

Inquiry into the Government's Approach to Road Safety April 2019

Commons Transport Committee

Evidence from Pedals: Nottingham Cycle Campaign, pedals.org.uk



About us

This response was submitted by Pedals: Nottingham Cycle Campaign.

We are a local group which campaigns for a more cycle-friendly city to enable more people to make everyday journeys by bike in Nottingham and the surrounding area. We have over 200 members.

Who do we mean when we say 'cyclists'?

When referring to 'cyclists' or 'people cycling', we refer to

- people who currently cycle
- people who currently do not cycle but would if they felt safer (64% of respondents to Sustrans' Bike Life Survey¹ said that they would cycle more if on-road cycle routes physically separated from traffic were available.)

This could include (based on the range of people who cycle in cities and countries with high cycling levels) -

- A dad taking his young daughter to school on the back of his bike.
- A mum collecting her children from nursery. One has a scooter and one has a bike.
- A student going to college
- An elderly lady using a tricycle to go to the supermarket
- A delivery company worker using a cargo bike for business
- A family cycling to the park for a picnic at the weekend
- An office worker using a handcycle to get to work
- A porter going to do the night shift at hospital

Executive summary

We ask the Committee to -

1. **Look again at the compelling evidence collected for the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (published in November 2018) and ask why the Government Response was half-hearted**

We believe that the Government must -

2. **Recognise the imbalance of potential to cause harm between people driving and people cycling**
3. **Systematically reduce road danger through safer street design**
4. **Count the hidden costs of traffic danger**
5. **Commit cash to make streets safer (not just fine words)**
6. **Deter and punish drivers who put people in danger**

¹ https://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/file_content_type/bike-life-2017-summary-report.pdf

We ask the Committee to...

1. Look again at the compelling evidence collected for the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (published in November 2018) and ask why the Government Response was half-hearted

In March to June 2018 the Department for Transport ran the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) safety review.

The Summary of Responses² document forms an excellent body of evidence for this inquiry.

However we found the Government Response³ (published in November 2018) to be unambitious and we haven't felt any effect from its recommendations locally in Nottingham.

149 cyclists were injured in Nottingham in 2017.

149 cyclists is also the average for the years 2012-2016. This number of injuries is not reducing.⁴

It's clear that changes to our road layouts are needed to keep people cycling safe, but the investment is not being made. With tens of billions of pounds in planned spending for trunk roads, investment in providing safe and attractive streets for cycling simply is not there.

Until good cycle networks are provided, people cycling will continue to be killed and injured on UK roads at an alarming rate.

We believe that the Government must...

2. Recognise the imbalance of potential to cause harm between people driving and people cycling

Many road safety initiatives are based on the ideas of 'sharing the road', 'mutual respect' and 'taking responsibility for your own safety'. These approaches attempt to be fair to all road users, by not being seen to prioritise one group over another. However, this draws a false equivalence between the risks faced by, and the potential to cause harm of, people driving cars and vulnerable road users.

"The potential for injury is related to the kinetic energy involved...A 2-tonne vehicle travelling at 50km/h has more than 200 times the kinetic energy of an 85-kg male on a 15-kg bicycle travelling at 15 km/h. Injury data supports this observation."⁵

² Summary of Responses to Call for Evidence: CWIS Safety Review, Department for Transport (October 2018) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748760/summary-of-responses-cwis-safety-review-call-for-evidence.pdf

³ Government Response to Call for Evidence: CWIS Safety Review, Department for Transport (November 2018) <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-cwis-safety-review>

⁴ STATS 19 Road Safety data, (data.gov.uk website) <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/cb7ae6f0-4be6-4935-9277-47e5ce24a11f/road-safety-data>

⁵ City Cycling, edited by John Pucher and Ralph Buehler, The MIT Press (book, 2012) <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/city-cycling>

Even the most aware and able-bodied cyclist cannot keep themselves completely safe through their own actions, when they are at close proximity to fast, heavy motor traffic, with potentially-distracted drivers. This is especially true in densely populated urban environments.

We call on the Government to adopt a Systematic Safety/Vision Zero approach which prioritises the safety of those who are most vulnerable and cause the least harm.

