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# FOLLOWING THE MONEY

Eight cycling cities and four national parks have received £148m for cycling. How are they spending it? CTC's **Chris Peck** finds out

**T**he Government claimed it was the biggest one-off investment in cycling ever. That's true as far as it goes, although we are still spending little more than £2 per person per year on cycling – five times less than the minimum figure argued for in the Get Britain Cycling report.

In one of those eight cities, Leeds, next year's Tour de France Grand Départ has focused minds on how to capitalise on the legacy for everyday cycle use. Leeds is the centre of Britain's fourth largest metropolitan area with, currently, very low levels of cycle use. Just 10% of people cycle once a month or more there, a third the level of York, 25 miles away.

Together with neighbouring Bradford, Leeds is putting up £11m, another £18m

coming from the Government, all to be spent – supposedly – by the end of March 2015. It's a breathtakingly tight timescale. Their ambitious project is focused on a 'Highway to Health', a cycle track straight through the centre of Leeds, linking the east of that city through the city centre and the railway station to neighbouring Bradford. It's about 10 miles in total. While Boris Johnson has been publishing his bold 10-year 'Vision' with a flagship cross-London segregated cycle route to be built at some point in the future, the Leeds version should be planned and built in just 18 months.

## PROPER INFRASTRUCTURE

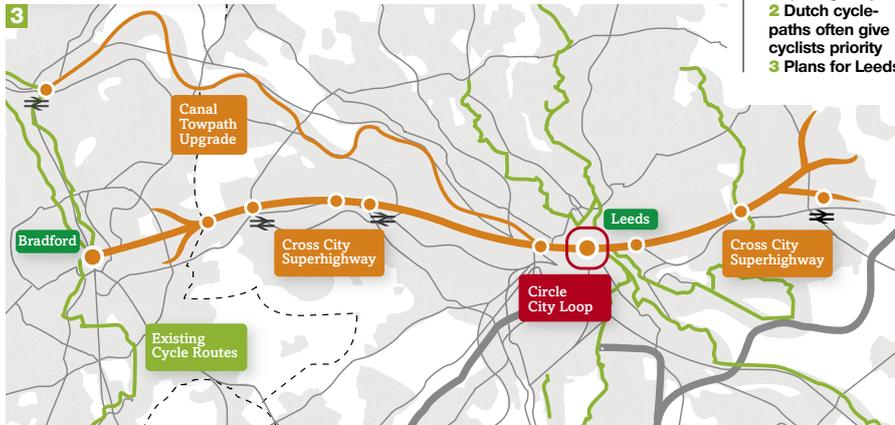
As is the case in the other 'Cycling City' bids, this new route is billed as a flagship project, a 'superhighway', with space in some cases taken from the road to provide a segregated route for cyclists. Some reading this will be thinking, with dread: 'Oh no, not another get-cyclists-off-the-road-and-dismount-at-every-junction-cyclepath!'

Lizzie Reather, from Leeds Cycling Campaign, is more optimistic: 'We've built up a really good working relationship with the council, with extensive discussions over the design of tracks and crossings of side

**“THE NEW ROUTE THROUGH THE CENTRE OF LEEDS IS BILLED AS A ‘SUPERHIGHWAY’, WITH SPACE TAKEN FROM THE ROAD”**

## CYCLE-PROOFING: WHAT IS IT?

THE CONCEPT of 'cycle-proofing' first appeared in the Prime Minister's announcement on the new cycling schemes, with the Labour Party proposing to go one step further and place an obligation to consider cyclists when planning schemes. Even more important has been the admission by Government that major roads can create barriers to walking and cycling, and the promise to 'start work to seek and correct historic problems, and retrofit the latest solutions and make sure that it is easy and safe for cyclists to use junctions'. While welcome, details on how this will work are still being thrashed out in meetings with the Department for Transport, which adopts a very conservative approach to any sort of innovation or flexibility over traffic signalling or road markings.



**In the photos**  
**1** Other cities are copying London's 'superhighways'  
**2** Dutch cycle-paths often give cyclists priority  
**3** Plans for Leeds

roads and how to deal with junctions. We feel the officers tasked with building it have the best intentions.'

