

cyclenation

...creating a nation of cycle-friendly communities

Response to A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World

July 2009

cyclenation is the new name for the Cycle Campaign Network (CCN), the umbrella organisation of more than 70 local groups which has campaigned since 1980 to improve conditions for cycling and to encourage more people to cycle more often.

We work closely with our partner organisations CTC and Sustrans and we urge the Department for Transport to take note particularly of the responses to the consultation from these two organisations, which we strongly endorse.

We also appreciate the contribution of one of our member groups, the Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign, to developing the **cyclenation** response.

THE RESPONSE

Vision and targets (Chapters 3 and 8)

1. Do you agree that our vision for road safety should be to have the safest roads in the world? (Chapter 3)

Yes, with the addition of the three short words: "for all users". A general reduction of casualty numbers is vital, but not if it results from vulnerable road users being too intimidated by motor traffic to walk or cycle at will.

Road safety targets should link casualty data to distance travelled by mode. Previous headline targets, based purely on the number of casualties, do not show how safe or dangerous our roads actually are. This will represent a challenge for the Office of National Statistics, local authorities and police forces to collect accurate data on walking and cycling travel, but this challenge should not be insuperable.

2. Do you agree that we should define a strategy running over twenty years to 2030, but with review points after five and ten years? (Chapter 3)

Yes, but this should also include a 15 year review. The world is likely to be experiencing unprecedented changes by 2025.

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3. Do you agree that our targets should be to reduce:

- road deaths by at least 33 per cent by 2020 compared to the baseline of the 2004–08 average number of road deaths;
- the annual total of serious injuries on our roads by 2020 by at least 33 per cent;
- the annual total of road deaths and serious injuries to children and young people (aged 0–17) by at least 50 per cent against a baseline of the 2004-08 average by 2020;
- by at least 50 per cent by 2020 the rate¹ of KSI per km travelled by pedestrians and cyclists, compared with the 2004–08 average? (Chapter 8)

We strongly support the inclusion of a target to “reduce the rate of KSI per Km travelled by pedestrians and cyclists”.

We recognise that there is concern that increased levels of walking and cycling could lead to an increase in KSI to those users. This could make some Local Authorities reluctant to encourage greater levels of cycling/walking for fear of missing their casualty reduction targets. However the report on “Safety in Numbers” recently published by CTC shows that, in contrast, cycling casualty rates would actually go down, creating a virtuous circle of accident rate decline to be followed by an increase in cycling.

Also, current road safety targets, based solely on the numbers of KSI, give a false interpretation of road safety. For example, a reduction in KSI amongst pedestrians and cyclists give the impression that walking / cycling is safer, whereas the reduction in KSI has largely been down to the general decline in levels of walking and cycling, as a result of heightened perceptions of road danger.

It is impossible to ascertain how safe / dangerous roads are, based purely on KSI figures. It is therefore imperative that KSI is matched with Kms travelled or some other measure of exposure to traffic danger.

4. We are proposing a set of indicators in order to help us to monitor performance (Appendix A). Do you believe these cover the right areas? (Chapter 8)

The final paragraph “Measuring progress on our vision” compares our safety to that of other leading nations by reference to the number of deaths per 100,000 population. As mentioned earlier, it is impossible to judge road safety based purely on how many people are killed. A true reflection of road safety (risk) would be to compare our safety record based on the number of deaths per Km travelled (broken down by mode), rather than deaths per 100,000 population.

Context (Chapters 2, 3 and 4)

5. We have identified a number of factors that may affect our ability to deliver road safety improvements in the future world we are planning for. Do you think we have taken account of the key risks and opportunities? Are there others you would add? (Chapter 3)

Peak Oil – the start of the gradual reduction in the supply of cheap hydrocarbons as sources become exhausted – is predicted to have arrived well before the 2020 or 2030, end dates of the periods for this consultation. There may be efficient and readily available

¹ Expressed as a three-year rolling average

alternatives by then but with minor exceptions the current developments have not shown favourable results. Whatever the portable energy products available, there is little chance that motor vehicles will be as cheap to operate as they are now. This would affect motor traffic volumes, and have a negative effect on long distance haulage and motorised travel, while at the local level walking and cycling may become more practical than motor cars for many trips. Cars will be smaller and so more fuel-efficient but their occupants may be more vulnerable to serious injuries in the event of a collision.

