

GET BRITAIN CYCLING

Written evidence from the Campaign to Protect Rural England for the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group inquiry

December 2012

Introduction

1. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group (APPCG) inquiry entitled 'Get Britain Cycling'. CPRE fights for a better future for the English countryside. We work locally and nationally to protect, shape and enhance a beautiful, thriving countryside for everyone to value and enjoy.
2. A key element of CPRE's *Vision 2026 for the Countryside*, which describes the England CPRE hopes to see in its centenary year, is for more people to walk and cycle. This is not simply to reduce the impact of transport on the countryside but also because cycling is one of the best ways to get out and appreciate the countryside.
3. We are also keen to improve conditions for and increase cycling in towns and cities. Less land would be needed for roads and parking, and this would also reduce air and noise pollution, while cutting congestion makes urban areas more liveable. As a result we campaign on a wide range of issues concerning cycling, from making it safer to cycle on country lanes to considering the needs of cycling in planning reforms and the design of High Speed 2.
4. This written evidence addresses the following:
 - why making rural areas more cycle-friendly is important and should not continue to be marginalised;
 - an update of our February 2012 Parliamentary briefing for the cycling safety debate that set out immediate actions for the Government to take to improve cycling; and
 - a break-down of recommendations for action needed at each level of government.

Why rural areas matter for cycling

5. CPRE supports the 'cyclesafe' campaign organised by The Times but believes there is just as strong a case to make it easier and safer to cycle in rural areas for the following reasons:
 - Although only 20% of people live in rural areas (defined by Defra as areas outside settlements with more than 10,000 people), the majority of the land is rural and

urban dwellers may wish to cycle in or through rural areas, whether for access to green space or to commute to jobs outside towns;

- Leisure cycling can help secure the viability of rural community facilities, without some of the downsides of rural tourism such as congestion around honey pot tourist sites¹;
- Leisure cycling in the countryside can be a gateway activity to cycling for everyday travel in towns;
- Rural roads are where many of our cycling athletes train to become champions;
- The risk rate of being killed cycling on rural A roads is over 15 times greater than average and half of all cycling fatalities occur on rural roads, despite most cycling being in urban areas; and
- There are fewer public transport options in rural areas and, although car ownership is higher, informal research by CPRE suggests that during the day as many as half of people in rural areas do not have access to a car, where for example the bread-winner has taken it to reach their place of employment.

Immediate priorities

6. In February 2012, CPRE published a Parliamentary briefing for the cycling safety debate that set out immediate actions for the Government to take to improve cycling, particularly in relation to rural areas. The briefing is attached to this evidence.

7. The draft Setting Local Speed Limits circular was published in the summer and, though there has been some progress in the policy in terms of it promoting 20 mph on urban roads and 40 mph on minor rural roads, many problems remain. In particular the policy creates a 'chicken and egg' situation, recommending lowering speed limits only where there are already many people walking and cycling or a history of collisions. The final circular is due out imminently and we are willing to provide further analysis of it for the inquiry.

8. The Department for Transport (DfT) has not taken forward CPRE's suggestions in relation to reform of traffic sign regulations, for example the trialling of cycle streets and making home zone and quiet lane designations regulatory, the approach used on the continent. Currently they are simply advisory (technically known as 'informatory') signs that do not provide any legal priority to non-motorised users. Likewise we have had no success with our proposal to reduce the regulatory burden for local authorities to open up streets to two-way cycling, which is the default in neighbouring countries such as France and Belgium. There also seems to have been no progress in bringing into force the part of the Traffic Management Act 2004 that would allow authorities to enforce cycle facilities and lorry management zones.

9. On a positive note, there has been a consultation to increase enforcement options against careless and inconsiderate driving through a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). In order to maximise effectiveness, we believe the introduction of these FPNs should be tied in with a national

1 For example see the Electric Bike Network which CPRE Hampshire helped launch in the South Downs National Park earlier this year: www.southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/news/take-an-electric-bike-for-a-spin-in-the-south-downs

education campaign to change perceptions, since many drivers do not appear to appreciate that cutting up vulnerable road users, for example, is illegal.

10. Defra consulted over the summer about reforming Rights of Way but the consultation was very technical and missed the opportunity to simplify the many types of path and increase cycle access. The lack of integration - both legal and physical - of cycling tracks within the rights of way network remains a barrier that needs to be tackled through regulatory reform.

11. We have met the Highways Agency to raise our concerns about its lack of action on cycling. The Agency has confirmed it has no specific budget for vulnerable road user schemes, has refused to publish any list of potential schemes and has not helped provide the necessary evidence base in relation to cycling for the forthcoming national roads strategy.

