

What should be in the National Cycle Plan?

A survey conducted by CTC, the national cyclists' organisation



What the National Cycle Plan/Active Travel Strategy should cover – a survey by CTC of cyclists and cycling organisations

Cycling modal share in large urban areas is only 3% - a very large opportunity to improve health outcomes exists. – Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, November 2009

In June the Prime Minister announced in *Building Britain's Future* that the Department for Transport and the Department for Health would between them produce both a National Cycle Plan and an Active Transport Strategy. We now understand that the two documents will be combined into a single Active Travel Strategy. We hope it will also have with input from various other government departments, particularly Communities and Local Government.

CTC strongly supports the idea of a National Cycle Plan, particularly the Prime Minister's aim "*to promote cycling as a mainstream form of personal transport.*" This represents an opportunity to make changes in policy which can support a substantial shift to cycling, building on the success in towns and cities in England over the last few years.

2008 saw the highest level of cycling since the early 1990s (4.7 billion) and one of the lowest ever number of fatalities (115). The risks of cycling are the lower than ever before (DfT, 2009).

Summary of findings – overcoming the barriers to cycling

Any plan to 'start a revolution in cycling' must start by seeking to make cycling easier and more attractive than alternative modes, whilst tackling the fears which appear to be the main barrier for most non-cyclists. CTC suggests that there are three key themes which the Plan should address:

- A) **Change the physical environment to improve conditions for cyclists.** Boosting cycling may require the construction of new facilities and the *changing of priorities* on the existing road network. *Better spatial planning* is needed to ensure that journey distances are short enough to enable them to be made by active travel, while measures to deter private car use in urban areas has shown to significantly enhance cycling levels.
- B) **Create a culture of cycling, through changing attitudes and using opportunities to market cycling to individuals.** Organisations and public authorities must be mobilised to give high profile support to cycling, marketing it in a way that presents it as attractive rather than risky. Specific interventions include new *Bikeability cycle training* – now well established as a means of improving attitudes, reducing cycling risks and encouraging cycling. Social marketing techniques have also been proving highly cost-effective, notably to promote *workplace-based cycling*, but

there is great potential for other applications too, notably helping tackle health problems due to overweight and inactivity.

C) Reduce the barriers to cycling from intimidating road user behaviour.

The main reason given for not cycling tends to specify the fear and intimidation experienced when using the road network. Solutions include: stronger enforcement of traffic law, lower speed limits, tackling the threat from lorries and challenging hostile roads and junctions.

In addition to these three themes, CTC believe that the Plan must create a framework of indicators and ambitions that accurately measure levels of cycling and the risks of cycling. Without good quality data on cycling levels, it is unlikely that local decision makers will have the confidence to continue investing in cycling.

What preceded the National Cycle Plan?

The differences between cycle use in Britain and that in some other parts of north and western Europe is often attributed in part to the longer term planning for cycling that occurred in those regions over the last 40 years (Pucher and Buehler, 2008).

Whilst other European countries began promoting cycling in the 1970s, there was little interesting promoting cycling in the UK until the mid-1990s, when the National Cycling Strategy (NCS) was developed and published in 1996. The Strategy set bold targets for increases in cycling – with plans to double cycling by 2002 and double it again by 2012. These targets were modified to a trebling by 2010 in 2000, yet the level of resources devoted to cycling was far lower than needed to achieve this. The NCS was also not well integrated with wider transport and road safety policies, nor were effective links developed with either policy or partners in health, education, environment, planning, economic development, social inclusion or the police.

CTC hopes that the development of the current plan takes on board some of the lessons learned from the National Cycling Strategy, the review of that body (DfT, 2005), the Walking and Cycling Action Plan of 2004 (DfT, 2004), and the subsequent successes of Cycling England.

Although the targets set in the 1990s and early 2000s didn't succeed, we would strongly urge against being overly cautious in the ambitions set for the current Plan. We are now beginning to see significant increases in cycle use in places where cycling has received strong financial and political backing. London has led the way, with a 107% increase in cycling on the main roads in 9 years, easily exceeding the Mayor's initial target. But cities like Sheffield and Leicester are also now beginning to show similar rates of growth, as are some of the Cycling Towns. A great deal has now been learnt from these success stories about what

measures are cost-effective in increasing cycle use, and the resources needed to deliver them. CTC now believes that increases on the scale achieved by London could be replicated across the UK given sufficient resource and political commitment (CTC, 2009).