3. Systematically reduce road danger through safer street design

We call on the Government to adopt a Systematic Safety/Vision Zero approach which prioritises the safety of those who cause the least harm and are most vulnerable.

The Systematic Safety (in Dutch “Duurzaam Veilig”) approach means -

“Not waiting for crashes to occur, but systematically eliminating the opportunities that create high crash and injury risk. Our traffic safety problems stem from two inherent human properties. First, we are vulnerable. Our bodies were not made to absorb the force of collisions with motor vehicles. Second, we make mistakes....A system that is only safe if people don’t make mistakes is not a system that is made for humans.”⁶

In relation to people cycling and walking-

“At speeds below 20mph (32 km/h), cyclists and pedestrians are rarely killed in collisions with vehicles (Kim et al. 2007, Rosén, Stigson, and Sander 2011). This physiological tolerance for injury is central to Sweden’s Vision Zero road safety approach that identifies the importance of protecting pedestrians and cyclists from motor vehicles exceeding 30km/h (19mph) (Johansson 2009).”⁷

This approach sounds very similar to the Hierarchy of Hazard Controls⁸ approach which is standard across many industries. The physical removal of hazards is prioritised over asking people to change their behaviour.

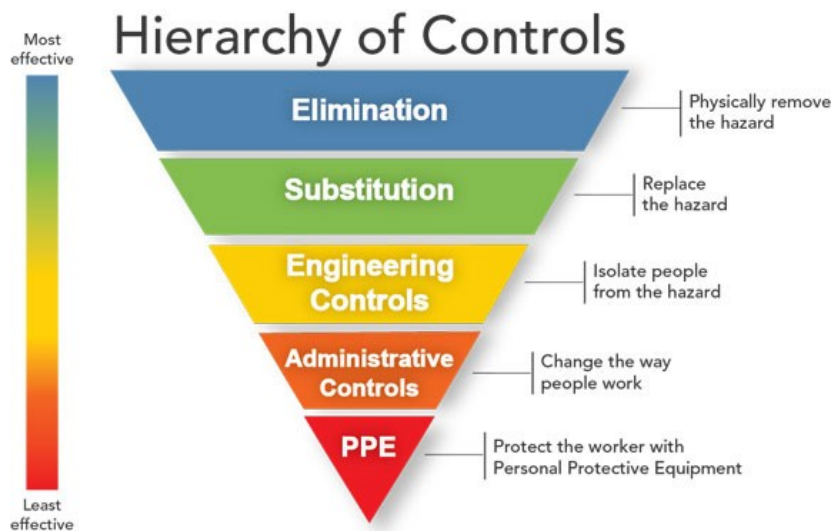
A good example of this is the hazardous situation of drivers endangering children outside their primary school at pick up time is solved by closing the street to motor traffic for an hour at school start and finish times, (as happens with Hackney’s School Streets⁹) rather than by telling the children to be careful. The cause of the danger has been removed, moved further away in order to protect the most vulnerable.

⁶ Systematic Safety: The Principles Behind Vision Zero, Peter G. Furth and Mark Wagenbuur (video, 2017)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5aNtsWvNYKE>

⁷ City Cycling, edited by John Pucher and Ralph Buehler, The MIT Press (book, 2012)
<https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/city-cycling>

⁸ Hierarchy of Hazard Controls, Wikipedia (website, viewed April 2019)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hierarchy_of_hazard_controls

⁹ Hackney School Streets (Hackney Council website, viewed April 2019)
<https://hackney.gov.uk/article/4379/School-streets>



On a city-wide level, this means building protected cycleways on busy roads, reducing speeds and preventing rat-running on residential streets. We support the design guidance set out in *Cycle Safety: Make it Simple* by Cycling UK¹⁰.

4. Count the hidden costs of motor traffic danger

Recognise that casualties caused by road traffic collisions are not the only costs associated with a society in which road danger deters people from making everyday journeys by cycling and walking, and that air pollution-causing motor traffic is a danger to public health.

The overall cost of sedentary behaviour to the NHS in 2016-17 was £0.7bn and contributed to almost 70,000 lives lost in 2016.¹¹

In Nottingham, 127 premature deaths (aged 30+) per year can be attributed to air pollution.¹²

In Nottingham, 43.7% of households do not have access to a car or van.¹³ Policies which prioritise private motor vehicle use do so to the detriment of this significant percentage of residents.

