

# CYCLING POLICY IN THE UK

A historical and thematic overview

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## About the authors

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# 1. Introduction

This review aims to give a historical and thematic overview of policy relating to cycling in the UK. The focus is upon the period when the decline in cycling began more frequently to be constructed as a policy problem rather than a natural consequence of modernisation. The report illustrates that over the past forty years, while there has been relatively little change in measured overall levels of cycling, different sets of cycling expectations have emerged. We demonstrate the tensions within policy relating to cycling, the different ways in which cycling policy has been articulated (for example, with respect to arguments around health and safety), and the different initiatives and stakeholders that have emerged over this time. The focus is on 'official' representations of cycling. Throughout the period discussed there have always been organisations and individuals lobbying for cycling and against car dependency, but we are attempting to give an overview of how dominant policy discourses have changed over time.

## 1a. Key policy actors

'Transport policy on cycling is a devolved matter' (DfT, 2007a: 3), although Shaw et al (2009: 562) suggest that so far, the impact of devolution on transport policy has been relatively limited. 'The initial transport strategies of each of the devolved administrations displayed horizontal convergence with A New Deal for Transport, and subsequent shifts in emphasis in Scotland and Wales privileging economic development and associated road building plans were mirrored at the DfT in England. Only in London, where a strong commitment to modal shift was expressed through the Congestion Charge and other initiatives, did evidence of divergence from the UK government and other devolved administrations emerge at the level of strategy.'

In England, the Department of Transport is responsible for cycling policy. It provides guidance to local authorities as well as overseeing the work of its advisory body, Cycling England, which aims to increase cycling in England. It has provided funding for cycling through Local Transport Plans (LTP), supplemented by its funding of Cycling England. However changes are under way as several months after assuming office the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government announced that Cycling England is to be dissolved by the end of March 2011.

Instead, local authorities have been invited to bid for funds for cycling projects from a new Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

In Scotland, the Scottish Executive is responsible for cycling policy. It funds its advisory body, Cycling Scotland (which is not being abolished) and through Local Transport Strategies (LTS) provides funding for cycling (DfT 2007a). In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for cycling policy while in Northern Ireland, the Department for Regional Development (DRDNI) is responsible for cycling policy.

While national governments guide and oversee cycling policy, much of the responsibility lies at a local level. 'In England, Wales and Scotland the responsibility for the upkeep and management of the roads on which most cycling takes place rests with local highway authorities. In Northern Ireland that responsibility rests with DRDNI' (ibid). National sustainable transport charity, Sustrans, leads the provision and development of the UK's National Cycle Network; other players are in the private sector including bicycle shops and other small businesses and social enterprises (e.g. some cycle training providers). Voluntary sector and campaigning groups provide services formally and informally (e.g. contributing to planning processes, providing maintenance workshops, etc.)

## 1b. Context: from cycling to the car

A hundred years ago cycling was dominated by the relatively privileged; yet during the first half of the twentieth century it became a mass mode of transport in many Western European cities. See figure 1.

Cycling levels in the UK peaked in 1949, when 24 billion kilometres were covered by bike, representing 37% of all traffic (Gazey, 1998; Horton et al., 2007; Smith, 1996). In the postwar period, increasing prosperity was accompanied by increases in car ownership across Western Europe and a decline in cycling as it moved from being a mass to a more residual transport mode. In the Netherlands, for example, '[f]rom 1950 to 1975, the bicycle was almost entirely excluded from the government's vision' (Netherlands Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, 1999: 31). However, since the 1970s in particular, trends have diverged both between and within countries. In the UK, cycling declined

Figure 1: Reconstructed trend lines of the bicycle share in the total number of car, bicycle, motoped and public transportation trips in nine West European Cities, 1920–1995 (in %). Bruhèze and Veraart 1999:14

