Northern Ireland

INACTIVE TRAVEL PLAN

At the time of writing, Northern Ireland remains in limbo. There’s no Assembly or ministers and no election has been called. Yet this can no longer be an excuse for inaction by the Department for Infrastructure, whose dismal record speaks for itself.

Belfast has just two miles of permanent, segregated cycle paths, and there’s been no adoption of or consultation on the GB Highway Code changes, which help protect vulnerable road users; the DfI still uses outdated terms like ‘shared responsibility’ in its recent Road Safety Strategy. These are all things that should have been addressed when we had a minister in post.

The Climate Change Act in Northern Ireland signed into law a commitment to 10% of the transport budget being spent on active travel, and that applies regardless of whether the Assembly is sitting or a minister is in post. But the last we heard from the DfI on this was that the plan is “due by the end of 2023”, over a year and a half after the Act became law. It’s another excuse to kick the active travel can further down the road, when that road sorely needs a cycle lane.

Stalemate at Stormont shouldn’t be an excuse for not creating a dedicated team to deliver the Belfast Bicycle Network, or start consulting on an Active Travel Act so it is ‘oven ready’ when the Assembly returns. But we need civil servants and the DfI to move from being a department for road building to one that takes active travel seriously.

Transport

WALES STRATEGY BEACHED

Last year Cycling UK welcomed the long-term ambitions and vision set out in the Welsh Government’s 20-year transport strategy, Llwynywr Newydd. Unfortunately, and with huge support from local campaigners, we’ve had to submit a less positive response to the government’s consultation on its National Transport Delivery Plan. It was supposed to set out how these ambitions would be realised, but there’s not enough on delivery, timescales, detail, funding or accountability. If the government really wants to switch more people to active travel, we hope they listen to our recommendations. cyclinguk.org/wales-strategy-beached