Climate Change. This will have similar consequences, but with less certainty as social pressures may be more critical. The travel needs of many millions of climate refugees will create traffic safety problems as well as community breakdown. Market forces will encourage the recycling of old cars, as in present-day Africa, and there may be problems in regulating the roadworthiness of old repaired vehicles.

The combination of Peak Oil and Climate Change could create high levels of instability. In today's conflict zones these have often resulted in poor levels of traffic safety.

Health should also be a factor. In the worst case, increasing obesity, CHD, Cancer, Type 2 Diabetes and Depression are all affected by a sedentary lifestyle, and people's concerns over the perceived dangers of walking and cycling have increasingly forced people to switch to driving (e.g. the school run). Alternatively active travel – walking and cycling for journeys to work, education, shopping or leisure – could provide a convenient alternative to a motorised lifestyle.

6. We think that the key challenge for road safety from 2010 is better and more systematic delivery, rather than major policy changes. Do you agree? (Chapter 4)

Enforcement is one of the traditionally important elements of the 3 “P”s – along with engineering and education. In recent years technology has played a very effective and efficient role in monitoring and enforcing excessive speed and other anti-social behaviour. However there has been a reduction in the number and effectiveness of traffic police, and there needs to be more of a balance.

Police bicycle patrols operate in a number of police forces and these seem to be very successful in providing a human touch to modern policing.

7. This consultation document sets out the current evidence on the key road safety challenges. Do you agree with our analysis? Would you highlight any others? (Chapter 2)

Road safety, and in particular the ‘perception’ of how safe roads are, also affects other areas, including health (CHD/Obesity/Type 2 Diabetes/Depression), pollution (effects on Health), Climate Change – Targets should take broader view, and include both costs to the community, and effect, and potential “life year” savings for these issues.

Key challenge should be to create a safer environment for all users, in particular pedestrians and cyclists, through schemes such as ‘home zones’, and not just target accident locations.

New performance framework (Chapters 4 and 8)

8. We are proposing a number of measures to support the effectiveness of the road safety profession. Do you think they will be effective? What else might need to be done? (Chapter 4)

The involvement of the public in monitoring road safety activities could be valuable in countering the misinformation coming from the media.

9. Do you agree that an independent annual report on road safety performance, created on an annual basis, would be a worthwhile innovation? (Chapter 4)

Yes, if a range of experience and expertise was involved.

10. Do you agree that the Road Safety Delivery Board should be tasked with holding Government and other stakeholders to account on the implementation of a new national road safety plan? (Chapter 8)

Yes. It would be important to get the support of all Government departments as the opportunities for synergy are enormous.

Roads and local authorities (Chapter 5)

11. Do you agree that highway authorities reviewing and, where appropriate, reducing speed limits on single carriageway roads will be an effective way of addressing the casualty problem on rural roads? Are there other ways in which the safety of rural roads can be improved? (Chapter 5)

We fully support proposals to reduce traffic speeds on rural single carriageway roads. This is a big step in the right direction. Even though average speeds may not reduce significantly at first, there will be some reduction in average speeds which will help reduce casualties and will also start to shift the perception of safety in favour of pedestrians and cyclists, which will encourage these groups to use the highway.

Lack of public transport and closure of village facilities and employment possibilities conspire to make the less well off young person heavily dependent on motor vehicles to access services.

12. How can we most effectively promote the implementation of 20 mph zone schemes in residential areas? What other measures should we be encouraging to reduce pedestrian and cyclist casualties in towns? (Chapter 5)

This is one of the most exciting proposals in the consultation paper and if adopted will receive the strong support from all the organisations representing vulnerable road users. We should particularly welcome schemes which are for 20 mph limits throughout a residential area rather than, for example, 20 mph zones around specific schools. Area-wide schemes have been popular and successful for many years in some cities on the continent, most notably in Graz, Austria's second city.

