processes in place to gather the data required.
- 12 CTC urges the Committee to question the Minister about the longer lorries trial. He should be invited either to provide evidence for the statements above or to set the Hansard record straight, and to consider what requirements should be made of lorry operators to mitigate the potential risks of the trial, and the means by which it will be assessed.

⁹ CTC. *Cycles and goods vehicles* (see www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/CTC_GoodsVehicles_brif.pdf).

¹⁰ House of Commons debates, 15 September 2011, c 1163 (see www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2011-09-15b.1162.9#g1163.1)

¹¹ Letter from Mike Penning MP to CTC, 18.10.11

¹² HC debates, 22 November 2011, c259W (see www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2011-11-22b.81709.h)

Cyclists' safety in deprived areas: the role of 20mph and cycle training

- 13 We are not aware of specific research comparing cyclists' safety in deprived and well-off areas. None was identified in a Government-commissioned literature review¹³, although it found that child pedestrians were 3-5 times more at risk in the most deprived areas than the most affluent ones (a subsequent NAO report placed the figure at 4 times¹⁴). We suspect the picture for cyclists is likely to be similar, with the same causal factors as those identified in the literature review.
- 14 CTC supports the calls which have been made (e.g. in the NAO report) for a particular focus on delivering 20mph schemes in more deprived areas. However it is also important to focus on major roads and junctions in deprived areas, as these have a bigger impact on the lives and journey patterns of people living in these areas. Our original evidence shows that cyclists are over 5 times more at risk on urban A roads than urban minor roads.
- 15 During our oral evidence session, it was suggested that education may be of limited value for addressing the deprivation issue, as the children who most need to be reached may not be particularly engaged through schools. CTC would point to evidence that driver education has little or no impact on drivers' safety, except where it focuses on developing hazard perception skills¹⁵ ¹⁶. This evidence also indicates that driving experience gained after obtaining one's licence has a much greater safety benefit, and that this supports the case for graduated licencing.
- 16 Cycle training may nonetheless play an important role in developing road safety awareness, and may also be a way to engage young people who are otherwise hard to reach. Our Bike Club initiative¹⁷, delivered in partnership with two charities specialising in supporting Youth Clubs (UK Youth) and extended education (ContinYou), offers young people a range of activities, including cycle training, cycle maintenance classes, led rides and expeditions. It reaches these groups through youth clubs and other community settings outside of conventional education. Many Bike Club projects are located in deprived areas. They often focus particularly on young people at risk of exclusion, those with physical or learning disabilities, and those suffering from being overweight or obese (conditions also associated both with deprivation and with a range of emotional, mental health and behavioural problems).
- 17 The experience of Bike Club is that cycling is a highly effective way to engage young people who may be hard to reach in other ways. They get to participate in a non-competitive physical and sociable activity, they learn to support one another, they gain practical skills (e.g. through learning cycle maintenance), and develop their roadcraft skills.
- 18 CTC suspects that cycle training for teenagers may be good not just for their safety as cyclists, but also for their safety and competence when they learn to drive. This possibility (and the need to research it) has been flagged up in a Government-commissioned evidence-review.¹⁸ If confirmed, this would indicate that cycle training could play a valuable role in pre-driver training, not only by developing road awareness but also by helping to form attitudes based on an appreciation of the perspective of non-motorised road users. It may also support teenagers in continuing to cycle as they enter early adulthood, thereby providing health and other benefits.

¹³ Christie N and Whitfield G: *Road user safety and disadvantage* – Appendix 2: literature review. Department for Transport Road Safety Research Report RSRR 123 (see <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/road-user-safety-and-disadvantage/rsrr123appendix2.pdf>).

¹⁴ Comptroller and Auditor General. *Improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists in Great Britain*. Report HC 437 Session 2008-2009 (see www.nao.org.uk/idoc.ashx?docId=8cf4bf6f-2f58-4811-9308-942ea09e2c56&version=-1).

¹⁵ S Helman et al. *How can we produce safer new drivers?* TRL report INS005, 2010 (see www.trl.co.uk/online_store/reports_publications/trl_reports/cat_paper_insight_reports/report_how_can_we_produce_safer_new_drivers.htm).

¹⁶ Launchbury C et al. Pre-driver education: survey of pre-driver education provision. DfT, 2007 (see

¹⁷ <http://bikeclub.org.uk>

¹⁸ Durkin K et al. *The Development of Children's and Young People's Attitudes to Driving: A Critical Review of the Literature*. Department for Transport, 2010 (see <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/pgr-roadsafety-research-rsrr-theme2-researchreport18-pdf/rsarr18.pdf>, pp68 and 84).