"[Greenhouse gas] emissions from cars, vans and HGVs all rose in 2016. The continued rise in road transport emissions highlights the urgent need for stronger policies to reduce emissions and moderate growth in demand for travel."¹⁴

5. Commit cash to make streets safer, not just fine words

None of the recommendations of the Government Response to the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy involved committing any Government any money to building a safer street environment (infrastructure).

¹⁰ Cycle Safety: Make it Simple, Cycling UK (PDF publication, 2018)

https://www.cyclinguk.org/sites/default/files/document/2018/04/1804_cyclinguk_cycle-safety-make-it-simple.pdf

¹¹ Queen's research shows sedentary lifestyle linked to 70,000 deaths per year in the UK, Queens University Belfast (article, viewed April 2019)

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/News/Allnews/Queensresearchshowssedentarylifestylelinkedto70000deathsperyearintheUK.html>

¹² What is Air Pollution?, Nottingham Insight (website, viewed April 2019)

https://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/air-quality-test/nottinghamshire-air-quality-strategy_/air-pollution-defined/

¹³ Key Statistics for Nottingham City (2011 Census), Nottingham City Council (report, 2013)

<https://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/86252>

¹⁴ Reducing UK Emissions: 2018 Progress Report to Parliament, Committee on Climate Change (report, 2018)

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CCC-2018-Progress-Report-to-Parliament.pdf>

6. Deter and punish drivers who put people in danger

Prioritise Roads Policing in Government policing strategies

Roads Policing should thus be prioritised in national governments' policing strategies, e.g. the 'Strategic Policing Requirement' for England and Wales. Police and Crime Commissioners and individual police forces would then have the backing to allocate the resources that Roads Policing needs and deserves.

Challenge the attitude that driving offences aren't 'real crime'

Anyone who lives in a city and walks or rides a bike to work will witness people using their phones at the wheel every single day. Speeding, parking on pavements and using a phone at the wheel seem to have become normalised and not viewed as 'real crime'. This has to change.

Tackle abuse of people cycling

A quick survey of our members and supporters reveals that many have been the victims of abuse and intimidation while cycling (see comments below).

It is likely that there is significant under-reporting of these kind of incidents to the Police. Even if incidents are reported, they will not form part of STATS 19 Road Safety data unless there is a physical injury.

Anonymised comments from our members and supporters, collected April 2019

- *"I was out with my partner too and behind him at the time when a vehicle, overtook me but then deliberately drove at my boyfriend narrowly missing him. I hate solo riding due to my experiences and will often turbo instead of going out!"*
- *"I slowed right down to pass an old man with his dog. The man grabbed my handlebars and wouldn't let go."*
- *"I had a kebab and chips thrown at me by a passing car once whilst cycling home on X road."*
- *"Close passes and not indicating before turning left across my path happen every time I enter Nottingham."*
- *"A bus driver used his bus to run me off the road. It was frightening."*
- *"A close pass makes me feel vulnerable and as if I've been abused - which of course is exactly what has happened. Shouting/swearing out of car window, tailgating, cutting up or horn blowing are always done by a person in a stronger/protected position so are actually a form of (road)bullying."*
- *"A man pulled up next to me and screamed out of his car window "Why didn't you f*****g get out of my way? Don't make me get out of my car and teach you a lesson. You better hope I never see you again. MOVE!" He said I should have pulled over to let him pass, when I hadn't done anything wrong and the road was quiet. I know I didn't do anything wrong but this incident left me frightened and shaking. I was only coming back from the supermarket on a 30mph street! (Residential streets in Nottingham City are a blanket 20mph zone, but because this street is just over the boundary into Nottinghamshire it is a 30mph limit.)"*

- *"I've had a driver overtake closely then turn left, forcing me to brake to a stop. I'm sure that it was deliberate. I've had a driver shouting out of the window for me to get off the road. Every time someone overtakes closely I feel vulnerable. It won't stop me cycling because I love it and it's my only real exercise, but I do worry about being hit by an inattentive or aggressive driver on most journeys. I use cycle paths when I can, taking longer routes to do so. But I won't be bullied off the roads."*