12. On the other hand we have welcomed the DfT announcements of new funding for cycling safety and the broadening out of the funding criteria so they are no longer focused on junctions, as on rural roads many of the problems are between junctions where vehicle speeds are at their most lethal. Long term funding and planning are needed, however, if the UK is to close the cycling infrastructure gap with northern continental countries.

Mainstreaming cycling at various levels of government

13. If the share of journeys cycled is to increase in England from 2% to 10% - a middle ranking level on the continent - let alone 20%+ as in the Netherlands and Denmark, co-ordinated action and ambition across different departments and levels of government will be required over the long-term.

14. A major issue is whether cycling plans and funding should be separate and dedicated or integrated within broader transport and land use planning. The Dutch emphasise the need for cycling to be integrated and there is a risk that a stand-alone plan may be eye-catching but lack buy-in and follow-through. Given the very low starting point, there is at present a strong case for a national cycling plan and dedicated funding, so long as it is integrated properly with action at the local and national level. Such a plan should set out a vision of how things might be done differently at all levels, with cycling stepping up to different levels of modal share, e.g. 5%, 10%, 20%. It should also encourage local areas to set their own cycling targets as higher shares are realistic in some areas.

Departmental level

15. The forthcoming consultation on a national roads strategy will be a touchstone to see if cycling is being mainstreamed or not. There is a risk that a focus on (existing) road users, predominantly motor vehicle users, is skewing consideration as to how major roads should be managed and operated. How would the needs of cycling, for example, be prioritised if there is to be (shadow) tolling for trunk roads operated by private companies? Investment and policy is focusing on providing for predicted increases in motor traffic, albeit mainly at pinch points, with the aim of unlocking economic growth. An alternative approach would be to set an ambitious target for cycling modal share and then work out how much this might reduce motor traffic and what infrastructure is needed on and around the major road network to cater for this modal shift.

16. It should not be forgotten - and it usually is - that increasing capacity, including even signal time at junctions, for motor traffic will discourage the growth of cycling: 'Given constraints on urban space, the provision of new roads or vehicle lanes will seldom be an option in cities, and evidence suggests that such new capacity can in any case rapidly release suppressed demand, making it still more difficult to encourage public transport, walking and cycling.' (page 20 in DfT, *Future of Urban Transport*, 2009).

17. Even though people travelling by cycle need about a sixth of the road space needed for cars, capacity is defined in terms of motor vehicle throughput and congestion in terms of delay for and queuing of motor vehicles. Misinterpretation of the Network Management Duty contained in the Traffic Management Act 2004 - usually that local authorities are legally required 'to keep the [motor] traffic moving' - has been a major barrier to reallocating road space to cycling. New statutory guidance is needed to highlight the benefits in terms of reducing congestion by increasing modal share of cycling.

18. Continental experience highlights the importance of good land use planning for mainstreaming cycling. By having what the Germans call 'towns of short trips', everything is in easy reach by bike. It is important that cycling is not simply promoted but that cycling (and walking) are made easier than driving. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is particularly weak in relation to transport. Although one of its core planning principles is to encourage 'the fullest possible' use of walking, cycling and public transport, the commitment to sustainable travel is heavily caveated and the condensing of policy has lost a lot of important detail. Additional guidance should be published by the DfT to help local planning authorities plan effectively for high modal shares for cycling and other sustainable travel.

19. The other side of the coin from providing safe and convenient segregated routes along busy roads is to civilise shared use on minor road networks in rural and urban areas. Although there has been local authority action to limit motor vehicle speeds levels, such as through lorry management zones and other examples of 'filtered permeability', regulatory change is needed too to give local authorities the same tools their continental counterparts have. The NPPF highlights the home zones and the Secretary of State gave support to 'quiet lanes' at [CPRE's annual lecture](#) in November. Yet all reference to them has been removed from national guidance on speed limits and no research is being undertaken in relation to including them in the revision of traffic sign regulations due in 2015.

20. Recommendations:

- integrate long term funding for cycling as part of a cross-departmental vision for cycling;
- mainstream cycling and high modal share for cycling into roads strategy consultation;
- publish new guidance on maximising sustainable travel in land use planning;
- update Network Management Duty statutory guidance and provide capacity and congestion metrics that value rather than ignore walking and cycling;
- take measures immediately to set out how changes to traffic sign regulations could give non-motorised road users legal priority in cycle streets, quiet lanes and home zones.