19 Providing cycle training, particularly in a non-school setting, may also be an effective way to tackle “anti-social” cycling behaviour. Teenagers struggle to understand why adults first tell them not to cycle on the roads, then later condemn them for riding on pavements. Being young and agile, they also have little understanding of what it is like to be old and fragile, and hence how frightened pedestrians can be when a cyclist rides past at speed. Nor are they likely to be receptive to being lectured about their behaviour by ‘authority figures’ (e.g. teachers, police officers or public authorities). However they typically regard cycle trainers as people who are offering them something they really value, be it enjoyment, skills, or simply the “rite of passage” of completing their level 3 Bikeability training, with the additional independence they can gain as a result. Cycle trainers are therefore more likely to be listened to when they explain the importance of respecting other road users’ safety, especially that of pedestrians.

Road traffic policing and sentencing of offenders

20 During oral evidence, a question was asked about any evidence of recent cuts to roads policing. CTC’s briefing on road traffic policing¹⁹ does in fact note that the number of traffic police officers in England and Wales fell by 19% between 1998/9 and 2007/8, even though the police force as a whole grew by 12%. We do not know of more recent evidence on policing numbers. However there is evidence that funding cuts to road safety partnerships – combined with ministerial statements about “ending the war on the motorist” – have also prompted cuts to safety camera funding²⁰. A decision to switch off cameras in Oxfordshire had to be reversed due to a clear and rapid increase in casualties²¹.

21 CTC’s written evidence also noted a sharp reduction in the proportion of drivers convicted of causing death or bodily harm through driving who received immediate custodial sentences – this fell from 92% in 2006 to just 51% in 2010.

22 CTC is not averse to the use of non-custodial sentences in cases where a driver with a good record and of good character causes serious injury or even death, if it is clear that this was simply due to a “momentary lapse of attention”. However this comes with two caveats:

- The offence itself should be described as “dangerous”, in accordance with the definition of “dangerous” driving in s2A(1)(b) of the Road Traffic Act 1991. This definition relates solely to the manner in which the vehicle was driven, and not the driver’s state of mind. Offences which cause danger that would be obvious to a careful and competent driver should not be dismissed as merely being “careless”, as this is both legally incorrect, and belittles the seriousness of endangering other road users’ safety. Such lax attitudes are not accepted in any other area of safety legislation.
- There should be much greater use of driving bans in such cases. Drivers who have dangerous lapses of attention can justifiably be deemed unfit to drive, and prevented from doing so, on public safety grounds alone (as we do for those with defective eyesight etc).

Further information about CTC’s views on the framework of bad driving offences and sentencing are in a CTC briefing on bad driving.²²

¹⁹ CTC. *Traffic policing* (www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/10_Traffic-Policing_brf.pdf).

²⁰ See RoSPA position statement: www.rospa.com/roadsafety/policy/statements/safetycameras-funding.aspx, and the concerns of the police: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10911436>. Local reports of cuts to road safety funding are at www.businesswatch.org/your-watch/194/derby-s-community-safety-partnership-budget-cut-by-36, www.telegraph.co.uk/motoring/news/8296497/More-speed-cameras-to-be-switched-off.html and <http://road.cc/content/news/28539-northamptonshire-speed-cameras-face-switch-government-cuts-start-bite>.

²¹ www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-12928747

²² CTC’s views on bad driving. www.stop-smidsy.org.uk/sites/www.stop-smidsy.org.uk/files/0910_CTC-View.pdf

Cyclists' offences

- 23 I noted in oral evidence that CTC has recently seen figures from Transport for London, showing that, in the last 3 years for which TfL has data, cyclists jumping red lights or disobeying junction controls accounted for 5% of cyclists' fatal and serious injuries, whereas 15% involved red light jumping or disobedience of junction controls by drivers²³. CTC's briefing on Cyclists' behaviour and the law²⁴ provides further data on the relative risk which cyclists and drivers respectively – and law-breaking cyclists and drivers specifically – impose on themselves and on other road users.
- 24 CTC is strongly supportive of increases in roads traffic policing, and fully acknowledges the responsibilities of cyclists, as well as drivers, to behave with respect for the rules of the road and of other road users. However with the finite resources now available for roads policing, it is vital to target those offences which cause the greatest risk.

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January 2012

²³ Evidence table attached. Compare lines 12, 14 and 19 (207 cyclist KSIs = 15% of the total) with lines 17, 30 and 32 (73 cyclist KSI's = 5% of the total).

²⁴ CTC. *Cyclists' behaviour and the law* (www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Briefings/Cyclists-behaviour-and-law_brif_.pdf).