

20's Plenty for Us

...making your place a better place to be

20's Plenty for Us
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Response from 20's Plenty for Us on the DfT's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

Consultation on the CWIS is welcome and we are grateful for a formal opportunity to put forward our view. We represent over 300 local community campaign branch groups around the country who are campaigning for 20mph limits to be the normal default road speed, with exceptions where warranted. There are now 15m million people who have this policy in over 40 local authorities. In fact more than half of the largest 40 urban authorities and 75% of Inner London Boroughs have rejected the national 30mph limit for "restricted roads" as being "unfit for purpose" and most of their roads have been "de-restricted" and set with a 20mph limit.

20's Plenty for Us does not seek to represent any particular mode of road user, but has both experience of cycle and walking, and an empathy with those who wish to enable cycling and walking to become the natural choice for short journeys. It has worked with many local authorities who have sought to encourage and increase cycling and walking, many of whom have seen a default 20mph limit as the foundation for all their other cycling and walking initiatives.

We welcome the aspiration for a long term goal that :-

"Our long term goal up to 2040 is that walking and cycling should be a normal part of everyday life, and the natural choice for shorter journeys such as the commute to school, college, work or leisure trips. We want to create a nation where cycling and walking are the norm for all people whatever their background or characteristics."

Question 1: The Government would be interested to hear views on the approach and actions set out in this Strategy

We do not see that this strategy will deliver the necessary foundation for achieving that ambition.

With UK having one of the lowest usages of cycles in Europe the ambition to take the next 9 years to double the very low 0.8 billion cycle trips pa to 1.6 billion is very cautious and reflects a lack of real vision as to how a real commitment to walking and cycling could transform our cities and communities.

In so many cities in Europe levels of 20+% of trips being made by bicycle are common and are driven by governments (both local and national) that recognize that as well as incentives to cycle, disincentives to

use motor cars are important and necessary. The fact that the DfT fails to acknowledge this simple truth has meant that the strategy and its targets are totally incompatible with the stated vision of "creating a walking and cycling nation".

In order to be truly transformational, the strategy needs to go far beyond an incremental approach to walking and particularly cycling. It is said that in the UK it is only the "fit and the brave and the desperate" who dare to cycle. An incremental approach would simply add a tranche of slightly less fit, less brave or less desperate. A transformational policy needs to be radical enough to introduce whole swaths of the population to walking and cycling. That will be far more cost effective both in meeting cycling and walking targets and in the huge resulting public health gains.

It is not sufficient to be pro-active travel, pro-healthy travel, pro-environmentally friendly travel. If the vast benefits in terms of public health, accessibility, mobility are to be gained by society then we must start to discourage the inactive and obesity inducing travel, the travel that pollutes our streets and creates the environmental problems that suppress walking and cycling. If the strategy fails to do this then it has little chance of meeting even its own mediocre targets.

It is almost as if the government wants to make the right noises about encouraging cycling and walking but at heart does not have the will to do so. Instead we have a bundle of initiatives and funding pots which are all very good in their own right, but will fail because the public interest and benefit from reducing motor car usage and increasing cycling and walking is not being vocalised by the government.

What the strategy lacks is that simple statement of fact that "***we would prefer people to cycle and walk rather than take the motor vehicle***". This is not ideological but a simple recognition that our cities, towns and villages cannot cope with an ever increasing number of motor vehicles being used for personal transport without it severely impinging on the health and well-being of residents, the health of our nation and the liveability of our places.

Within the three themes it must be recognised that for cycling and walking our streets fall far short of the conditions in safety, mobility and liveability that are necessary to "create a cycling and walking nation".

Question 2: The Government would be interested to hear views on the potential roles of national government departments, local government, other public bodies, businesses and the voluntary sector in delivering the strategy and what arrangements could best support partnership working between them.

The "glue" that binds all of these bodies and departments together is and must be a mutual recognition of the societal benefits of discouraging and reducing motor car dependency for personal travel and the benefits of more active travel. Without the government making the case for such discouragement as well as encouragement then there will be no unity of purpose across these bodies. Far more direction and leadership is required from central government. Hence from central government there should be :-

- Clear engagement with the public on the benefits of cycling and walking as well as recognition of costs and dis-benefits of reliance on motor vehicles for personal travel.
- Central policies that shift the balance on walking and cycling. Some of these are referenced in answer to the next question.

