



# ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

*With less than a year to go until the next general election, **Chris Peck** examines how you can help get cycling on the next government's agenda*

**C**OUNCILLORS ACROSS the country have already received over 12,000 messages from you and other cyclists, urging them to make Space for Cycling. Almost 300 have signed up in support of the campaign, which is coordinated by CTC and local campaign groups nationwide. As the general election draws closer, it's important to strengthen grassroots support for cycling.

Illustration: Adam Gale

Space for Cycling is aimed at councillors because they have the power to change things at a local level. They decide where resources go, where new developments will be, and how they will be accessed, as well as the design of streets, crossings, width of cycle paths, even

the type of materials used in projects. All these things have a profound effect on whether people will cycle and how safe it is.

## Show us the money

Although councils often control multi-billion pound budgets, those budgets are declining in the face of austerity measures imposed by central government. More and more of the discretionary spending that local authorities have goes to pay for vital services, such as looking after older people or vulnerable adults. The message from local authorities – the coal face of providing for cycling – is clear: we need longer term, consistent funding coupled with clear guidance and regulations on how

to build better streets and remove the huge legacy of decades of car-dominated road planning.

CTC has liaised with the main parties through meetings with Cycling Minister Robert Goodwill MP and his counterpart in the opposition, Richard Burden MP, as well as a close collaboration with the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group, whose members led the Get Britain Cycling inquiry in 2013. So far, the messages we've been getting back are very supportive of cycling. But politicians won't yet commit to dedicating the necessary funding – at least £10 per head, per year, rising to £20 over time. This was the level of funding that was identified in the Get Britain



» Cycling report (supported by Parliament) as required to project Britain from the bottom of the international cycle use league to the top.

Since the coalition government took office in 2010, we have seen uneven progress. Overall cycling levels appear to have plateaued, albeit substantially above where they were ten years ago, yet serious casualties have continued steadily to rise, so the rate of injury for cyclists has also risen. In part, this is because of the government's utter failure to tackle bad driving, despite some improvements recently thanks to CTC's Road Justice campaign.

Achieving more as well as safer cycling – the well-documented 'safety in numbers' effect – requires government and local authorities to cater for that increased cycling by making conditions more amenable. That means reducing speed limits in residential areas, making space for cycling on main roads and through green spaces, and tackling specific safety problems, such as major junctions, heavy vehicles, or bad driving. Without those problems being tackled, new or returning cyclists must rely on drivers being more aware of them. More cyclists on the roads *does* make drivers more aware, but that alone isn't enough.

### Slapdash solutions

The destruction of Cycling England in 2011, in the 'bonfire of the quangos', set back planning for cycling massively. Local authorities that had been making real progress as 'Cycling Towns' suddenly had their ring-fenced cycling cash removed, at precisely the same moment that they were being asked to make colossal savings because of central government imposed austerity measures. The coalition claims it has spent more money on cycling than ever before, but much of it has been in the form of one-off dollops of cash in the last couple of years. Principally, that's been the resurrected 'Cycling Cities' programme, as well as the spending down of the legacy of the 2010-2011 Cycling England programme.

Presently, we have eight cities in the middle of implementing what are, in some cases, highly ambitious plans for cycling, but doing so on an absurdly rushed timetable, with the expectation that there will be no resources to continue the work after May 2015. This short-term thinking is hugely inefficient: by the time local authorities have skilled up teams to consult on, design and procure projects, the money will have run out and those resources (and learned lessons) will be lost.

As reported in Cycle Dec 13/Jan 14, Leeds has almost £18m to spend on its flagship schemes, including a 10-mile route right through the city and all the way to Bradford. This is an immense project to try to build in just 18 months, yet that is what is required.



● The aim is to secure commitments to cycling ahead of the 2015 general election

Left: iStockphoto.com. Below left: courtesy of British Cycling's Martin Key

To secure that long-term funding, cyclists need to be bolder in mobilising the political support for cycling. That means reaching out to people who ride bikes seldom or not at all, but who might want to, particularly parents of young children, and those on the cusp of retiring. We need our existing networks of campaigning and recreational cycling groups to challenge their local politicians with a simple, recurring demand: give us long-term funding for cycling of £10 per head per year, rising to

£20 per head per year as time passes.

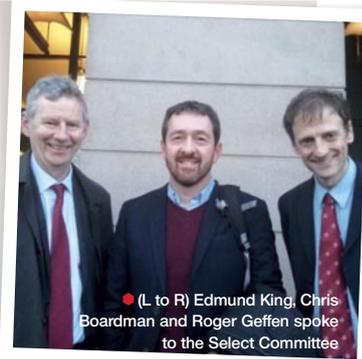
Having focussed efforts on local decision makers over the summer, autumn will be the time to start badgering MPs and the major parties – gearing up for a general election in May – to commit adequate resources to cycling. In short to make Space for Cycling, we'll first need funding for cycling. ●

*Visit [space4cycling.org.uk](http://space4cycling.org.uk) to find out more about how to get involved.*

## ► SUPPORT FOR £10 PER HEAD ON CYCLING

**The Commons Transport Select Committee's report on Cycle Safety was published just as Cycle was going to press. CTC gave evidence to the committee in February, along with the AA and British Cycling, and many of the points raised by Campaigns Director Roger Geffen are endorsed in the report. They include: high standards for cycle-**

**friendly design (such as Space for Cycling); more emphasis on cyclists' safety in driver training and the Highway Code; and raising the level of funding for cycling to £10 a head, which is the minimum CTC believes is necessary to radically improve our roads and streets so that anyone can get around safely and easily by cycling.**



● (L to R) Edmund King, Chris Boardman and Roger Geffen spoke to the Select Committee