

Briefing for MPs for the debate on cycling - 2nd September

Progress and follow-up from the Get Britain Cycling Report

This briefing has been prepared for the benefit of members of the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group (APPCG), in advance of the debate on September 2nd of the APPCG's report "Get Britain Cycling". It was prepared by British Cycling and CTC, the national cycling charity, on behalf of the UK Cycling Alliance. It complements a shorter briefing previously circulated to all MPs, prepared on behalf of UKCA by Sustrans and supported by 24 organisations including the AA.

The briefing comprises the following sections:

1. The evidence for promoting cycling
2. Funding for cycling
3. 'Cycle-proofing': redesigning our roads, streets and communities
4. Improved safety for cycling
5. Commitment and leadership across Government

Full briefings on individual subjects are available on request to the APPCG.

Summary

- There is a very strong case for increasing the **investment in cycling** – with huge benefits from **improving public health, reducing congestion** and **curbing emissions** to be gained from reaching the goals of the Get Britain Cycling report (10% of trips by 2025).
 - The Government has responded positively to many of the Get Britain Cycling inquiry's recommendations, but has only met the report's **headline call for £10 per head annually** of funding for cycling in 8 cities for 2 years. All parties are now urged to support long-term funding commitments of at least this level throughout the UK.
 - A commitment by the Government to **'cycle proof'** the major road network is welcomed, but action is needed to ensure that local authorities follow suit. They also need **better guidance**, professional training and regulatory freedom to allow the introduction of high-quality continental-style cycle facilities.
 - The **risk of cycling has increased** in recent years, with casualties increasing at the same rate as the distance travelled by bike. **Lower speed limits** and **stronger traffic law enforcement** should be a stronger priority for Government, which must also do more to tackle the threat to cyclists from HGVs.
 - The Prime Minister has **shown leadership** in getting behind cycling, but there is a lack of commitment to **implement radical solutions** and **significant funding** to support cycling. Some Government departments are not contributing to the improvement in conditions for cyclists.
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1. The evidence for promoting cycling

The vision behind the Get Britain Cycling report is to realise the full potential of cycling to contribute to the health and wealth of the nation, and the quality of life in our towns and local communities.

The evidence that the cycling can achieve these outcomes includes:

Health

- Only 39% of men and 29% of women in England do enough exercise to benefit their health. A person who cycles regularly in mid-adulthood typically has a level of fitness equivalent to being 10 years younger, and a life expectancy 2 years above the average.
- Cycling's health benefits far outweigh the risks involved, thanks to these extra life-years – by a factor of 20:1 - according to a Government-endorsed estimate. In other words, not cycling is far more likely to kill you than cycling is.
- Unlike driving, cycling causes negligible harm to others, either through road injuries or pollution, so it's a healthy option not just for cyclists, but for everyone else too.

Transport

- Cycling is a cheap, efficient and enjoyable way to integrate physical activity into one's regular journey patterns. 66% of all trips in Britain are under 5 miles – as are 55% of urban trips made using private motor vehicles – a distance easily covered in a 30 minute cycle ride.
- Congestion on England's roads cost the economy over £10bn a year in urban areas alone in 2009 and could rise to £22bn by 2025.

Economic

- Cycling is booming in Britain and said to be worth £3 billion to the economy. Yet while €30 (£25) per head of population is spent annually on cycling in the Netherlands, the equivalent figure for Britain is £2.
- It has been estimated that each additional regular cyclist provides economic benefits worth £590 annually, e.g. through reduced health, congestion and pollution costs and improved productivity.
- Investment in cycling of up to £10,000 is justified for every one extra person cycling regularly over the next 30 years as a result of that spending.
- The Cycling Demonstration Towns programme has demonstrated that spending on cycling at the level found elsewhere in Europe (c£10 per head annually) can achieve a steady increase in cycle use – across the first 6 towns an average increase of 27% was recorded over 4 years.

Environment

- Research from the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) shows that a UK-wide roll out of smarter choice travel would positively impact the economy, reduce congestion, improve health, significantly curb on carbon emissions and improve quality of life and could reduce emissions in 2020 by almost 3 million tonnes of CO₂.
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2. Funding for cycling

The Get Britain Cycling report made the following recommendations to Government:

- A cycling budget of at least £10 per person per year, rising to £20.
- Budgets set by local authorities and public bodies of at least the proportion of trips made by bike.
- Cycle spending from budgets of other government departments, such as Health, Education, Sport and Business.

Why £10 per head?

Evidence from both abroad and the UK has shown that increasing cycling levels is best achieved through sustained expenditure on cycling programmes at a level of £10 per head or more.

What has been done? London's ambitious £913m plan for the next decade will see spending on cycling per person well over the £10 per head level. The Government's recent announcement of £94m for cities and national parks means that – with local contributions - around £10 per head will be spent in those cities over the next 2 years.