Sub-national

21. The abolition of the regional tier of government and planning and the establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and introduction in early 2013 of Local Transport Boards (LTBs) may initially appear to be of little relevance to cycling. LTBs will, however, be responsible for prioritising local transport investment and in some areas may go beyond this to have other roles, such as control of local rail services.

22. In August 2012, the DfT announced that LTBs would be responsible for allocating £1.1bn of local transport spending in England per year after 2015. This is already about six times more than the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and in addition schemes are likely to take match funding from other sources such as Local Transport Block Funding (the main source of funding for road safety and cycling), Community Infrastructure Levy, New Homes Bonus and long-term borrowing. So the decisions taken are likely to have a major impact on investment, planning and transport trends in local areas.

23. There is limited information about LEPs' transport priorities but those that have set out detail - such as the South East LEP - have long lists of road-building schemes and a blind spot towards cycling. Although some schemes may involve a very small proportion of funding having some benefit to cycling, there are none that do so explicitly. Whether LTBs act differently to LEPs, for example due to the requirement in DfT guidance for LTBs to have a majority of councillors on them, is yet to be seen but there is a real risk LEP priorities will form the basis of LTB deliberations, particularly given the political rhetoric.

24. A different approach to option generation, which in some cases seems to be based on road wish-lists, is needed. Area wide programmes to retrofit safe multi-user paths along busy roads and to stations, and to provide cycle parking at stations across LTBs, could harness economies of scale and would be the necessary foundation for continental levels of cycling.

Recommendations:

- DfT to strongly encourage all LTBs to draw up area wide cycling schemes as part of option generation;
- DfT to encourage transparency by LTBs, showing how much of their spending benefits cycling as well as highlighting potential negative impacts, such as taking funding away from the Local Transport Block.

Local authorities

25. While there are some excellent new cycle facilities and initiatives at the local authority level, they very much remain the exception not the rule. Despite the huge institutional and significant physical changes needed to mainstream cycling at a time of financial constraints, there seems to be a certain degree of blind faith in localism. The Welsh Active Travel Bill has been held up as an example of what is needed in England. The central duty differs little, however, from that in section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to improve the rights of way network. Due to a failure to prioritise resources, this has had little practical impact.

26. CPRE has amended the 'ladder of interventions' (attached) contained in the DfT Local Transport White Paper, to consider the relationship between central and local government as opposed to individuals. This provides a framework to consider the degree of influence or

compulsion needed and there is a case for the DfT to have some ability to reject Local Transport Plans that fail to plan or deliver for more people cycling, more often and more safely.

27. Although London's 'Cycling Revolution' has been the most high profile attempt to grow cycling, CPRE's analysis is that the setting of the target of 5% of journeys by 2026 is fundamentally flawed, and lacks ambition - see [Backpedalling London's cycling revolution](#) (attached). The focus of investment has led to demographic trends worsening, with cycling becoming increasingly dominated by white, middle aged males in central London. The potential to increase cycling in outer London and out into the Green Belt has been missed.

Recommendations:

- Adopt ladder of interventions to frame the limits of localism in national policy, including giving DfT power to 'call in' Local Transport Plans;
- Encourage local authorities to set ambitious cycling targets and to remind them of the need to carry out Equality Impact Assessments to ensure cycling attracts a wider demographic.

Parishes, towns and neighbourhoods

28. Some of the most positive cycling initiatives have come from the grassroots and, with the majority of cycling trips being less than three miles, community level action is very appropriate. In particular:

- People are more likely to be influenced by messaging from their peers rather than local or national government;
- Making the first part of a journey easy to cycle is essential if we are to nudge behaviour to make cycling the norm rather than a rarity; and
- Local knowledge about barriers to cycling and monitoring of maintenance issues is very useful.

29. For the DfT, however, localism seems to extend to local authority level and go no further. Local Transport Plans often set out general policies and proposals for larger settlements but leave rural areas out. With about a third of all parish and town councils as members, CPRE has a close interest in, and has through the CLG funded Supporting Neighbourhoods in Planning Project been helping communities develop, neighbourhood plans.

30. CPRE is launching a Transport Toolkit in early 2013 to highlight best practice. Ideas for neighbourhood level action highlighted in this toolkit include: Community Speed Watch, e-bike pools, community travel plans, personalised travel planning, creation of safe routes, creating local cycling maps and cycle parking. While there is a lot of good will and volunteer time available, funding is needed too. A proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is supposed to be reserved for neighbourhoods but CLG is yet to consult on the necessary regulations.

Recommendations:

- DfT and local authorities to promote and support neighbourhood level action to improve conditions for cycling, such as CPRE's Transport Toolkit;
- CLG to publish regulations to enable CIL to fund neighbourhood level initiatives.

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