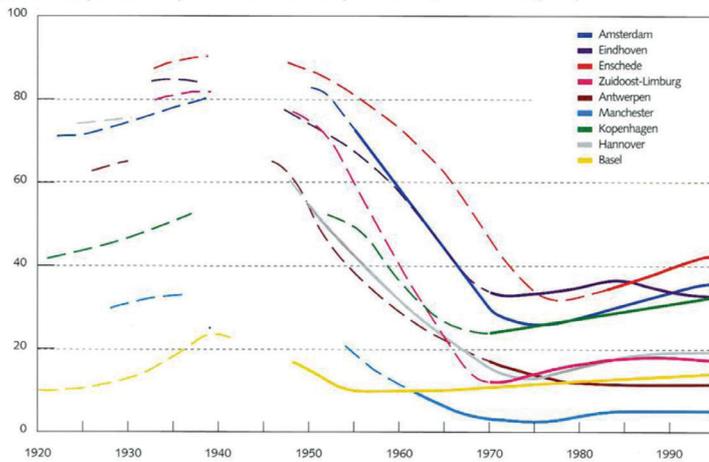
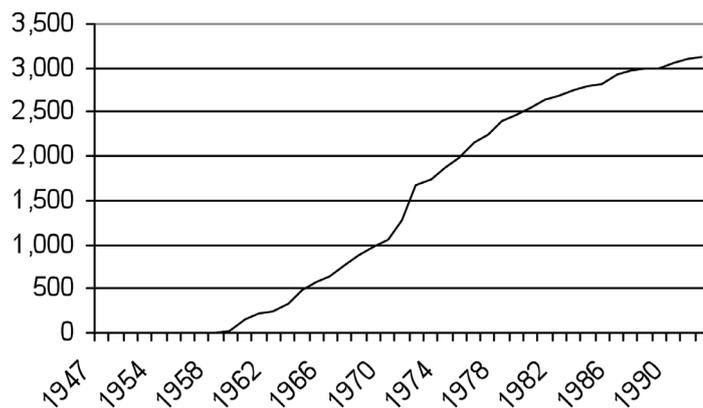


Figure 2. Motorway length (km)



Source: Transport Statistics Great Britain, 2010.

sharply between the 1950s and early 1970s and has since been more stable, with substantial local and regional differences.

During the interwar period the railways had faced increasing competition from other transport modes, and lines had closed (Gourvish and Blake, 1986). When rail was nationalised in 1948 the new British Railways ‘had to cope with several handicaps from its outset’ (Wolmar 2008:269). Despite the ambitious 1954 ‘Modernisation Plan’, damaging inter-regional competition continued, the electrification programme stalled, and railway spending became increasingly seen as propping up an ailing industry that could not compete with the private car. This led to the drastic cost-cutting proposal by the Chairman of British Railways, Richard Beeching, in the now notorious report, *The Reshaping of British Railways* – a title

‘indicative of an important policy thrust – to adapt railway operations to the era of the motor vehicle’ (BTC, 1954 and 1963; Headicar, 2009: 82). The report’s recommendations included the closure of ‘about one quarter of the 21,000 mile route network’ in order to concentrate dwindling resources on core mainline routes (Headicar, 2009: 83).

Policy-makers had mistakenly anticipated that passengers on these branch lines would be happy to take a bus to the mainline station (or indeed drive) and continue by train. The impact of inconvenience within this kind of multi-modal journey was underestimated, and this trend of travelling to the mainline station rather than a branchline did not materialise to anything like the extent they had predicted. As Christian Wolmar states, ‘Beeching’s fundamental mistake was to underestimate the contribution of branches to the economics of the railway and he was wrong to assume that people who travelled by rail would happily shift to bus’ (2008: 286). The resulting unanticipated financial vulnerability of the mainlines, whose many ‘feeder’ branches had been closed, meant Beeching’s promised savings never materialised.

‘Beeching’s Axe’, as the cuts became known, illustrates the potential ‘failure of policy-makers to recognize the full range of impacts of policies themselves on future travel demands’, in this case, by stripping the nation of thousands of miles of valuable railway, failing to recognise the social lifeline of the railways, encouraging motorised traffic, worsening the conditions for non-motorists and in turn, discouraging cycling (Vigar, 2002: 52). The ongoing influence of vested interests may also be noted: Ernest Marples, the Transport Minister who appointed Beeching, owned two-thirds of the shares in Marples Ridgway, a road construction firm. Following criticism he sold these shares; later it was revealed that they had been sold to his wife (Dudley and Richardson 2000).

