

APPG ENQUIRY INTO CYCLING & WALKING INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2021
SUBMISSION BY THE TRANSPORT SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP OF THE
FACULTY OF PUBLIC HEALTH

- **About Us**

The Faculty of Public Health of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom is the body within the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges which has responsibility for public health specialist practice. As such it is the major professional body for consultants in public health (including Directors of Public Health). Our charitable objects are to promote knowledge in the field of public health, to assure the highest possible standards of professional competence and practice, and to act as an authoritative body for the purpose of consultation and advocacy concerning public health. Our Transport Special Interest Group is a member of the Partnership for Active Travel, Transport & Health, cooperates closely with the Transport & Health Science Group (some of whose information we have used with consent in this evidence) and seeks to apply the Faculty's objects in the field of transport. Our members employed in local government are at the forefront of the contributions local government can make to health and hence are important advocates for active travel.

- **Targets.**

We would like to see more ambitious targets. The 1 in 6 deaths which arise from inadequate physical activity could be substantially reduced if the substantial majority of the population walked or cycled every day for at least ten minutes. We would like the UK first to catch up with and then to keep pace with the most successful active travel communities in the world, such as the Netherlands or Copenhagen.

- **Overall level of funding.**

The experience of cities which have successfully made walking and cycling a substantial component of their travel plans is that expenditure of £25-£30 per capita per annum is needed, equating for England to about £7.5bn over a Parliament (plus the Barnett consequential for the devolved nations). This is in addition to money needed for backlog maintenance.

It is important that funding is secure over a multi-year settlement and not changed from year to year.

The Government is still committed to roadbuilding schemes. Most road schemes would not meet cost/benefit criteria without adding in a substantial element of benefit for reduction of congestion but it is now clear that new roads only reduce congestion temporarily; they attract additional traffic instead, by uncovering unmet demands for

relocation. Much of the money committed to roadbuilding would be better spent on active travel and public transport.

- **Capacity.**

You ask *“Do local authorities and other bodies have the capacity and skills needed to spend the funding allocations required to meet the Government’s targets (or any new ones)?”*

The first point we would make is that, as a result of the reductions in public health grant, specialist public health capacity in many local authorities has been reduced, limiting the capacity of public health specialists to spend time on advocating for a higher priority for travel.

Secondly, local authorities vary considerably in the extent to which their transport staff have taken on board the requirements of the new transport objectives.

Transport planning needs to move from thinking about movement of vehicles to thinking about movement of people and then it needs to take a further step and think about the kinds of placemaking that will promote active travel and minimise motorised traffic. An example of the kind of outdated professionalism that needs to change is a local authority which turned down a proposal for a car-free development because it did not meet the normal requirements for car parking provision. Highways engineers who routinely think about cars first and other road users second are another example. On the other hand, some local authorities have adopted excellent strategies focused on placemaking and real adherence to prioritising active travel.

Thirdly there is a general reluctance to make use of innovative street designs, which in part results from professional traditions but also from the nature of official street design guidance. This is unfortunate as they can be cheaper than traditional methods. In St. Louis they use large stone balls as obstacles for traffic calming. In New Zealand they encourage innovative street design and have tested various methods of encouraging drivers to give way to pedestrians finding that narrowing the road and painting stripes works as well as a zebra crossing. In Calgary they have used public art to make underpasses more inviting and have used public art actually on the street surface to encourage community use and separate cycle lanes from vehicular lanes. In the Netherlands car parking nose to kerb is used as an obstacle in traffic calming whilst living streets are designed by the residents who are encouraged to make provision for parking, for play and for community use, with the carriageway being merely the gaps between the obstacles. These methods are more effective and much cheaper than the methods commonly used in the UK.

You ask *If not, how can this capacity be boosted, and how quickly can CWIS spending be ramped up?*

We suggest that an allocation of £20 per capita per annum be indicatively allocated to each local authority with provisions to bid for an additional sum of up to £10. However, the allocation should only be released to be spent on a plan agreed with Active Travel England. Active Travel England should have default powers to spend the money itself where the local authority fails to produce an acceptable plan and for that purpose should be able to exercise any of the powers of a highways authority.