Long term planning for cycling – the Netherlands from the 1970s

Planning for cycling was ignored in the Netherlands for much of the first half of the 20th century. Like in Britain as cars became popular provision for private motor transport was prioritised with many new roads built for motor traffic, in many cases paid for with a tax paid by cyclists.

The growth of private motor transport in the 1950s and 1960s, like in Britain, saw a significant fall in levels of cycling, while private car use increased dramatically, bringing with it a 200% increase in road fatalities in 20 years.

Longer term planning for cycling in the Netherlands began in the mid-1970s, when cycling had reached its lowest ebb, partly in response to the oil crisis, partly as a result of protests over safety of children and the dominance of town centres by motor traffic. Towns and cities began to plan for cyclists and a new campaigning organisation for cyclists' rights emerged.

The evolution of cycle planning has continued in the Netherlands in 'Sign up for the bicycle', a key policy produced in 1993 and subsequent policies. The underlying principles of these documents have been designed into all new housing developments and road layouts built since then, creating a permeable, welcoming environment for cyclists.

Results from the CTC Survey

Aware that there was unlikely to be an opportunity for public consultation on the Plan itself, CTC felt it was important to give individuals an opportunity to make their views on the subject known. CTC therefore set up a short survey which invited participants to identify and prioritise some key policy interventions and 'iconic measures' which could be adopted in the Plan, as well as to submit their own comments.

Over 1800 responses were received between the 2nd and 26th of October. Survey participants were self-selected, responding mainly to a weekly CTC newsletter and coverage in several online cycling publications. In total 1507 CTC members responded, as did 308 non-members and 40 individuals who responded on behalf of organisations, including local cycling campaigns, local authorities and disability organisations.

CTC's key demands

A. Creating an attractive environment for cycling

Overall spatial planning, the provision of transport infrastructure and the standards of maintenance all need significant improvement to ensure that an increase in cycling can be obtained. Planners and engineers must adhere to the relevant guidance and assessment procedures. To do this they must receive the training and, crucially, the understanding of how to deliver cycle-friendly planning, design and maintenance.

CTC is greatly concerned that despite improved guidance from the Department (such as *Manual for Streets*, LTN 2/08 - *Cycle Infrastructure Design*, LTN 3/08 – *Mixed Priority Routes: Practitioners Guide*) the quality of planning of urban areas for cycling and walking is still too low.

Recommendations: *We believe that there needs to be a step-change in provision at a local authority level, focusing on four broad objectives:*

- *Planning and locating new developments to make them easily accessible by cycle.*
- *Creating safe and attractive cycling conditions for all cycle journeys, through a combination of lower speed limits, cycle friendly design and planning, and the provision of dedicated facilities for cycling, including cycle parking.*
- *Mitigating the severance effect of existing roads and other barriers to safe and convenient cycle travel.*
- *Ensuring that cyclists' needs are reflected in road maintenance procedures and practices.*
- *Measures to assess and mitigate the effect that existing roads have on severance of communities from services*
- *Spatial planning to reduce the distances travelled and ensure cycling is taken in to account*

B. Creating a culture of cycling

The Sustainable Travel Towns and Cycle Demonstration Towns programmes have both focused heavily on smarter choices measures, to great success. The high benefit to cost ratios achieved by these interventions, particularly schemes such as high quality cycle training (Bikeability) has yet to filter through to local authority decision making. CTC understands that the pressures on revenue funding has led to the failure to provide full cycle training provision in some local authority areas – despite the existence of ring-fenced grants from DfT to support it.