Question 3: The Government would be interested to hear suggestions and evidence of innovative projects and programmes which could be developed to deliver the objectives outlined in the Strategy

We believe that it is a central government responsibility to set in place the foundation for a strategy that will deliver. It needs transformational rather than incremental change. We believe that the following interventions which form the foundation of strategies for the most successful walking and cycling places are required :-

1. The current national speed limit of 30mph with local traffic authorities being able to make exceptions ***should be changed to 20mph keeping the ability for such authorities to justify and set limits higher where appropriate.***

This blanket limit has already been declared "unfit for purpose" by most of our iconic cities in England and several counties. In fact 15m people in the UK live in places where a 20mph limit has been set for most roads with exceptions only where they can be justified. A 20mph limit has clear advantages for vulnerable road users who walk and cycle and the reversal of the current need to justify 20mph limits for local traffic authorities would transform the cost and effectiveness of implementations at a cost of less than £2 per head of population. Instead of having to justify and sign 20mph limits then the few streets remaining at 30mph would require the traffic regulation order and signage to set them at 30mph. Instead of 30mph being the norm and only slowing down in some places, 20mph would be the norm and we would only go faster where appropriate. This would be in line with successive British Social Attitude Surveys which have shown 70+% of people agreeing that 20mph is the correct limit for residential roads.

2. ***Presumed civil liability and better road justice.*** In any road crash the motor vehicle driver/insurer should be liable unless it can be proven that the vulnerable road user was negligent. There are also far too many situations where criminal and life threatening activity takes place on the roads. Cycling and pedestrian road users are particularly threatened because of their vulnerability.

Presumed Civil Liability. The UK is one of the very few countries in Europe to require that it is always vulnerable road users who must prove negligence by anyone protected in a motor vehicle. Note that this does not apportion blame but only liability. This civil protection is a key factor in setting clear and fair rules about how roads are shared, especially for younger vulnerable road users.

Better Road justice. Traffic Law Enforcement, Collision Investigation and Criminal Prosecution/Sentencing all have too low a priority in police, courts and legal systems. If we are to double and treble the number of road users who are to lose the protection of their steel motor bodies and become vulnerable road users then it is incumbent on our criminal system to protect them adequately. Far too often there are too few trained police officers and legal professionals who fully understand and exercise the rights of vulnerable road users. This leaves them feeling disenfranchised on the roads and unfairly discriminated against.

3. ***Every community to be a cycling and walking community.*** The idea of "cycling cities", "cycle demonstration towns" and now "cycle ambition cities" fails to set a national agenda to promote cycling. The whole process of bidding for limited central government funds makes cycling look like a luxury or optional civic responsibility and does nothing to convert any local authorities which show little understanding of the needs of cyclists or empathy with promoting cycling. Every local authority should have a responsibility and plan to increase walking and cycling. It should also have ring-fenced funding for walking and cycling which reflects this.

4. **Re-instate the annual national school travel audit.** This was an important measure not only of walking and cycling levels for children but an important proxy for the perceived level of safety on our roads.

Question 4: The Government would be interested to hear your views on how to increase cycling and walking in typically under-represented groups (for example women, older people, or those from black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds)

The answer to this lies in the fact that there is an institutionalised prejudice against vulnerable road users. Those who do perceive prejudice in society from their gender, age or ethnicity are bound to feel that the additional prejudice against them as a vulnerable road user is not acceptable, and consequently suppresses their level of walking and cycling.

Hence whilst selective encouragement of such groups may be beneficial, there is a far greater benefit from reducing the prejudice against all vulnerable road users.

Question 5: The Government would be interested to hear views on what type of assistance Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships would find beneficial to support development of ambitious and high standard Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

Far too often the central government hides behind a fig-leaf of localism in order to evade responsibility for many of the problems for vulnerable users of our streets. It is not enough to provide pots of funding and encouragement. Local authorities feel as if they are fighting central government in implementing walking and cycling initiatives.

One clear example of this is the way that central government has repeatedly made the introduction of 20mph limits easier but has failed to set a national policy to reverse the default from 30mph set in 1934 to 20mph. Local authorities are still required make traffic orders for every such road rather than declaring themselves a 20mph default authority and only requiring traffic orders for the exceptions. Repeater signage is still based on 20mph being exceptional rather than requiring a driver to accept it as the norm unless clearly signed otherwise. Such unwillingness to set a national limit also endorses the views of those drivers who are unwilling to comply on the basis that elsewhere 30mph on residential streets is acceptable. Engagement would also be so much more effective if done at national level rather than every local authority doing so without the assistance of centralised cost-effective marketing.

In so many areas of public health and liveability central government does take a leading and national role. This is the case in child protection, smoking in public spaces, plastic bag usage, education, etc. It needs to do so in transport with clear policies and expectations of what Local Authorities and Enterprise Partnerships need to do to take a full and active role in meeting the nation's strategic objectives for walking and cycling.

In conclusion

This strategy needs :-

- A bigger vision of the ability for walking and cycling to transform the lives and opportunities for our communities.
- To provide a clear and unequivocal message about the benefits of modal shift including the discouragement of motor vehicle use and encouragement of walking and cycling.

- National initiatives that endorse the need to re-create our street and road network to be inclusive, safe and convenient for walking and cycling.

The nation has a huge opportunity to increase its public health and the liveability of its communities. We therefore urge the government to lift its sights on what may be achieved and resolutely pursue the ability for all our places to be better places to be, walk and cycle.

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