

DfT Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, March 2016

Response to the consultation from Pedals (Nottingham Cycling Campaign). Pedals is a volunteer run constituted group representing cyclists across the Greater Nottingham area.

Pedals very much welcomes this opportunity to respond to the consultation. While we welcome many of the proposals in the draft strategy, we have some significant concerns, and believe that the Strategy will not deliver a meaningful change in cycling and walking conditions that is necessary to cause people to switch to these methods of transport instead of the use of private motor vehicles. The draft report correctly notes that there is significant potential for change here, but it does not offer the correct solutions and resources to bring about this change. In our response we as can be expected from the nature of the group concentrate on the strategy in respect of cycling rather than walking.

Question 1

Funding

The main thing missing from the *investment* strategy is *investment*. The report furthers a political agenda to devolve decision making and funding down to local authorities and LEAs. The result of this on the ground is that cycling and walking are squeezed to the periphery and the case for each must be made time and time again with no guarantees of success. We consider ourselves *lucky* to have been granted one LEA-funded cycle scheme in Nottingham City (sometimes referred to as the “Cycle Superhighways”), but there is absolutely no guarantee of any future funding - something which the draft CWIS explicitly does not address. This should not be a matter of luck. **Pedals believes that it is imperative that Government guarantees substantially increased funding for cycling and walking**, otherwise all of the other laudable goals in the draft CWIS will fail to be achieved. The eventual aim should be that 10% of all transport spending goes to cycling and walking.

We agree with the view that the Government’s recent Road Investment Strategy will have some very probable consequences: increased congestion, pollution and danger and much lower value for money than cycling (DfT 2014, “Claiming the Health Dividend”). It is important to recall the recommendations of the House of Commons All-Party ‘Get Britain Cycling’ Report in 2013 which called for £10 per person, rising to £20 per person, to achieve the target of 25% of journeys by bike by 2050. Mature active travel societies such as the Netherlands and Denmark have invested in double figures per capita per annum over decades (see e.g. Puecher & Boehler 2012, “City Cycling”). The then Chief Medical Officer in 2010 called for, a doubling of walking trips and an 8-fold increase in cycling, which public health academics have calculated, could save the NHS £17 million by 2020 (The Lancet, 2012). The case for investing in cycling and walking is clear.

Given that, and the warm words in the draft strategy, the fact that it offers a mere £1.38 pppa outside of London (Cycling UK 2016, <http://www.cyclinguk.org/press-release/2016-03-27/cycling-walking-investment-strategy-worthless-without-meaningful-fundi>) is very perplexing. We would like to see to see Netherlands-levels of sustained funding achieved here also. It is unimaginable that motor traffic would be supplied with such an arrangement, and we do not think that is it right for non-motor traffic to be treated in this way either. **Please lead from the centre on funding.** It is correct for decisions to be taken locally, but there must be ring-fencing to ensure that money *is* spent on cycling and walking, and that it is spent in the right way - see the next section.

Question 2

The Draft Strategy appears to rely extensively on local commitment and local investment from local funds, yet much more is needed to support local action, particularly with reduced budgets at local level and the new uncertainties with the transition to new devolution arrangements. It is very important to ensure that local walking and cycling can be effectively prioritised at the local level. Although we are aware that D2N2 has shown some interest in helping to fund cycling projects, we understand that this is far from being the general case with LEPs, and there is no guarantee that D2N2 will continue to do so in our area. This is particularly frustrating for local user groups keen to promote ideas for worthwhile projects, and suspecting that cycling or other sustainable travel projects will not be seriously considered along the other types of projects, particularly new roads, on which most LEPs tend to focus, even when they could generate very substantial health and environmental benefits. **Pedals calls for a new positive duty on Local Authorities and LEPs to safeguard investment in cycling and walking.**

Question 3

The Draft Strategy contains references to a number of successful initiatives which could be emulated elsewhere. However, some of these such as the Diglis Bridge over the River Severn in Worcester (p45) need very substantial funding. This is particularly relevant for us in the Nottingham area where a group of several local organisations, including Pedals, are well advanced on the preparation, in close cooperation with Sustrans, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council, of a feasibility study, for plans for a new foot-cycle bridge over the River Trent on the east side of Nottingham, in which we have learnt much of direct relevance from the very successful Diglis Bridge. Furthermore, we are sure that such major projects, if well-located and with a series of good quality connections, can be a very strong encouragement to higher levels of walking and cycling, for both leisure and commuting purposes. This experience is particularly relevant to Question 3 of the Strategy (p46). For more information on our proposed project see:

<http://pedals.org.uk/proposed-foot-cycle-bridge-over-the-trent-update/>

We are surprised to note the omission of any reference to the proposed HS2 National Cycleway, in view of the extensive work already done on this and the DfT's commitment in principle to go ahead with this project, which could do much to help extend and upgrade the quality of local cycle networks in areas through which the HS2 railway will pass. In the Nottingham area we are particularly supportive of the potential of the Leen Valley as an early win 'Pathfinder' project to be implanted as soon as funds became available.

Question 4

The past emphasis on cycling as a sporting activity requiring specialist and expensive equipment has, we believe been a disincentive to the general population, including the groups referred to in the question. The emphasis should be shifted to raise the profile of cycling as a normal, everyday activity. Capable fulfilling the daily transport needs of all, be they commuting to a place of work, shopping or heading to school.

The need for consistency and quality

Research has shown time and time again that many people do not like to cycle with motor traffic, and the hostile road environment is the main reason why, we think, so relatively few people in most areas cycles for their utility journeys today. The draft CWIS again adopts a localist approach to design of facilities for cycling and walking. This is already resulting in schemes of extremely variable quality - from London's laudable new segregated routes to more of the same old poor standard shared pedestrian/cyclist paths or cycle lanes-in-the-door-zone -

being approved right across the country, which is inappropriate and, again, would never be countenanced for motor transport. **Pedals is calling on Government to create a new high quality, ambitious, cycling and walking design guide for the whole nation.** Without this, provision will remain extremely variable. Central guidance will also shield authorities from having to make damaging concessions to local lobbies.

Targeting efforts where they will make an impact

If the point made above about the main barrier to cycling being motor traffic is accepted, then many of the schemes in the draft CWIS are not required. **Pedals believes that Government funding and leadership should be concentrated on high quality infrastructure and management to reduce traffic levels.** Where streets are busy (> 2000 PCU per hour is the reference definition of “busy” adopted by the London Cycling Campaign) then the correct solution is to either engineer solutions that make them less busy or to separate cycles from motors. The CWIS can target funding to help to ensure that this transition takes place. Measures such as cycle training should be provided for as mitigation while users are expected to travel in hostile conditions, but there may be no big place for it in the long term picture if the right road conditions are created. That said it should be insured that all children get the chance to do (as with learning to swim). Bikeability cycling skills should be a part of the Key Stage 2 curriculum to build the acceptance of cycling as a normal and safe method of travel.

The solution is obvious: make cycling and walking the best choices, at least for short journeys, by making them feel safe, easy and pleasant, and people will choose them.

Question 5

The Government should develop a single infrastructure design guide to highlight best practices. As individual Local Authorities spend time and resources preparing their own guides inconsistencies arise and frequently can lead to plans which lack ambition and are of a low standard.

This should have the ambition to specify proven high quality provision designs.

Prepared by Hugh McClintock, Iain Lane and David Lally for Pedals

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