The facilitation of motorised traffic throughout the 1960s, considered almost ‘natural’ by many at the time, was cause for concern by others. Two influential reports published during this time went against the flow by warning of the long-term effects of congested road networks. First, Colin Buchanan’s *Traffic in Towns*, commissioned for the Ministry of Transport by then Transport Minister Ernest Marples, suggested supply of road infrastructure could not continue to meet demand, that ‘some deliberate limitation of the volume of motor traffic is quite unavoidable’ (Docherty, 2003; MoT, 1963: par 30). Second, also commissioned for the Ministry of Transport and rather ahead of its time, the Smeed Report proposed road user pricing to help relieve congestion but lacked the political will necessary for implementation (Begg, 2003; FHWA,

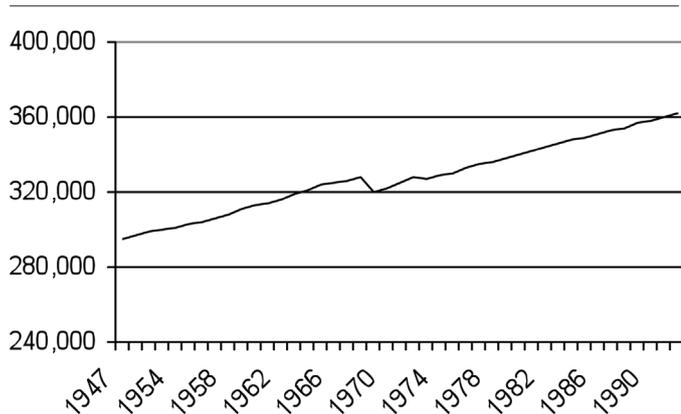
2008; MoT, 1964). However the dominant political view during the postwar period was illustrated by the growth and upgrading of infrastructure designed for the car and road freight. (See Figure 2).

1c. A little pre-history

Cycle infrastructure and cycle training are two topics that will appear later in this report. Back in 1934, the UK's first bike path opened in West London (anon., The Manchester Guardian, 1934). Described by the Guardian at the time as a 'safety track for cyclists', it was 8 feet 6 inches wide and 2.5 miles long (ibid: 6). Political fanfare and controversy coincided - the Transport Minister presided over the opening ceremony and cycling campaigners voiced concerns over infrastructure, safety and this assault on their 'rightful use of the roadway' (ibid). The Cycling Tourist Club (CTC), in an effort to defend and recapture cyclists' right to the road, responded by suggesting an alternative - "motorways" - built only for cars - leaving the rest of the road network for cyclists' (Peck in Walker and Rodrigues, 2009). The debate over 'vehicular cycling' and 'segregated facilities' remains important in the UK to this day.

Less controversial but perhaps equally relevant, in

Figure 3. Total Road Length (km)



Source: Transport Statistics Great Britain, 2010.

1936 the CTC created the UK's first cycling proficiency scheme in response to increasing casualties: 1,324 cyclists were killed in 1933, the year before the opening of the bike path (anon., The Manchester Guardian, 1934: 6). A few years later, the scheme was adopted nationally by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and 'has been in use almost ever since' (CTC, 2010a; RoSPA, 2010).





## 2. False starts: early 1970s to late 1980s

In response to the growing environmental impact of cars and road expansion, the endangerment of cyclists and pedestrians, as well as the Middle East oil crisis, the early 1970s were marked by pressure group formation and political activism (CTC, 1993; De Jong and Rouwette, 2010). Several well-known environmental and transportation organisations formed during this time, including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, London Cycling Campaign, Sustrans (then Cyclebag), Campaign for Better Transport (then Transport 2000), as well as the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (CTC, 2008e; Friends of the Earth, 2010; Jones, 2004; Rawcliffe, 1998; RCEP, 2010; Sustrans, 2010b). Meanwhile, The Cycle and Motor Cycle Association, having existed since 1890, split due to 'diverging needs', giving birth to the Bicycle Association (Bicycle Association, 2010).