Recommendations: *A culture of cycling requires commitment from a range of public and private partners, each contributing to reduce the barriers to cycling and market cycling effectively and attractively to individuals. Specifically:*

- *Cycle training needs to be available and marketed to all children and adults.*
- *Workplace interventions, such as workplace challenges.*
- *Personalised travel planning needs widespread roll out.*
- *Measures to promote cycling to those most at risk from social exclusion and health problems, such as GP referral programmes.*
- *Specifically we recommend that health trusts and other public sector organisations should be tasked with demonstrating leadership as model cycle-friendly employers.*

C. Improving road user behaviours

A key plank of the draft road safety strategy *A Safer Way* is the need to reduce speed limits in residential and shopping streets to 20 mph. This issue was strongly supported in the questionnaire and remains one of CTC key priorities. CTC awaits the outcome of the road safety strategy and hopes that the importance of reduced urban (and rural) speed limits is taken into consideration in the preparation of the National Cycle Plan.

Recommendations: *Better, safer behaviour from all road users is required to rehabilitate the image of cycling and, more importantly, to create a road environment that welcomes returning cycles and ensures they continue to cycle:*

- *Tackle illegal road use through greater enforcement*
- *Review effectiveness of current road traffic legislation*
- *Deal with the specific threat from lorries, e.g. changing delivery/access times to city centres, imposing safety equipment and cycle-specific driver training*

Indicators to measure an increase in cycling and reduction in risk

CTC strongly supports decision in *A Safer Way* to measure cyclists' safety in terms of the risk per kilometre travelled rather than measuring the numbers of injuries. The former allows the promotion and increase in cycling without fear that indicators on cycling safety will be undermined. Recent research on the safety in numbers effect suggests that in places with higher levels of cycling, the risks of cycling are lower, however cycling casualties may still rise overall (CTC, 2009, Vandenbulcke et al, 2009).

There is little indication, however, as to how these targets and indicators of cycling safety will be transferred to the local areas. We suggest that a robust indicator for cycle use in local areas be considered as part of a future National Indicator set – such an indicator not only would help monitor delivery against any National Cycle Plan ambition for cycling, it could also help determine the risks of cycling in each area.

Currently the standard of monitoring of cycling levels under the current cycling indicator from local transport plans (LTP3) is highly variable. In analysis of Progress Reports from the second round of local transport plans, CTC found some LTPs measured cycle use based on a very small sample of trips – barely a few hundred – whereas other baselines consisted over tens of millions of trips.

The leading barrier to cycling appears to be the intimidation from traffic (Cabinet Office, 2009: 72). Tackling this issue should be a major part of any policies to increase cycle use. In addition CTC believes that this key issue should be one of the indicators by which the success of cycling policies should be measured. Fear and intimidation as a barrier to activities is already measured for public transport accessibility and forms a major part of the national indicator set, as measured through the Place Survey (NI 1-6, 17, 21-23, 27, 37, 41-42, 119, 138-140).

We would like to see a question in the Place Survey on the intimidation from motor traffic as a barrier to cycling (and walking) in local areas.

Detailed results and recommendations from the questionnaire follows. Quotes from the survey are in grey boxes.

What level of cycling should the Plan aim for?

Results from the survey questions indicate that individuals believe that the Plan should be ambitious, with two thirds of respondents agreeing that we should aim at least to double cycling in the next ten years, with the long term aim of making it a normal journey choice for short trips. CTC believes that such a doubling would create benefits to society of at least £3.5 billion (CTC, 2009).

Another 30% called for even more ambitious targets, with several commenting that this would still leave Britain with a very low modal share compared with some of our continental neighbours, and that rates of cycling amongst local authorities are in any case highly variable.

How much investment in cycling should there be?