What more could be done? We welcome the Prime Minister's backing for the principle of spending £10 per head on cycling, however the short-term commitment does not allow even the recipient authorities to plan beyond the next 2 years. We now urge all parties to support long-term funding commitments of at least this level, so that local and national officials throughout the UK can build up the capacity and programmes needed for effective long-term cycling investment..

Budgets set in accordance with the proportion of trips

What has been done? Edinburgh is so far the only local authority that has committed to increasing the level of cycling. In 2012 it passed a motion requiring that 5% of all transport spending (externally funded schemes excluded) be devoted to cycling, increasing by 1% per year.

What more could be done? More local authorities and public bodies should commit to providing the long-term security of funding necessary to develop longer term strategies and plans necessary to attract external funding from planning gain and future funding rounds.

Other government departments' contributions to cycling

What has been done? The Department for Health has made a £1m contribution to supporting the Cycling Cities programme. No other Government department has made contributions to cycling, although the Treasury maintains support for the tax-free hire of bikes through payroll systems.

What more could be done? The Departments for Education and for Businesses should respectively support the promotion of cycling in schools and workplaces. The Department for Environment should provide greater support for improving outdoor cycle access and the rights of way network, both for its recreational and tourism benefits and as a means of travel using off-road routes. However cycling's greatest benefits financially are its health benefits. Local authorities should invest more public health funding on programmes to enable and encourage increased cycle use, particularly among groups and individuals who are insufficiently active to benefit their health.

3. 'Cycle proofing': redesigning our roads, streets and communities

The Get Britain Cycling report made the following recommendations to Government:

- A requirement that cyclists' and pedestrians' needs are designed in to the early stage of all new development schemes.
- Revise existing design standards to ensure the delivery of continental best practice for cycle-friendly planning and design and include more secure cycle parking.
- Local authorities should seek to deliver cycle-friendly improvements across their existing roads, including small improvements, segregated routes, and road reallocation.
- The Highways Agency should draw up a programme to remove the barriers to cycle journeys parallel to or across trunk roads and motorway corridors.

What is 'cycle proofing'?

Cycle-proofing is about ensuring that cycling is designed into all roads, junctions and traffic schemes, including those linked to new developments. The goal should be to make any new infrastructure safer more convenient and more attractive for existing and would-be cyclists.

What has been done? The Government has announced policy commitments to 'cycle proof' roads including making improvements to the strategic road network and encouraging local authorities to design road improvements with cyclists as well as motorists in mind. A Cycle Safety Fund of £20m was created to help redesign junctions. This should be maintained in future years, with longer term timeframes to allow major redesigns of junctions or streets.

What more could be done? Cycle proofing needs to be included into all relevant transport and planning policies and standards, with appropriate training for those responsible for delivery. The Government should go far beyond merely encouraging local authorities. Any future funding for transport schemes should include provisions binding local authorities to high quality design which contributes to more liveable, less car-dependent streets and communities.

Revise existing design guidance to include clear enforceable standards

What has been done? The Government's current guidance consists of multiple documents which, between them, provide a raft of policy and non-prescriptive design advice. Although the underlying principles are essentially sound (if widely ignored), the advice itself is contradictory, vague and allows the provision of inadequate and often dangerous cycling infrastructure.

What more could be done? Current guidance should be replaced with consistent advice on the creation of direct, coherent, safe and pleasant cycling conditions, including clear and enforceable design-standards on safety-critical issues. This should in turn be integrated into the 'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges' to ensure all new roads are built with cycling in mind. Regulations on traffic signs, road markings and signals desperately need to be overhauled to allow local authorities the flexibility to introduce innovative new facilities, such as Dutch-style roundabouts and standardised, simplified approaches to providing priority to cyclists.

The Highways Agency

What has been done? £4.8m is being used to improve 14 sites for cycling and £15m is earmarked for 2015/16.

What more could be done? £15bn will be invested in new roads and all should be designed with cycling in mind with additional resources for the Agency for dangerous junctions and improving cycling.

4. Improved safety for cycling

Besides improved infrastructure, the Get Britain Cycling report also focused on three areas where Government and local authorities must take action to improve safety for cycling:

- Extending 20 mph speed limits in towns; 40 mph speed limits on rural lanes;
- Tackling HGV safety through vehicle design, driver training and awareness raising, public procurement of freight services and reduction in goods vehicle movements;
- Strengthening enforcement of road traffic law, and ensuring that driving offences – especially those resulting in death and injury – are treated sufficiently seriously by police, prosecutors and judges.

Speed limits

What has been done? The Government has somewhat relaxed the regulations around installation of 20 mph limits and zones, such as removing the need for certain road signs to be illuminated in the former and allowing less intrusive traffic calming measures to be used for the latter.