Elsewhere in Europe, popular protests in Denmark and the Netherlands are largely regarded as unleashing political will to reverse car-centric policies and declining rates of cycling, and beginning a shift towards more integrated planning approaches (De Jong and Rouwette, 2010; Jamison, et al., 1990; Keates, 2007; McClintock, 2002). On the other hand, UK Government response to public pressure, then and in the years that soon followed, erred on the side of caution, hesitant to promote a mode of transport perceived as unsafe, a 'problem to be dealt with' (CTC, 1993; McClintock, 2002:18). Meanwhile, UK cycling had collapsed to its lowest-ever level in 1973 at 3.7 billion passenger km (1% modal share), down from 23 billion in 1952 which represented 11% modal share (Department for Transport, 2009e).

By the late seventies there were some indications of change. In a 1977 study for the Department of Transport on the potential of cycling in the UK, Waldman found that 'apart from hilliness and bad weather', 'fears about safety [were] a major deterrent' (CTC, 1993: 9; Waldman, 1977). 'If flat, compact cities could be made safe for cyclists, Waldman calculated, 43% of trips to work could be by cycle' (CTC, 1993: 9; also see Parkin, et al., 2008). Also in 1977, the Labour Government's Transport White Paper, 'reflecting government concerns about the rising cost of oil, erosion of the quality of life through road traffic, and the needs of non-car users', offered local authorities a budget for 'innovatory cycling projects' (CTC, 1993; Hayward, 2009: 160; McClintock, 2002). The White

Royal Commissions are 'advisory committees established by the government to investigate a matter of public concern on an ad-hoc basis' (BBC 2008). Often they are created to tackle controversial issues, and to control their impact and activities governments usually give them a reporting date after which they will cease to exist. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, however, became a standing body that has produced twenty-eight reports over a thirty-year period, including one on Transport and the Environment. It will close in March 2011 after publishing its twenty-ninth report, following the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition 'quango cuts' of July 2010. Its terms of reference are:

'To advise on matters, both national and international, concerning the pollution of the environment; on the adequacy of research in this field; and the future possibilities of danger to the environment. Within this remit the Commission has freedom to consider and advise on any matter it chooses; the government may also request consideration of particular topics.' (RCEP 2009).

Paper stated that '[c]ompletely segregated cycle routes would be impractical or far too expensive in most cities, but local authorities should consider ways of helping cyclists when preparing traffic management schemes...there is scope for many more practical initiatives [to support walking and cycling]' (DoT 1977: 28).

By 1981, such projects were deemed successful enough to be considered for extension in the now Conservative Government's Cycling Consultation Paper, which identified 'a boom in cycling' (page 1) also stating that '[i]n an ideal world' cyclists would have 'their own tracks, separating them from other users of the roads. But there is not enough space and not enough money to do this everywhere'. There were over 300 responses to the consultation and the Secretary of State for Transport responded with the Statement of Cycling Policy (Clarke, 1982), inviting local authorities in England to bid for match funding for expanded 'innovatory schemes'. The Minister expressed his



'hope that the growing recognition of cyclists' needs will lead to more widespread action to improve facilities which in turn will encourage more people to cycle' (Clarke 1982: 1). While 'the Department recognises the need to provide cycle facilities wherever new trunk roads cross significant flows of cyclists' the Statement stressed that 'most cycling takes place on local roads' and therefore conditions for cyclists would there depend on 'the actions and priorities of local highway authorities' (Clarke 1982:1). However: 'The Government sees no need to direct that a fixed proportion of the local authority expenditure accepted for Transport Supplementary Grant should be used for cycling projects. The amount of cycling varies from county to county, and expenditure priorities must remain a matter for local decision'. While encouraging cycling the Government would not attempt 'to impose central direction upon the variety of local

circumstances' (Clarke 1982: 5).

