

British Cycling written evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Cycling and Walking evidence session in support of the Governments development of a new cycling and walking investment strategy. To accompany the oral evidence provided by Chris Boardman, British Cycling Policy Advisor and Transport Commissioner for Greater Manchester.

The written evidence will take the form of a transcript of the oral evidence that Chris presented a portion of to the committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

“Let me start my input with a large measure of optimism and positivity. What a moment of opportunity this is for the future of Active and Accessible Travel choices in this county. Last year’s publication of [Gear Change](#) was a moment of celebration for all of us who have campaigned to see active travel taken seriously within transport policy.

We have seen equal ambition from the Governments of Wales and Scotland, things are happening nationally and regionally which gives me great hope for the future. There is real momentum behind walking and cycling, we have a Prime Minister who gets it and is a man of action and regional Mayors who share his enthusiasm and want to see rapid, transformational change, so that people finally have real choice about how they chose to move around.

Let us be clear that there is no need to seek to make driving less attractive, we simply need to make active travel more attractive but if you need to take from the first activity to better enable the latter, then we must be prepared to do so, as long as we are delivering the high quality, inclusive alternatives that people can use safely and easily.

I am now a few weeks into my new expanded role as Transport Commissioner for Greater Manchester. The 4 years I have spent focusing on active travel gave me great insight into how the system works, the interface between politics and operations, as well as a belief that Greater Manchester (and other places) can, if it chooses, really lead the way on this journey and show how a viable and attractive alternative to driving can be put in place and at the necessary pace.

Active travel is a vital piece of the solution, but it will only work if supported by an affordable and integrated public transport network. Like every city in the UK, Greater Manchester must meet its clean air and carbon reduction commitments. And after just a few weeks in the job it is abundantly clear that we cannot deliver it without a fundamental shift in how we travel.

I am going to attempt to support this evidence session buy returning to the summer of 2019. I and the other Cycling and Walking Commissioners from city regions and Nations across the country, sent a letter to the then Transport Secretary Chris Grayling asking for practical support to help us to better do our jobs.

Our 5 asks of the Government were:

1. Commit to long-term devolved funding.
2. A political commitment to minimum quality levels.
3. Enable the local retention of fixed penalty notices to fund road danger reduction measures.
4. Enable us to innovate by keeping road traffic regulations under review.
5. Transport investment decisions should account for the true cost of car use to society.

I still believe that these are the right practical ways to help the Government plan for an effective and targeted investment strategy that can deliver quickly and with ambition.

Let us look at what progress has been made so far and what we have not yet started.

**Funding** - £2bn is a fantastic commitment, but it is not the long-term settlement that Local Government needs across England. Indeed, the short-term bidding process is hampering delivery this year. We absolutely need the next investment strategy to commit to long term funding so that councils can invest in the specialist expertise necessary to develop and deliver high quality 'active travel' schemes. I know how hard it is for Local Government to develop and then hold on to talented people. A long-term strategic funding settlement that allows Councils to build effective teams is vital for the delivery of high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure. Gear Change has delivered the ambition, we now need the investment strategy to deliver the money and it needs to be a transformational bold level of investment.

**Design standards** – LTN 1/20 is excellent. In Greater Manchester we have invested in accessible training for Highways teams in our 10 Districts so that they understand how the standards support them in their roles, how to use them most effectively and most important of all how to engage with the communities they serve so that change is received positively. It is excellent to hear that the DfT are now replicating this training for councils across the country, and I hope that my team at TfGM can support them by sharing our experiences over the last 3 years.

But what about standards for walking and wheelchair users and public transport users? There is an urgent need for continual review and improvement. It is wonderful that the Manual for Streets is being reviewed and a new updated version planned. When it is published it must have the same fanfare and promotion that LTN 1/20 had, and the standards must be enforced with the same rigor and accessible training delivered widely. This is especially true for the building of new developments. It is vital that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government ensures that his teams and his agencies take this work seriously and engage with the DfT closely. I would like to see that vital cross department work specifically outlined in the next investment strategy as it has been in Gear Change.

**Fixed penalty fines** – We have sadly seen no movement on this critical issue. The case we made 2 years ago remains. Significant cuts to road policing budgets have led to a dramatic reduction in operations and a marked increase in road danger and casualties. These traffic offences could be more effectively enforced if revenue from fixed penalty notices from road offences were kept locally and reinvested in road safety activity in the community where the offences are taking place.