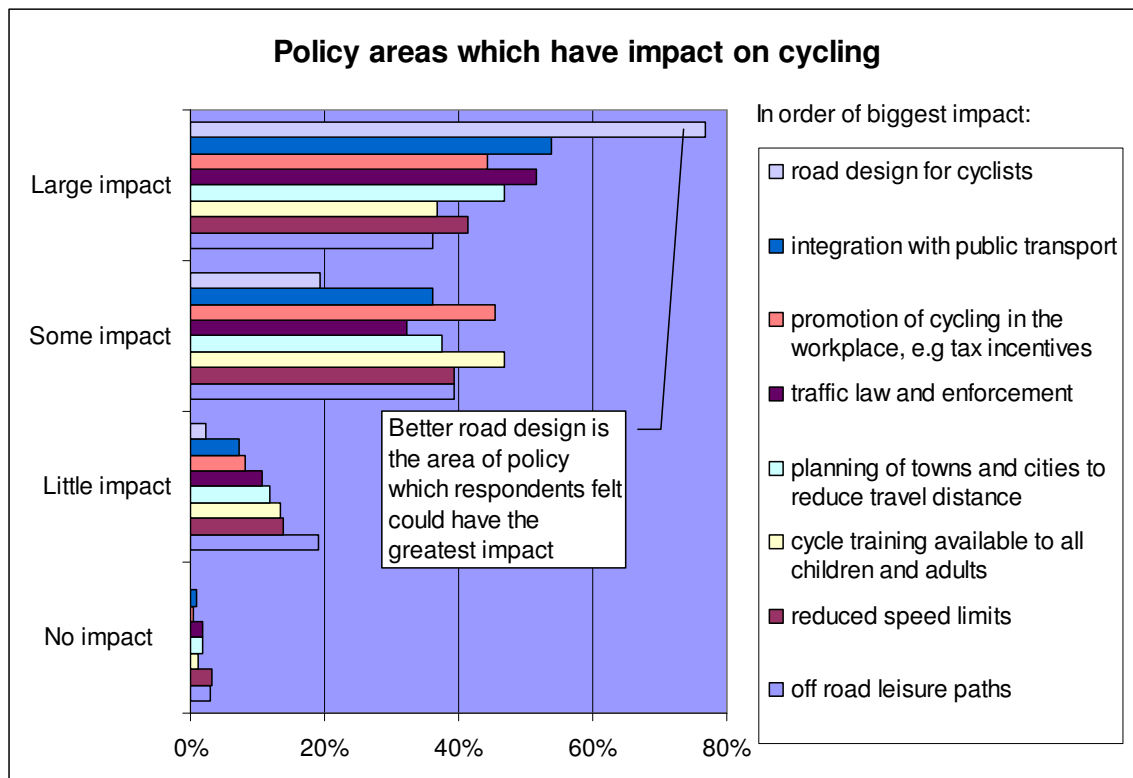
Unsurprisingly only 2.5% of respondents agreed with the idea that investment in cycling should decline in line with other government expenditure. Another 9% suggested investment should remain at the same level, administered by Cycling England (CE).

87% of respondents believed that investment in cycling should rise, but opinions differed on who should administer it, and which schemes should be prioritised. 10% of the total felt that increased investment should be distributed directly to local authorities, with no CE input.

Of the remainder (i.e. those who thought Cycling England’s funding should be increased), 49% felt that the focus of increased investment should be in delivering more comprehensive cycle training, whereas 27% felt that the cycling towns and cities programme should receive the bulk of any increased investment.

