

## Response from CTC, the national cycling charity, to DRD's Draft Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland

**About CTC:** CTC, the national cycling charity, was founded in 1878. CTC has 70,000 members and supporters, provides a range of information and legal services to cyclists, organises cycling events, and represents the interests of cyclists and cycling on issues of public policy. [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk)

CTC promotes cycling and protects and inspires cyclists for many reasons, not least because it is one of the easiest ways of introducing an efficient, convenient and potent physical activity into people's daily lives.

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 CTC welcomes the opportunity to respond to the *Draft Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland* (published August 2014). In particular, we applaud DRD's vision "to establish a cycling culture in Northern Ireland". The late Tom McClelland, formerly CTC's lead volunteer representative in Northern Ireland, played a huge part in generating the momentum behind this. It was at his instigation that the NI Assembly held an inquiry into the benefits of cycling to the economy earlier this year, to which CTC gave evidence.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 Likewise, we are pleased to note the Strategy's recognition that cycling can make a significant contribution towards the Programme for Government priorities, namely growing a sustainable economy, improving health and well-being while building communities and protecting the environment. In short, cycling is undoubtedly excellent and convenient exercise<sup>2</sup>; makes economic sense (see 1.3 below), improves the quality of life for communities and, as a near zero-carbon form of transport, helps tackle climate change. The list of specific areas/sectors where the Strategy aims to realise the potential of cycling (p8) reflects its range of benefits well.
- 1.3 CTC's experience and an ever-expanding body of evidence supports the view that, for numerous reasons, investing in cycling make financial sense: for example, a recent compilation of the latest available cost benefit evidence from the UK and abroad found that almost all of the case studies it reviewed cited BCRs averaging 5.95 (a very high return given that the Department for Transport in England considers a BCR of between 1.5 and 2.0 to represent 'medium' value for money, whilst

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ctc.org.uk/sites/default/files/1403\\_rg\\_reg-devt-cttee\\_ni\\_cycling-inquiry\\_con.pdf](https://www.ctc.org.uk/sites/default/files/1403_rg_reg-devt-cttee_ni_cycling-inquiry_con.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See CTC's briefings *Cycling & Health*, and *Cycling & the Economy*: [www.ctc.org.uk/campaignsbriefings](http://www.ctc.org.uk/campaignsbriefings).

anything above 4 is 'very high').<sup>3</sup> More evidence is available in CTC's briefing on Cycling and the Economy.<sup>4</sup>

- 1.4 CTC is pleased to note the intention to achieve Northern Ireland's cycling future not just through the work of the DRD, but in conjunction with other Government Departments or public bodies. Cycling's benefits are so wide-ranging that cross-departmental working is by far the best means of ensuring that it is comprehensively supported and that its full potential is maximised.
- 1.5 With regard to taking "a prioritised, more focussed approach" and the development of pilot projects and monitoring them well, we agree that this is a good way of learning lessons for future projects, provided that this process does not stall the overall vision to achieve a cycling culture.
- 1.6 We commend the balance of the Strategy's three proposed strands of 'Build, Support and Promote.' On the one hand, promoting cycling through targeted 'smarter choices' measures is known to be highly cost-effective as a way to boost cycle use<sup>5</sup>, but these measures alone are not going to deliver a mass cycling culture. Taking action to reduce hostile conditions on the roads is therefore crucial, e.g. by implementing high quality infrastructure, addressing the speed and volume of traffic, together with effective law enforcement to deter bad driving.
- 1.7 We also support the idea of developing a comprehensive network, a 'whole of route' treatment, urban 'masterplans', interventions planned for rural routes and the proposals for Greenways. We agree that it is important to ensure that provision becomes less fragmented and of more consistent quality.
- 1.8 In particular, we welcome the commitment to seize the opportunities presented by road maintenance or upgrades to improve provision for cycling. It is important, however, that the forthcoming delivery guidance elaborates on this and stresses what a cost-effective way this is to introduce cycle-friendly redesigns of the road layout.
- 1.9 The provision of cycle training and the measures listed in 4.3-4.4 are all welcome.
- 1.10 More generally, we commend the Strategy for its clarity, accessible language and succinctness.

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<sup>3</sup> Davis, Dr A. *Claiming the Health Dividend: A summary and discussion of value for money estimates from studies of investment in walking and cycling*. Department for Transport. Nov. 2014.  
[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/371096/claiming\\_the\\_health\\_dividend.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371096/claiming_the_health_dividend.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings/cycling-and-economy>

<sup>5</sup> See CTC's briefing on smarter choices: <https://www.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings/smarter-choices>

## 2 Strengthening the Strategy

CTC believes that the following will help strengthen the Strategy:

- 2.1 **Ambition:** We think it regrettable that the draft Strategy explicitly rejects the idea of "an arbitrary Northern Ireland wide target for the percentage of people cycling by a nominal date" (5.0). Instead it proposes "Specific city wide or local area targets through our 'masterplanning approach". Local targets would certainly be useful, particularly if DRD intends to start with targeted pilots in specific areas as it builds up its own organisational capacity and skills to deliver cycle-friendly improvements to a high standard. However, this should by no means rule out setting a challenging national target. The forthcoming Delivery Plan will need to be genuinely ambitious about the rate of growth in cycle use - with the funding to match - if "a cycling culture" is to be achieved in Northern Ireland" (see also Conclusion).
- 2.2 **Supporting the 'pillars':** Dutch and Danish cycling experts are clear that supporting measures - such as wider action on road safety, and the positive promotion of cycling for specific 'target groups' - are important. Indeed, there is growing evidence that promotional activity (e.g. in schools or workplaces) is most effective when targeted in areas where infrastructure improvements are also being made. This link needs to be made explicit in the Strategy.
- 2.3 **20 mph:** The Strategy also needs to be more positive and adventurous about 20 mph schemes. 20 mph is already known to improve cyclists' safety (as the Strategy itself acknowledges); and it helps makes them feel more confident and less intimidated. We believe that DRD should thus go further than the pilots and piecemeal approach it proposes and instead adopt 20 mph limits by default for most streets in built-up areas, with exceptions to be identified in consultation with local communities.
- 2.4 **Type of Cyclist table (figure 4.3):** Whilst supporting the concept of the 'Road User Hierarchy' (fig. 4.2), we believe that a key weakness of the Strategy is the inclusion of a table of different types of cyclists (fig 4.3). In itself, the table is fine, but the Strategy needs to say that cycle provision in any given location should aim to meet *all of their needs*. For instance, it is not acceptable to provide only for the fast commuters on the direct main roads, leaving everyone else to make more tortuous journeys using poorly connected back-streets.
- 2.5 **Design standards:** We are pleased to see the Strategy commit to the development of best practice guidance because this will help to ensure high and consistent quality. This, of course, depends on the quality of the guidelines adopted, so we suggest that DRD takes the *London*

*Cycling Design Standards*<sup>6</sup> and the forthcoming design guidance associated with the Active Travel (Wales) Act<sup>7</sup> as good examples to follow. CTC also offers an overview briefing on the principles of cycle-friendly design and planning.<sup>8</sup>

- 2.6 **Professional training:** We also suggest that steps are taken to make sure that all practitioners are offered appropriate training so that they are best able to implement the design guidance well.
- 2.7 **Respect and understanding:** On the subject of respect and understanding (4.2.4), we urge DRD to ensure that any awareness campaigns convey positive, memorable and truthful messages, and avoid giving the misleading impression that problem behaviour from cyclists causes anything like as much harm as problem behaviour from drivers. We expand on this in our briefing, *Cycle Awareness Campaigns for Drivers*.<sup>9</sup>
- 2.8 **Inclusive cycling:** It is, of course, important that the Strategy aims to increase cycle use so that people of all abilities and ages enjoy opportunities to cycle in an environment that is conducive to their needs. This needs to be strongly emphasised throughout. On this note, while we understand the reasons behind DRD's decision to call the document a 'Bicycle Strategy' rather than a ('Cycling Strategy'), we note that, technically speaking, a bicycle is a two-wheeled cycle. There are many cyclists and would-be cyclists who prefer to use adapted or non-standard cycles that may not be literally categorised as a 'bicycle'. We therefore believe that 'Cycling Strategy' is a preferable title.

## Conclusion

We recognise that the draft Strategy itself is simply a statement of intent and that the detail will follow in a *Bicycle Strategy Delivery Plan* along with 'SMART' objectives, policies and actions. This Plan, therefore, will be the real test of DRD's commitment to cycling, particularly what targets and funding it contains.

**Targets:** In terms of targets, as mentioned above (2.1), we believe that the DRD should set a challenging national target, especially given that cycle use in Northern Ireland stands at 0.7% of journeys, which is low even by UK standards, not to mention those of our continental neighbours. The UK Parliament's *Get Britain Cycling* report called, for instance, for a long-term ambition to increase

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<sup>6</sup> For CTC's commentary on the latest draft, see: <https://www.ctc.org.uk/blog/roger-geffen/londons-draft-cycle-safety-plan-design-guide-really-pretty-good-uk-standards>

<sup>7</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/transport/active-travel-delivery-guidance/?lang=en>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings/cycle-friendly-design-and-planning-overview>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings/cycle-awareness-campaigns-for-drivers>

cycle use from less than 2% of journeys in 2011, to 10% of all journeys in 2025, and 25% by 2050.<sup>10</sup>  
The Scottish Government has a target for cycling to reach 10% of trips by 2020.<sup>11</sup>

**Funding:** The *Get Britain Cycling* report also called for an initial cycling budget of at least £10 per person annually, rising to £20 as cycle use increases. We believe that this level of funding will help Northern Ireland achieve the vision it sets out in the Strategy and, in time, match the levels of cycle use enjoyed by countries like The Netherlands (27% of trips) or Denmark (16%).

**CTC**

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.ctc.org.uk/sites/default/files/get\\_britain\\_cycling.pdf](https://www.ctc.org.uk/sites/default/files/get_britain_cycling.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Scottish Government. *Cycling Action Plan for Scotland*. 2010.  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/resource/doc/316212/0100657.pdf>