This approach would not only give local police forces the means to improve road safety, but it would generate public support for such activity, where funds generated can be seen to be invested back into their community. Ultimately, the aim would be to remove the need for major enforcement activity when casualty rates are drastically reduced through the provision of self-enforcing road infrastructure and road user behaviour.

This strategy is already being utilised in Scotland where 19+ local authorities are reinvesting the income in not only enforcement activities but public transport, car clubs, parks maintenance, and park and rides.

We urgently need a visible enforcement presence on our road network. Sadly, one of the very negative impacts of the Pandemic Lockdowns was that dangerous speeding by too many drivers rocketed and that dangerous trend has continued as our roads have filled up again with cars. English Councils urgently need new devolved powers to police their urban and rural roads, raise funding and keep people safe.

Closely aligned with this (and brilliantly championed by Cycling UK) is the need for the comprehensive review of road traffic offences and penalties, as [promised back in 2014](#). People need to both be safe and feel safe on our roads and that requires the most dangerous drivers to be banned from ever driving again. Driving is a privilege not a right and if people abuse that privilege, then it should be taken away from them.

**Traffic regulations** – Sadly, this is one of the most frustrating areas where we have not seen any movement. The very welcome review of the Highway code will we hope if delivered in full be very helpful but need legal and engineering solutions now to deliver the required infrastructure and to adapt to a rapidly changing post COVID world.

As we stated 2 years ago if we are to encourage more people to walk and cycle, we need a framework that enables us to explore new solutions and not hinder progressive thinking. We need to be open about where the regulations are not delivering a truly high-quality experience for people walking and cycling.

This should include looking at ways to improve pedestrian crossing provision such as simple zebra crossings at side roads or reviewing guidance on walking speeds to help local authorities make the case for extending pedestrian crossing times at signalised junctions. Importantly give Local Authorities the powers and the funding they need to lower the speed limits easily and quickly on many dangerous roads, urban and rural.

Why not also review our National Speed Limits, we live in a very different world from the one where 60MPH and 30MPH were considered appropriate. Our roads are crowded and often in poor repair, if we want to tackle dangerous speeding lets be bold and make everyone slow down. Many such ideas are in regular use across the world including devolved nations of the UK but are not currently sanctioned in England.

We would ask that traffic regulations, be kept under constant review to ensure they meet the needs of cities and communities across the country. City regions like Greater Manchester are eager to work collaboratively with the Department for Transport to update road traffic regulations and, with government backing, pilot ideas with real promise. Let Local Government be the testing area for new ideas, let us be brave and learn by trying. If the Pandemic has taught us anything it is that we do things quickly if we want to and that a pilot is not permanent and can be easily taken out again if proven not to work.

**True costs of motoring** – We are living through a climate crisis. The Government has recognised this and later this year we host the UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference COP 26. We know that transport is one of the biggest contributors of dangerous greenhouse gasses to the atmosphere and that toxic air is killing thousands of people each year and stunting the lives of children.

Currently, economic appraisal models do not take full account of the negative consequences of making private car use easier, nor do they take full account of the benefits of walking and cycling on our health, wellbeing, and environment. This approach to appraising the value of transport investment has led to systemic undervaluation and underinvestment in sustainable transport.

If the full impact of developing for private car use, particularly in urban areas, is factored into transport investment decisions, sustainable modes would return far greater levels of public benefits. We ask that the Department for Transport and the Treasury change their appraisal methods to focus on efficient use of road space and total people movement, rather than being based around capacity and journey times for vehicles.

This vital change is needed despite the move toward more electric vehicles. We know that electric cars and vans still pollute, and their use does nothing to tackle congestion, noise road danger and population wide inactivity.

I am sure that other people giving evidence today will agree that one way to achieve this is to resurrect the **Traffic Reduction Act** (a summary here [SN00420.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)).

Several regions have set their own traffic reduction targets, so we are in a different world to 1997 when this was first tried. Very simply this would mean that every Local Authority would have to set targets and report on them.

I am told by people working in Transport at the time, the first version of the bill was fantastic, but then got subsequently watered down and eventually was disregarded as unachievable.

Sadly, the Traffic Management Act has had the opposite effect by introducing network management duty which made it virtually impossible to negatively affect car use. Maybe this is an example of the brave and bold reaction we need to the Prime Ministers call to action in Gear Change.”