Indeed, design of off-carriageway provision has taken leaps forward in recent years. Pioneering work in Brighton and London has set standards, which mean that these new cycle tracks are much wider, have better crossings and clearer priority at side-roads – and many of the beneficiaries of the latest grant are constructing this sort of infrastructure. It's unlikely that they will reach the standards that you would experience in the Netherlands, but for much of its length the Leeds route could, Lizzie suggests, really be a 'superhighway', and not just a smear of blue paint as some of the first iterations of this technique were in London.

From the initial drawings, it appears that

the quality of provision in Leeds is far better than the equivalent sections in Bradford. In east Leeds, the route will draw people from new housing developments along the main A64 York Road. This corridor, presently equipped with some on-road cycle lanes and shared bus/cycle lanes, carries over 40,000 cars, buses and lorries a day, but just 200 bikes. Leeds is planning wide cycle tracks for this section, and priority is given to the 'superhighway' where it crosses a side road.

When the route passes over the boundary into Bradford, however, things get a bit messier, with the plans suggesting poor quality footway conversions, with little clear indication at this stage what they should do at side roads. The other issue is car parking, which clogs the roads – and even pavements – along the route. 'At some point,' says Lizzie >

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**In the photos**  
**4** Dutch cycling infrastructure is factored in along with new roads  
**5** Often in the UK, cycling infrastructure is an afterthought



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› Reather, 'it will come down to someone making a tough decision on car parking.'

**THE CLOCK IS TICKING**

At either end, the route has feeder networks on local roads and will be connected to large areas of 20mph speed limits. Alongside the huge investment in changing the layout of lanes and junctions, there will also be work with residents, businesses and community groups to raise awareness about the new route. The evidence from elsewhere has been clear: accompanying infrastructure changes with promotional activities is the most effective way of increasing cycling.

CTC has already been doing work in this area, and Ginny Leonard, CTC's cycling development officer based in Leeds, will be providing adult cycle training and other promotional activities as part of the programme. She says, 'Working in Leeds has helped CTC's profile locally and we're already seeing more people out cycling on the streets as a result.'

The challenge for all eight cities – and the four national parks – will be implementing their huge, complex schemes in such a short period of time. Although all of the cities have produced long-term strategies, without the funding, the strategy won't be implemented. CTC will continue to campaign on a national level to secure even more money, on a multi-year, not multi-

**“IN WALES, EVERY LOCAL AUTHORITY MUST ASSESS THEIR CYCLE NETWORKS”**

month basis, to maintain the momentum that has been achieved thus far.

**THE WELSH WAY**

Meanwhile, in Wales, a different approach is being taken. There, following years of gestation, the Welsh Assembly has passed an Act that will force every local authority in the principality to draw up maps of their cycle and walking networks, and set out plans to make improvements. Although only £12m has been set aside to fund this work at first, the process of drawing up cycle routes will hopefully mean that local authorities must honestly assess the state of their roads and outline the improvements required. Another part of the Act forces the Welsh authority to consider cyclists when designing major road schemes – similar to England's 'cycle proofing' commitment.

CTC is helping to write the design guidance that Welsh local authorities must use to determine whether their routes are up to scratch. This will cover questions of whether or not the network actually connects locations, as well as setting standards for width, junction priority and surface quality that authorities should aim for – or explain if they are missing. Already local authorities are starting to plan out how they will implement the Act.

The hope is that once a long-term plan has been set out, this should mean the changes and improvements set out in the plan go ahead whenever new sources of funding are available, or relevant sections of road are resurfaced. The problem remains that imagination and political commitment will be required to plug the vast funding gap between the changes required and the money currently available. ☀

**PRACTICAL CYCLE-PROOFING**

**1** Make sure that new and existing major roads and junctions are adequately bypassed or safely crossed, so that no one has to cross – or use – a busy dual carriageway when out on a ride.

**2** When roads are resurfaced, local authorities should think carefully about how space can be reallocated to make things better for cyclists, such as laying out cycle lanes and removing the centre lines.

**3** It's not just roads: new rail schemes must be built with cyclists' needs in mind. At the moment, they're not: level crossings are being removed and either closed altogether, or replaced with unrideable and fiddly bridges.

**4** All new commercial and housing developments should be planned with cycling at their heart, rather than an add-on amounting to a converted pavement and a smattering of cycle stands tucked away in a dank corner.