13. How can we provide better support to highway authorities in progressing economically worthwhile road safety engineering schemes? (Chapter 5)

There are good examples of cost-effective highway schemes which assist cycling as well as returning. These are more likely to be schemes which improve on-road conditions for a variety of users: walkers, cyclists and public transport. The Local Transport Note on "Cycle Infrastructure Design" and other DfT publications provide the technical background.

Vehicles (Chapter 6)

14. What should Government do to secure greater road safety benefits from vehicles?

In-car Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA) offers a relatively simple and reasonably acceptable approach for reducing speeding. We welcome the Government's initiatives in this area and hope that they can be extended.

However there is a risk that wider introduction of ISA will be the target for campaigns of misinformation similar to those which have defeated attempts to introduce or extend road charging in Manchester and London.

15. Do you agree that, in future, crash avoidance systems will grow in importance and will have the potential to greatly reduce casualties?

ISA seems likely to allow vehicle speeds to be managed successfully in accordance with pre-determined digital road maps, reducing the appeal of unnecessary travel in a carbon-restricted world. In contrast, technologies such as co-operative driving have the potential to allow cars to drive up to the new limits and to negate any predicted benefits in reduced demand, pollution and greenhouse emissions.

16. How can we best encourage consumers to include safety performance in their purchasing decisions?

Behaviours (Chapter 7)

17. We have highlighted what we believe to be the most dangerous driving behaviours. Do you agree with our assessment?

Drinking and other "laddish" behaviour is still a social safety problem, with stories of attacks especially on women cyclists. The motor car is a potent symbol of manhood, reinforced by countless films and magazines.

18. What more can be done to persuade the motoring public that illegal and inappropriate speeds are not acceptable behaviours?

It is a matter of great concern that the media – newspapers, Radio and Television – habitually publish articles, news items and editorial items which negate much of the work of local and national government, the police and concerned members of road user groups and the ordinary public in promoting responsible car use. No newspaper is guiltless; from the Times to the Daily Star one can read ill-informed and partisan journalism criticising roads safety partnerships and their cameras and enforcement campaigns, as if we did not have thousands of people dying every year as victims of drivers going too fast for the conditions, drinking excessive amounts of alcohol, or indulging in all kinds of selfish and anti-social behaviour. Unfortunately a significant proportion of media advertising is bought by the motor industry, making any change in the situation very difficult.

Even publicity campaigns with good intentions can send out the wrong messages. For

example, the recent Think! Campaigns have produced some ‘thought provoking’ adverts in an effort to get motorists to think about their behaviour. Such adverts include the Kill Your Speed scene depicting a motorist braking at 40mph in a 30mph area, and a child being thrown over the car.

Although these are primarily aimed at the motorist, they are also very disturbing to vulnerable road users, and in this case parents, and do little to give people confidence in allowing children to walk or cycle.

Similar concerns are experienced by cyclists, with the campaigns encouraging helmet use by continually linking cycling with head injuries, brain damage and death. Understandably people are discouraged from cycling, thereby missing out on all the far greater health benefits of cycling.

Advertising campaigns should be more sensitive to the needs and feelings of vulnerable road users.

19. What more can be done to encourage safe and responsible driving?

Five types of irresponsible driving were highlighted in paragraph 7.23: drink-driving; drug driving; speed; failure to wear a seatbelt; careless driving.

All these issues could be reduced in severity by reducing average vehicle speeds, e.g. a drunk driver is both less likely to have an accident driving at 20mph, and the severity of any accident would be reduced.

This affirms the importance of reducing speed limits and speeds on all residential roads.

20. Should more be done to reward good driving? If so, what?

One suggestion that could be explored: provide a “no claims bonus” on VED for motorists with no convictions / penalty notices for speeding, drink-driving, drug-driving, careless driving or failing to wear a seatbelt.

Additional Comments:

Section 7.39 - Single Double Summer Time

Given the obvious benefits in reduced KSI figures, we believe that the Government, through this strategy, should actively support a move to Single Double Summer Time.

Given that more northerly/westerly parts of the United Kingdom have embraced Devolution there is now little reason for the whole of the UK to remain on the same timescales if each country wants to go its own way.

This change would also put England in line with our other major European trading partners, and more importantly, save 80 needless UK road deaths per year.

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