

Agenda Item 10a

Department of Transport
(by email)

Date: 28th October 2014
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Department for Transport's Cycling Delivery Plan.

The vision for this plan is entirely laudable. As a life-long cyclist I am passionate to see more people enjoy the multitude of benefits of cycling, many of these benefits can also be attributed to walking.

The Government want to encourage more people across England to cycle. They agree that cycling means a healthier, fitter citizen with less congested cities, less pollution and a more productive workforce. The resulting benefits are wide reaching to the economy, to the environment, to the health of individuals and communities.

Having been involved in the delivery of a cycling strategy in the Coalville and Ashby areas of NW Leicestershire I will make use of knowledge gained during that process.

The DOT delivery plan is broken down into four themes. These are.....

1. Vision, leadership and ambition.
2. Funding.
3. Infrastructure and planning.
4. Safety and perceptions of safety.

Vision, leadership and ambition.

It's good that the plan includes metrics by which the success of the plan implementation can be measured. However the measurement may be open to misrepresentation and would appear to be difficult to audit for accuracy. It is unclear as to how the 'stages' would be measured and where the actual numbers would come from.

With the current level of public spending cuts it would appear that local authorities may not be willing to take part as many have lost a significant number of staff. Those that are left are trying to keep afloat. There would seem to be a lack of staff to take on any cycling development duties.

Unless the introduction and development of cycling schemes are a requirement rather than asking for interested authorities to come forward it may well end up a patchwork quilt.

It is suggested that a local 'influential cycling and walking champion' be appointed. Sadly this might be seen in an authority as a poisoned chalice. Any such champion must be fully committed, enthusiastic and passionate about cycling and walking. Otherwise we could end up with leaders who are neither knowledgeable nor particularly interested. *If pursued there should be a champion for each category of user.*

It would seem vital that user groups should be an important part of infrastructure development. They should be a major component of any development team. They must be able to veto any unsatisfactory projects. There is no mention of user group influence in the delivery plan. There were many areas of the £3M plan for Coalville in our area, which provided little benefit for

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cyclists. The scheme didn't provide any cycle parking, secure or otherwise. Cycle parking particularly in shopping areas should have been an absolute requirement. There were no safe cycle ways provided into the town centre.

Funding

It is vital that any funding is ring fenced to ensure that it all gets spent on providing cycling and walking. If this is not done then allocated resources could easily be misspent.

Infrastructure and planning.

A set of cycle way standards needs to be produced. Leicestershire County Highways claim that the minimum cycleway width is one and a half metres. This claim seems very much at odds with cycle ways provided by other highway authorities. In fact there are many cycle ways in Leicestershire that are much narrower than this. Standards for provision should not be down to an individual's perception.

Transport For London (TFL) has certain views on cycle provision. Their standards are available on the internet. The claim that cyclists should not be disadvantaged by using a cycle way, otherwise cyclists will stay on the road and not use what could be expensive facilities. They also prioritise cycle infrastructure over other means of transport.

If we want to increase cycling to the levels of Denmark, Holland etc, as suggested in the plan then we need to make game changing decisions and plan to incorporate safe vehicle free places for cyclists.

All new housing, business or retail developments should be required to provide separate cycle lanes as well as pavements. All new road systems (other than motorways) should also be accompanied by a separate safe cycle lane. Without this entrenched policy the chances of delivering the plans objectives are pretty much zero.

There are many large housing developments being designed and developed. All planning authorities must be required to ensure they provide short multi user routes to shops, schools and other facilities instead of forcing resident and others to have to follow what can often be torturous roadside routes.

In our area we have many underutilised country pavements. Most if not all could be safely opened up to cyclists.

Safety and perceptions of safety

As the report states, many people do not cycle because of fears about their safety. The concerns are twofold, firstly they are frightened of their physical safety and secondly they are frightened of their personal safety (the fear of assault).

Bicycles are in law carriages. They were rightly banned from using pavements following a case Taylor versus Goodwin in 1879. This was well before the modern motorcar, which wasn't around until 1886. So at that time a bicycle could travel at about the same speed as all other road users, whether on two or four legs. However since then the relative speed of cycles and other road users has changed enormously.

Whilst most cycling takes place in large cities rural area can be just as dangerous, if not more so. In many cases there are no pavements for walkers and no lights with vehicle speed considerably higher. In most urban areas people have a choice of public transport. Rural areas are not so well catered for, many villages having no public transport of any kind. Many rural footpaths are little used and could easily be converted to dual use, pedestrians and cyclist with little cost and little effort.

Cycle infrastructure needs to include safe and secure cycle parking. How can you entice people to cycle to town if there's nowhere to leave their bikes?

To have any chance of success this plan need to do two things, one, it has to provide separate cycle lanes as seen in the countries mentioned in item 5 on page 5.

Secondly it must seriously include representatives of user groups.

Walking

The plan also talks about walking. Early in 2014 there was a government commitment to 'Moving More, Living More' and the All Party Commission on Physical Activity published 'Tackling Physical Inactivity: A Coordinated Approach'. It is encouraging that these issues are receiving the attention they deserve.

This draft talks of extending the cycling commitment to walking which delivers similar benefits to cycling and walking is the more achievable and accessible alternative to motorised travel. . This draft does however concentrate on cycling and we trust walking will receive similar attention. People can walk from their front door and efforts must be

made to make pleasant walking environments available to all within reasonable walking distances of their homes. The most important network property is the inter-connectedness of the network itself. Every opportunity should be taken to improve the inter-linking of the network so that it becomes more useful to the public.

To encourage a generational change in attitudes and encourage walking and cycling for health and general well being and to reduce our carbon footprint people must be educated of the benefits and a cohesive and extensive network of safe routes created. Sustrans have been very successful at the creation of good cycleways but the rights of way network is still very fragmented. The maintenance and protection of national walking trails is being devolved with uncertain consequences and the right to walk round our coast is not being created as fast as many had hoped.

If the promised 2020 target is to be achieved more resources are probably going to have to be found.

Similarly some progress has been made with long distance bridleways which can of course also be used by cyclists and walkers but that network is if anything even more fragmented than that of the footpaths.

The benefits of the footpath, bridleway and cycleway network are multi-dimensional and have impacts on sustainable transport, green infrastructure, recreation, tourism, and health & well-being. They are the primary mechanism for linking communities and facilities if we are to reduce motorised transport and the carbon emissions that ensue.

In an ideal world we would suggest that on rural roads what is needed is actually a totally separate track for the non-motorised traveller so that vehicles are segregated from the rest of them.

There are well established user groups covering all these activities that are well qualified to give the leadership and guidance and perhaps the government's role is to empower them, encourage local authorities to work with them and provide the funding and legislative framework in which these activities can flourish.

Planning guidance should require all planning authorities to take every opportunity to improve the provision of off road routes.

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The Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LAF) is an independent statutory body, set up as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000, and exists to represent the interests of everyone concerned with access to the countryside and the public rights of way network including footpaths, bridleways and byways, cycleways and areas of open access.

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