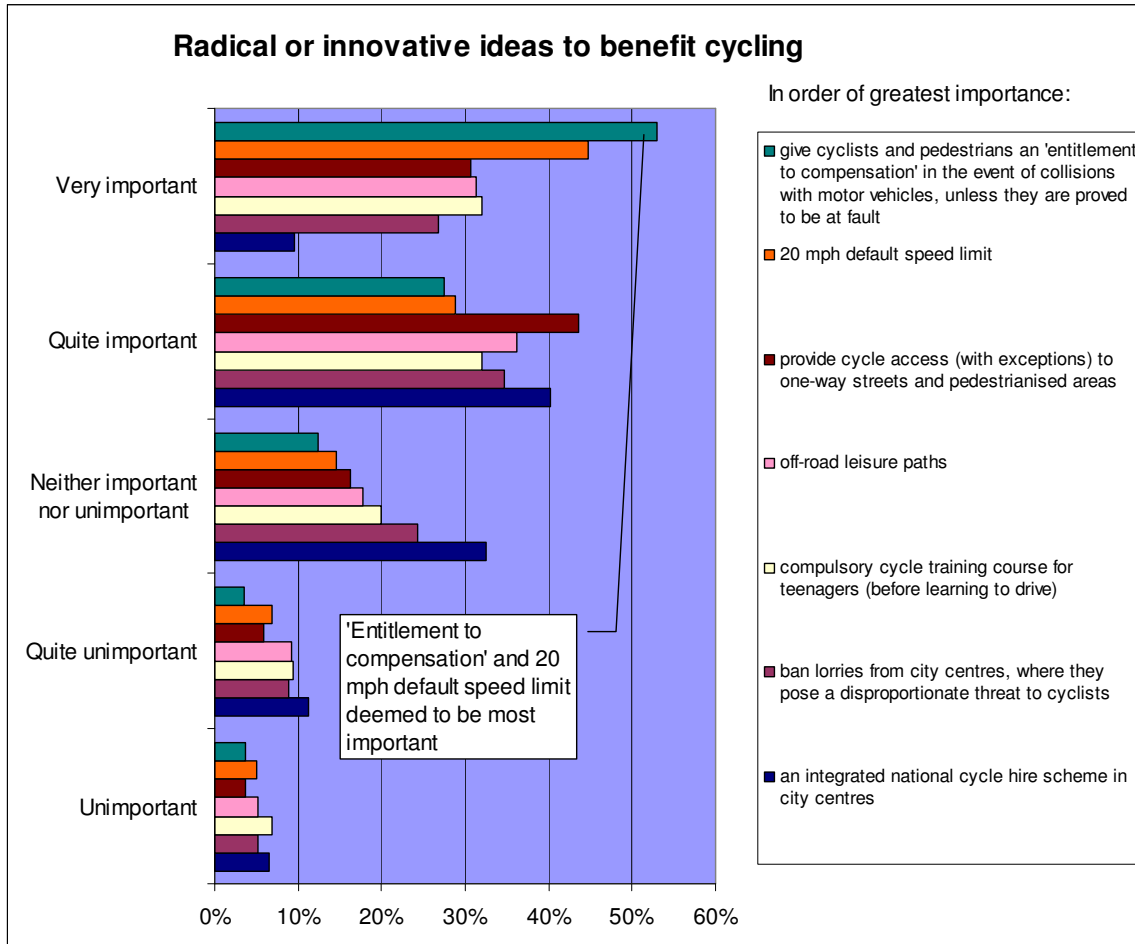
What changes in policy would have most impact?

In questions relating to which aspects of policy would have the greatest impact on cycling levels there was a strong feeling that each of the eight suggested interventions would have either some or a large impact.



Opinions on which ‘iconic’ measures to benefit cycling were also requested. It was suggested that these radical or imaginative solutions may not by themselves substantially increase cycling levels but they might make a big difference to how cycling is perceived and show a strong commitment to cycling.

The idea which gained the most support was that of creating a legal presumption that cyclists and pedestrians would be entitled to compensation in the event of collisions, unless it they were proved to be at fault. Recent media speculation on the subject failed to accurately understand exactly how the system would function and what impact it would have on motorist behaviour/insurance. The idea is outlined in greater detail below.



In addition to the quantitative questions the survey offered respondents the opportunity to share their views on particular matters which they felt were important. Over 2000 individual comments were recorded and analysed.

Clustering these comments into a range of areas gave a clear indication of where people's priorities lay. This gave us an indication of issues which there were strong feelings about and a group of issues which were less frequently mentioned, but are still clearly important. These issues are raised in order of the number of times they were mentioned.

1. Improving the road network for cyclists

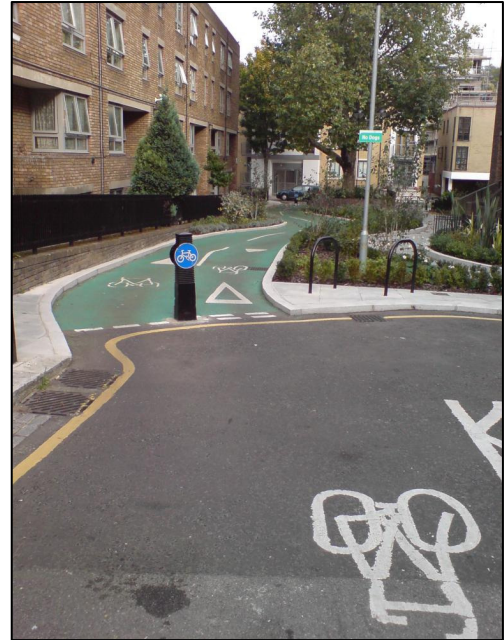
"Cycle paths along main roads in rural areas where there is no suitable alternative quiet route. This is especially important between villages and from village to town."