You ask *“What should be the role of Active Travel England? What resources will it need to fulfil this role?”*

Firstly, we would make the point that it is important there is a public health input into Active Travel England, with public health representation on its Board and public health specialists who have a clear role in its decision-making processes.

Active Travel England needs to be

- a regulator of transport strategies (for example, by controlling the release of funding in the way we have suggested above), for which purpose it will need a group of staff, perhaps drawn from the civil service, able to carry out this function
- a source of expertise and guidance, for which purpose it will need appropriate experts
- an advocate able to speak for active travel in public debate, for which purpose it will need a policy staff, probably drawn from a third sector background
- If it is to have default powers, as we suggested above, it will also need to have the project management capacity to exercise these.

- **Breakdown of funding.**

You ask *“What should CWIS 2 funding be spent on – i.e. what programmes or initiatives should be funded?”*

The priorities for funding should be

- The creation of complete cycling networks. According to Metcalfe’s Law (which approximates to reality, although it is not precise due to certain discontinuities) the utility of a network is proportional to the square of its size. Accordingly, one 100-mile network is sixteen times more useful than four 25-mile networks. Funding should be focused on creating and linking networks not on isolated schemes.
- Blocking rat runs with barriers which selectively allow the passage of pedestrians, cyclists, buses, emergency vehicles, residents of the immediate

local area and some other special types of traffic but do not allow the passage of ordinary traffic from outside the immediate neighbourhood. This would open up scope for community use of the street and would often create a long length of quiet street for cycling.

- Green attractive pedestrian routes, in which routes through parks or other greenspace would be linked by green streets, using street trees, gardens extending into the street, climbing plants on buildings and patches of green space. Research has shown that people will walk further along such routes.
- Cycle parking and cycle hubs
- Attractive pedestrian crossings where roads sever communities or pedestrian routes
- Investment in the train/cycle combination, including the provision of cycle vans on all passenger trains (which Cal Train in Northern California has shown to be highly successful)

You ask *“How much capital and how much revenue?”*

The initial need is predominantly for capital to create these networks and for funding to publicise the facilities that are created, but as time passes the balance will shift towards a need for revenue to maintain them.

You ask *“How much of this capital and revenue should go to transport/highway authorities, to Active Travel England, to the voluntary sector, to Highways England and HS2 Ltd, etc, and how much should be spent by government directly?”*

There should be an allocation to the National Cycle Network and an allocation to improve canal towpaths. Highways England should receive an allocation to improve pedestrian and cycle crossings of trunk roads, and a similar allocation should be made to Great British Railways to reduce the community severance effect of railways. There should be an allocation to Great British Railways to provide cycle vans on all passenger trains. The rest of the money should go to Active Travel England, some of it to support national promotional campaigns but most of it to support the local programme funding which we have already described. Consultation with stakeholders should be a requirement for funding of local programmes and there would be capacity within the local programmes for third sector involvement.

You ask *“How can government maximise the opportunities for its funding allocations to leverage in additional funding from other sources?”*

Social prescribing has an important role in promoting active travel.

There are many co-benefits to active travel and these need to be recognised in order to tap appropriate funding.

- **Public and political acceptability.**

Opinion polls show that the majority support schemes such as lower speeds and low traffic neighbourhoods. Unfortunately, the minority who do not are organised, vociferous and fact-averse. They need to be challenged.

- **Behaviour change.**

You ask *“What combination of schemes and policies will provide the basis for a substantial and lasting shift towards active travel?”*

Most people do not choose to use a car. They do not perceive a choice because, outside London, the alternatives simply are not there. We need comprehensive cycle networks, walking networks and public transport networks. They need to be well-publicised.

The attractive lifestyles that can be created by living streets are not widely appreciated in advance by people who have not experienced them. In some other countries there have been attempts to use virtual reality to overcome this.

