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Dear Mr Dollimore

Cycling UK follow up letter to DfI – January 2023

I refer to your letter to the DfI's Permanent Secretary (Dr Julie Harrison) received on 17 January 2023. In your letter, you advised that the Cycling UK appreciated the more comprehensive response from the DfI on 19 December 2022 but sought further clarification on several areas, including some additional questions.

Your letter has been passed to me to respond as the Director of Transport Policy and Planning. I have addressed each of the areas as follows:

1. Active Travel Spend

In December 2022, we advised you of the work the Department is undertaking in this area. We also advised that the budget situation has been extremely challenging however, we expect to have a clearer understanding of how the Department will align its staff and financial resources to support active travel delivery very soon. You will appreciate that due consideration is required, taking into account a range of factors, and we are progressing this work as quickly as possible. I am pleased to confirm that one of these two senior posts has now been filled, with the other post due to be filled once a competition has been completed to fill their current post.

Under the Climate Change Act, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) must prepare and publish the first Northern Ireland Climate Action Plan (CAP) by December 2023. The Act requires that each Northern Ireland Department must assist DAERA in preparing the CAP and must provide DAERA with proposals and policies covering its areas of responsibility. The DfI is leading on transport sector input to the development of the Climate Action Plan in keeping with the timetable that has been set by DAERA.

2. Project Delays

Unfortunately, an exact date for switch on for the Comber Greenway is not available at this time, however if all works proceed as expected the Greenway lighting should be operational by end of February or early March 2023.

The section of the Greenway between Beersbridge Road and North Road is waiting on the delivery of columns. These are expected to arrive in early February and this section of the Greenway should be operational by end of February or early March 2023.

I can confirm officials are actively working on the development of schemes identified with the Belfast Cycle Delivery Plan.

3. Pop-Up Cycle Lanes

As part of a review of works carried out during the pandemic, the Department sought feedback from the public on the pop-up cycle lane installed on Bankmore Street / Hardcastle Street / Marcus Ward Street / Dublin Road.

This consultation confirmed the support for this cycling route and in response, the Department is preparing detailed designs with supporting legislation for a consultation on the permanent scheme. Further progress on this matter will be subject to the satisfactory completion of the legislative process.

4. Pavement Parking Consultation

The analysis of the response to the consultation on pavement parking is complete, and a draft report of the findings and the Departmental response is being prepared. We do not at present have a timescale for the completion of this work but hope to be in a position to make it public later this calendar year.

5. Belfast Bicycle Network

As mentioned previously, the Department is currently considering taking on a greater role in the delivery of greenways going forward. This is not expected to have any impact on the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan. However, funding of this and other programmes will of course be subject to future budget settlements.

6. Shared Responsibility

The draft Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030 is consistent with the Department's messaging to all road users including, but not restricted to, those categorised as vulnerable road users. The Strategy embraces the Safe Systems approach to road safety improvement.

The internationally recognized Safe Systems approach is recognised as the optimal, best practice approach to achieving significant reductions in road user fatalities and

serious injuries. It is based on well-established safety principles and requires a shared responsibility between all of those who use the road transport network; from system providers (including government, industry organisations that design, build, maintain and regulate roads and vehicles) to road users for safe travel outcomes on the road network. The approach is based on an ethical position where it can never be acceptable that people are seriously injured or killed on our roads with the long-term goal of elimination of death and serious injury on roads.

DfI continues to have lead responsibility for Road Safety in Northern Ireland and is therefore responsible for promoting the Highway Code and raising public awareness of the nature and scale of the road safety problem here and highlighting the specific actions that road users can take to reduce the risk to themselves and others. The Department does this successfully via a range of media channels including television, radio, online including social media and outdoor.

PSNI data continues to show that over 95% of road deaths and serious injuries are due to human error, a mistake that someone makes as they are using the road.

As you mention, the latest available statistics confirm that the main causes of death and serious injuries on our roads remain inattention or attention diverted; excessive speed having regard to the conditions; and alcohol or drugs. Failure to wear a seatbelt in the event of a collision is also a factor.

The data also shows those groups who are over-represented in road casualties and those who are more vulnerable road users, for example, young males 17-24 years, older road users, children, pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. The data also shows that around two thirds of collisions occur on rural roads.

The Department targets resources to where it will be most cost-effective, where the need is greatest and where most lives can be saved by targeting the most at risk on our roads and challenging those attitudes and behaviours that lead to road deaths and serious injuries. For this reason, the majority of the Department's public information campaigns address these issues, namely carelessness/inattention (including mobile phone use), drink driving, speeding, seatbelt wearing, as well as reflecting those most at risk on our roads. However, other campaigns are designed to help protect vulnerable road users and encourage the wearing of seatbelts.

For ease, the current campaigns can be viewed here:

<https://www.sharetheroadtozero.com/TV>

As a more specific example, in recent years the Department has developed positive cycling campaigns which demonstrate the responsibility of both the person driving and the person cycling and the consideration they both have as they share the road.

These campaigns can be viewed here:

<https://www.sharetheroadtozero.com/TVWebPages/cycling-space-and-signal>

<https://www.sharetheroadtozero.com/TVWebPages/cycling-blind-spots-and-junctions>

DfI has also developed a campaign that shows the benefits of walking rather than taking the car, particularly for shorter journeys. This can be viewed here:

<https://www.sharetheroadtozero.com/TVWebPages/great-things-happen>

Where you say we encourage people who walk, wheel and cycle to increase their visibility to other road users when we say “Be Safe, Be Seen we are simply promoting the advice contained within the Highway Code. It should also be noted, that drivers and riders, are also encouraged to ensure their lights are in good order and the use them appropriately, particularly in poorer light when people walking or riding may be more difficult to see. Using the roads, is probably the most dangerous thing we all regularly do, this advice is designed to help keep us all safe.

People can sign up to the pledge here: <https://www.sharetheroadtozero.com/>

The Department’s road safety social media channels can be viewed here:

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ShareTheRoadToZero> and

Twitter <https://twitter.com/roadtozero>

I trust you will find the response helpful in both providing clarification and addressing the additional queries.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

James Redmond
Director of Transport Policy