The largest group of comments – by a very long way – raised issues relating road design. Approximately a third of all comments mentioned this issue, with most calling for more high quality cycling facilities. Many specifically called for cycle paths on rural major roads and for access to schools. There was also a strong

feeling that rural areas suffer serious problems of severance caused by busy roads that are hostile for cyclists.

A significant proportion felt that the need was for greater priority to be given to cycles, whilst at the same time limiting the freedom of movement for motor vehicles. Proposals included allowing cyclists to have two-way access on one-way streets and to turn left on red lights, as well as closing off key streets to motor traffic to provide high quality routes for cyclists.

There were a few comments recommending the closing off of streets on Sundays or greater use of vehicle restriction more generally – such as the Ciclovía events in Bogotá, Colombia, a regular weekly version of the Skyrides pioneered this year.



Recommendation:

- Motor vehicle restrictions in urban areas (“filtered permeability”) to give priority access to cyclists and create routes with low motor traffic volume.

Recommendation:

- Tackle the problems caused by major roads and junctions by ensuring cycle provision is integrated and retrofitted onto the Highways Agency network; and ensuring that they and other highway authorities follow assessment procedures to identify the need for cycle crossings, adjacent or parallel cycle facilities and cycle-friendly junction improvements, with funding identified and prioritised accordingly.

Recommendation:

- Encourage local authorities to identify networks where cycling investment will be prioritised along key corridors for cycle travel linking up the crossings or bypasses of major roads and junctions and other movement barriers, and opening up opportunities for cycle travel through parks and open spaces and other high-quality off-road routes. (These should nonetheless be seen as additional to and not a substitute for the aim of creating safe and attractive conditions throughout the road network – see earlier).

2. Better driver training

"I believe that every person possessing a driving licence should have to go out onto the road on a bike for at least half an hour to experience what it is like being squeezed off the road, intimidated and made to feel as though they have no right to be there."

A strong current among the comments – roughly 10% - related to the need to improve driver behaviour through better, more frequent or cycle-specific driver training. A suggestion that was often repeated was the idea of forcing drivers to undergo a degree of cycle training prior to learning to drive.

Recommendation: *Driver training must include a degree of cycle-awareness. 'Pre-driver' training, currently being developed by the DSA, is a perfect opportunity to give teenagers good quality road awareness training on bikes. This would encourage them to cycle and make them better drivers at the same time.*

Recommendation: *Professional drivers should have a degree of cycle awareness training included in the periodic training required for their Certificate of Professional Competence.*

Recommendation: *Motorists whose licences are revoked and are required to re-sit a driving test should be required to take cycle awareness training as part of the remedial instruction.*

3. Incentives at schools and workplaces

"Remove VAT on bicycles. Schools to encourage cycling through school bike clubs, or school run cycle buses."

Another 9% of responses referred to the need to encourage cycling through incentives. Many mentioned the idea that VAT should be removed from cycles, whilst at the same time increasing taxation on motor transport. There was considerable support for the Cycle to Work scheme, although several mentioned that it wasn't available to everyone, with many employers still not providing it and those in education, out of work or retired unable to obtain the benefits.

Several mentioned the success of projects such as Bike It! or other schemes to incentivise cycling in schools and workplaces.

Recommendation: *The Cycle to Work scheme should continue to be promoted and all employees should have access to it. Similar schemes for those not in employment should be developed to give them access to reduced price cycles.*

Recommendation: *There must be clearly identified funding for activities to encourage cycling, particularly those which involve enabling people to try out cycling e.g. cycle training for targeted groups, Sustrans's Bike It! project (for school pupils), CTC's Bike Club project (for youth groups) or CTC's or Workplace Cycle Challenges (for those in employment). These schemes have extremely high benefit:cost ratios, yet many local authorities struggle to fund them for lack of dedicated revenue funding sources.*

4. Enforcement of and changes to traffic law

"The attitude of motorists is in my mind a major deterrent to encouraging cycling. Touched on but not really addressed is the issue to discourage inconsiderate driving by motorists with regard to cyclists. Only a change in the law can do that."