We believe that the cost of motoring should be shifted from the ownership of vehicles to their use, so as to encourage more selective use. Use of motor vehicles can be taxed by a combination of increased fuel duty and introduction of road charges.

These need not be an anti-motorist measure if they were linked to lower levels of other motoring taxes and costs. Fees charged to motorists (such as MOT fees) and taxes on motoring items (such as VAT on car maintenance or car accessories) could be reduced or abolished as part of the process of offsetting the increased fuel duty and road charges. Insurance is another major cost which is not directly related to mileage and the Treasury could provide a third party, passenger liability, fire and theft insurance policy automatically to every car (with a higher excess for drivers with a poor record), and fund that through road charges and increased fuel duty. This would shift a major fixed cost onto mileage-related payments and abolish the problem of uninsured drivers, as all drivers would be automatically insured and would pay for their basic insurance through road charges and fuel duty. It could be administered through existing insurance companies. Insurers could compete to offer top-up insurance (such as insurance of excesses, overseas cover, breakdown cover or provision of comprehensive cover). Claims on the Treasury from those who take

out top up insurance would be processed through their insurance company. Claims on those who do not take out top up insurance would be allocated to insurance companies in rotation, in proportion to their share of the top-up market, with the Treasury paying them an administration fee for administering the claim.

- **Wider policy support.**

The following support policies are needed

- Highways England need to discontinue its current approach to infilling old railway bridges and tunnels as this obstructs the expansion of cycle networks, railway reopening and greenways
- Great British Railways needs to be very much more selective in its programme of removing pedestrian level crossings. Crossings should be closed only where a genuinely short diversion, not involving use of a busy road, is possible. For other crossings GBR should be more willing to build a bridge, to use a signal-controlled crossing or to accept small risks where they are no greater than those of crossing a lightly-used road.
- The 2026 cut off date for claiming historic rights of way should not be applied except where the local authority has carried out a comprehensive review of its definitive map.
- Planning policies need to shift developers away from their current failure to consider green walls, green roofs, and living streets. If new permitted development rights are created under the new planning system, they should be conditional on green roofs (or roof gardens or solar panels), green walls and a living street design for any new street. Planning authorities should be prohibited from turning down proposals for green-enveloped buildings on the grounds of “not fitting with adjacent properties” except in unusual circumstances such as an attractive architecturally-distinctive conservation area. Schemes which create new streets without using a living street design should automatically be called in for this to be justified. Green roofs and green walls should figure on the planning form and planning authorities should never be at risk of costs for requiring them.
- Women in particular, but also some men, are scared of waiting at quiet bus stops or on quiet railway platforms or of passing through quiet passages. Attention needs to be paid to this. Lighting, and monitored CCTV can offer considerable reassurance.

- **Walking as much as cycling.**

Walking is not difficult to cater to. It requires the creation of a comprehensive aesthetically-attractive walking network and safe crossings of main roads. This requires a different thought process from just building a facility. It also requires funding of a lot of small actions such as planting some trees, changing the programme of some traffic lights, establishing a path across a field, putting in a pedestrian crossing, which do not amount to a “project” for funding. The financial facility needs to be able to fund widespread small improvements to a network as if they collectively amounted to a project.

- **Levelling up.**

Our proposals for indicative per capita funding of local areas would meet the requirement for levelling up. However, this will only work if the overall funding is adequate. Whilst overall funding has been inadequate it has been better to allow some authorities to demonstrate what can be done. That needs to move on – but by levelling up not by spreading more thinly.

- **Justice and inclusion.**

One of the obstacles to walking and cycling in deprived neighbourhoods is that those neighbourhoods tend to be less green and less attractive to walk in. Sometimes they are also less safe. There are ways to measure walkability and a goal of a transport strategy focused on placemaking would be to improve the walkability of the less walkable neighbourhoods.

- **Decarbonising transport.**

There is currently no public health representation on the Zero Carbon Transport Board, despite the Transport & Health Science Group having made detailed proposals.

- **The relationship between central and local government. Programme and project management.**

Our proposals for Active Travel England take account of this.