What more could be done? The Government could, and should, go further, including strengthening guidance to positively recommend the use of 20 mph for most built-up streets. Three quarters of residential roads in the Netherlands are already 30 km/h (18.5 mph). Over 12 million people now live in areas committed to 20mph so now is the time to investigate whether the default limits of 30 mph in areas with street lighting could be lowered to 20 mph by default, with councils having the discretion to apply higher (or lower) limits where justified.

HGV safety

What has been done? London has led the way in trying to improve the problem of lorry safety. Despite making up less than 5% of traffic, lorries are involved in almost half of all deaths in London (nationally lorries are involved in around 20% of deaths, despite making up just 5% of traffic). London has led on setting up procurement contracts to ensure that lorries are fitted with safety sensors and mirrors, and installing 'Trixi' mirrors to improve lorry drivers' visibility of cyclists at junctions.

What more could be done? Nationally the Government could be doing more to improve design of lorries through lobbying at international level, including ensuring cab design allowed better visibility and sensors were built in, rather than requiring retrofitting.

London and other cities should learn from other European cities which have shifted delivery patterns to night, restricting lorry access to busy roads at busy times, and agreeing routing strategies with lorry operators and for construction projects.

Road traffic law enforcement

What has been done? The Department for Transport is coordinating a working group, including cycling organisations, to liaise between actors in the criminal justice system. The recent introduction of a fixed penalty notice for ‘careless driving’ may help increase enforcement of low-level offences. However the number of road traffic police has fallen 29% in 10 years, even though total police numbers have remained virtually unchanged.

What more could be done? Ministry of Justice should initiate a review into how the criminal justice system operates in cases of cyclist injury and death. Resources and training of road traffic police and prosecutors must be increased.

5. Commitment and leadership across Government

The Get Britain Cycling report called for:

- A cross-departmental Cycling Action Plan, with annual progress reports;
- National targets to increase cycle use from 2% of journeys, to 10% by 2025 and 25% by 2050;
- The appointment of a national Cycling Champion, from outside the Department for Transport, while central, local and devolved governments to appoint lead politicians responsible for cycling.

Cycling Action Plan

What has been done? The Government has promised to produce a “Cycling Delivery Plan” in the autumn. Stakeholders and other government departments have been engaged through various forums but there is a lack of coordination and drive. However the Department for Communities and Local Government has been undermining policies to promote development which encourages safe and convenient access by cycle or other sustainable transport forms, while the Department for Education has rebuffed calls to include cycling in the National Curriculum.

What more could be done? The Department for Communities and Local Government should collaborate with the Department for Transport to ensure that new developments are safely and conveniently cycle-accessible. Departments for Education and for Businesses should pro-actively promote cycle-friendly schools, colleges and workplaces, including providing Bikeability cycle training for all children. The Department for the Environment should seek improved countryside access and rights of way network. The Home Office and Ministry of Justice should collaborate to strengthen road traffic law and its enforcement. The Treasury should make available revenue (as well as capital) funding is available for positively promoting cycling, as well as delivering cycle-friendly infrastructure.

National targets to increase cycle use

What has been done? There has been no recognition of the need for targets. In Scotland there has been a long-standing and ambitious target to reach 10% of trips by 2020, reiterated earlier this year. The history of the National Cycling Strategy in 1996, which set overly ambitious targets, may in part explain the reluctance of the Government to endorse a numerical target. Better measures of cycle

use at a local level have been introduced recently through the Active People Survey, but these only give an indication of self-reported cycle use, not distance travelled or numbers of trips.

What more could be done? Further improvement of data collection on a local and national level is required to establish the effectiveness of interventions, and to establish whether or not the risk of cycling (as distinct from simply counting numbers of deaths and injuries) is improving.

Champions in national and local government

What has been done? Under Cycling England a network of 'Cycling Champions' was set up in local authorities. Many of those Cycling Champions are still active, but there is no co-ordinated network to provide assistance. London's Cycling Commissioner, Andrew Gilligan, has proved an effective communicator inside and outside the Mayor's office and Transport for London. No central Government 'Champion' has been appointed.

What more could be done? There should be a national cycling Champion, backed by the Prime Minister and with the remit to write and oversee the action plan. The Department for Transport should re-establish a proper support network for local authorities, to provide technical expertise for local authority officers and member Champions.

For more detailed briefing materials on any of these topics please contact members of the UK Cycling Alliance.

- Bicycle Association - bicycleassociation.org.uk
- British Cycling – www.britishcycling.org.uk
- CTC, the national cycling charity – www.ctc.org.uk
- Cyclenation, the federation of cycle campaign groups – www.cyclenation.org.uk
- London Cycling Campaign – www.lcc.org.uk
- Sustrans – www.sustrans.org.uk