8% of comments mentioned that road traffic law enforcement was still very poor, with many believing that the hostile road environment from bad driving was a result of a legal framework that allowed bad driving to go unpunished.

Even though the issue had already been raised in the preceding questions, 4% still felt the need to re-iterate the need for a reversal of the burden of proof in the event of crashes between cyclists or pedestrians and motor vehicle users. This 'presumed entitlement to compensation', was prematurely raised as a possible item in the National Cycle Plan in the Sunday Times on the 20th of September.

Pedestrians and cyclists are obviously more likely to come off worse in any collision with a motor vehicle. However they suffer a double injustice if they are then unable to provide reliable evidence to a court of the driver's negligence – often due to memory loss caused by the very injuries they have suffered. Britain is one of just four countries in western Europe which requires them in all cases to prove the driver's negligence before they can obtain compensation (the others being Ireland, Cyprus and Malta).

Creating presumption that the driver's insurance will cover any injury damages would encourage greater care from drivers, giving effect to the Highway Code's provisions which repeatedly stress the need for drivers to pay particular attention to pedestrians' and cyclists' needs. Overall road safety could be expected to improve significantly as a result.

Recommendation: *Better road traffic law enforcement is sorely needed – too few incidents of bad driving are being dealt with adequately by the police. A review of the current framework of road traffic law should be undertaken to determine what the impact of the Road Safety Act 2006 has been and what further changes are required.*

Recommendation: *There should be an assumption that injured pedestrians and cyclists are entitled to compensation from the driver who hit them, unless it is clear that the injury arose from illegal or irresponsible behaviour on the part of the injured party.*

5. 'Normalising' cycling

"Publicity, in the popular press (TV, radio, newspapers) that SELLS cycling as a desirable lifestyle - sexy, fun, quick, cheap, convenient. Just like the car manufacturers do."

Presenting cycling in a way which is appealing, which doesn't emphasise danger and instead associates it with celebrities ("not just Boris and Dave") was commonly stated. Several people suggested TV advertising campaigns supporting cycling, others suggested "subtle media manipulation" to "enhance cycling chic". This reflects the fact that cycling is still perceived as alien to many non-cyclists, associated either with 'sport' or with law-breaking activities in urban areas.

As well as comments about normalising cycling and not emphasising danger, dozens of responses urged that Government should neither make cycle helmets compulsory nor even promote them. It is perhaps surprising that we received just one comment in favour of helmet promotion, and none in support of legislation.

Recommendation: *Care must be taken with all public presentations of cycling to ensure that it is presented in an attractive and aspirational manner. Images of cyclists should accurately reflect the diversity of participants, including both utility and leisure cyclists, and a mix of people with and without helmets (bearing in mind that the majority choose to ride without them).*

6. Better integration with public transport

"Much more reliable and simpler access for bikes onto trains."

7% of respondents suggested better integration with public transport – even though this had already been raised as a policy area which needed changing. Nearly all these comments related to cycle carriage ON trains, not better parking at stations. There were also many requests to improve cycle access on buses, both long distance coaches, rail replacement buses and on local buses.

CTC strongly welcomes the recent announcement on better cycle parking, hire and storage facilities at stations. This will be of great benefit particularly for those who use the rail network for commuting or other regular trips. Whilst such provision will doubtless account for the majority of any future growth of combined cycling and rail trips, we nonetheless firmly believe that the ability to carry cycles particularly for recreational travel is also an important benefit, not just to cyclists

themselves but also to rail operators (by encouraging use of otherwise under-used off-peak and weekend trains) and to the rural and tourist economies. Moreover a significant number of people with disabilities use cycles as mobility aids, enabling them to travel independently without depending on lifts provided by others. It is ironic that they are often told they are prevented from travelling on train services as they are not allowed to use the disabled spaces for their cycles.

Space for cycle carriage needs to be designed in at the outset of commissioning any new or refurbished rolling stock, otherwise the opportunity is lost for several decades. We strongly urge that plans for new or refurbished rolling stock – in particular the forthcoming Intercity Express Programme (IEP) – should incorporate space for cycles. This should be seen in the wider context of ensuring greater flexibility of train design to allow not only for peak-hour loadings but also for the carriage of other large items of luggage at quieter times when recreational travel often predominates.

Recommendation: *Secure, well designed and sensibly located cycle parking should be the norm at all rail stations and other public transport interchanges, together with repair and hire facilities at larger stations and those with high demand for recreational cycle hire. New rolling stock needs to be commissioned with some dedicated space for cycles, together with additional space which can be used flexibly by cyclists, wheelchair users, for luggage or buggies as required. High quality 'cycle hubs', such as those promised by the Secretary of State for 10 railway stations, will make a big difference but need careful planning to ensure their long-term sustainability.*

7. More and better cycle parking

"Better bike centres/parking in towns and cities. Secure, undercover, basic repair facilities and washroom/showers as part of transport hub."

Another 7% of responses suggested that more cycle parking was needed, especially in built-up areas. Better on-street cycle parking, stronger enforcement of cycle theft and improved residential standards to ensure cycle spaces are provided were all suggested as interventions that can improve conditions for cyclists.



Many also called specifically for city-centre or transport interchange cycle hubs, such as that mentioned above. These facilities already exist in some places, but few are able to survive under current market conditions without considerable subsidy. Good examples include the Grand Arcade cycle park in Cambridge –

<http://www.camcycle.org.uk/resources/cycleparking/grandarcade/>

Or the Bike Park in Leicester - <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/transport-traffic/transportpolicy/sustainable-team-homepage/cycling-in-leicester/bike-park/>

Each provide free space to store bikes, changing facilities in addition to a bike shop.

Recommendation: *More cycle parking, both for residences and at destinations, is required to reduce the problems of cycle theft. Guidance is required on recommended levels of cycle parking to be provided at different destination types, particularly for use for those seeking to secure cycle parking in the context of development proposals.*

8. Cycle facilities for those with disabilities

“Make cycle paths accessible to all - change the design of certain gates or barriers so disabled cyclists that are unable to dismount their cycles can pass.”

Many cyclists were keen to point out that cycle paths need to be designed inclusively. There were particular concerns about the proliferation of barriers on paths which, although designed to prevent motor vehicle access also blocked access to hand-cyclists or users with mobility impairments.

Recommendation: *All cycle facilities must be made be suitable for all users, including handcyclists, wheelchair users and tandemists. Obstructions such as kissing gates or motorcycle barriers must be removed.*

9. Other issues – maintenance and speed

Additional comments included the need for public authorities to show greater commitment to cycling, better road and cycle path maintenance, removing car parking and tackling the specific problem of close vehicle overtaking distances. 3% of comments reiterated the need for reduced urban speed limits – which was already the issue with the second-highest demand in the previous question.

Recommendation:

- Strengthen the guidance to local authorities on 20mph speed limits and zones. The assumption should be that these will cover the majority of the urban street network, hence councils should be required to identify those major roads where higher speeds are justified.

Recommendation:

- Speed limit setting guidance should also reverse the presumption of a 60mph speed limit on rural single carriageways, since this is an inappropriately high speed for the majority of rural lanes.

Recommendation:

The Government should issue guidance on cycle-friendly road maintenance procedures. This should cover

- The provision of phone email contacts for reporting carriageway, cycle path and lighting defects.*
- Appropriate standards for the inspection and repair of highway, cycle track and lighting defects.*
- Appropriate standards for winter maintenance of roads and off-road routes used by cyclists.*
- Standards for removal of vegetation, debris and other hazards or obstructions to free passage or adequate sightlines on rights of way and off-road cycle routes.*
- Addressing the needs of cyclists in all roadworks (whether undertaken by the highway authority or statutory undertakers), including mimicking the problems of road narrowings, defective surfaces and diversions, and ensuring the reinstatement of good surfaces and all cycle markings.*

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