The VeloCity conference was held in London in 1984, and Dr P. J. Bevis (Department of Transport) presented a paper on Cycle Facilities in Towns: The Department of Transport's Experience, which frames its discussion (page 1) by stating that 'Cycling has become more popular in recent years but unfortunately cyclists are vulnerable in traffic'. The paper gives an insight into the thinking behind the the design of facilities at the time, e.g. that (page 3) 'Segregating cyclists from motor vehicles by bridge or subway, is the preferred means of providing a safe passage for cyclists to cross major roads or negotiate busy junctions' although concern over pedestrian/cycle conflicts was expressed and barriers within subways recommended to slow down cyclists and segregate pedestrians from cyclists (page 4). The paper also makes approving mention of (page

12) an advanced stop lane recently installed at the Parks Road / Broad Street junction in Oxford.

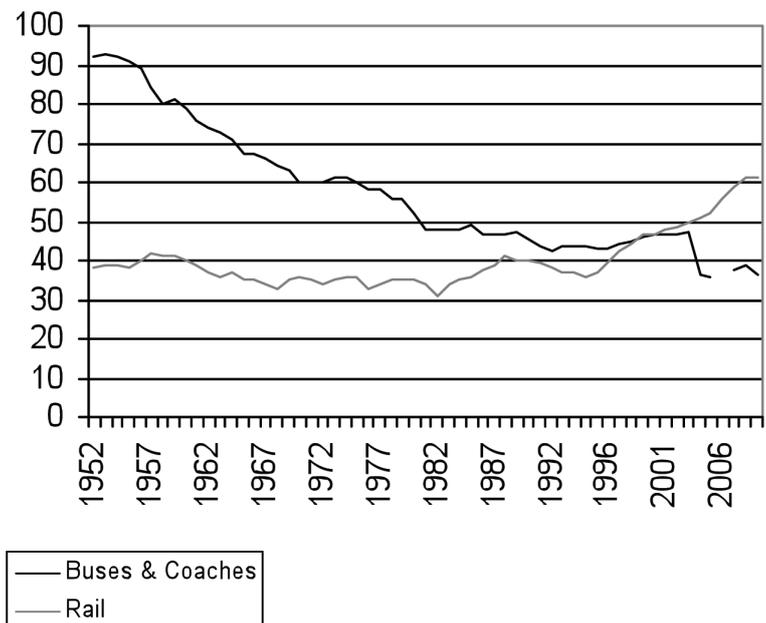
During the 1980s the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation published the technical guidelines *Providing for the Cyclist* (1983), also including a chapter on cycling in *Roads and Traffic in Urban Areas* (1987). New cycling groups were formed during this period, while others began to strengthen themselves through membership, partnership and coalition, including the Cycle Campaign Network, European Cyclists' Federation and the cycle unit set-up by Ken Livingstone and the Greater London Council 'to assist Boroughs in planning cycle schemes and to develop a London-wide strategy for cycling' (CTC, 1993: 10; CTC, 2010f; ECF, 2010; McClintock, 2002). The GLC's role in London was significant: some of today's key cycling routes were created during this period, such as the Market Porters route in South Hackney.

During the 1980s unemployment was high and Sustrans (then Cyclebag) 'used the Manpower Services Commission of the Ministry of Employment to pay unemployed people to take part in [cycle] track construction. At one time there were up to 800 workers on various railpaths.' (Ragnarsdottir 2007). The first of these was the 8km disused Bristol-Bath railway which was converted to a bike path while the Cycle Tracks Act of 1984 empowered local authorities to 'convert sections of footpath to shared cycle/pedestrian use' (CTC, 1993: 10; OPSI, 1984).

By the end of the decade however, in line with what Margaret Thatcher had described as 'the great car economy', the controversial White Paper *Roads for Prosperity* announced the 'biggest road-building policy since the Romans', eventually leading to large public protests at proposed building sites, especially Newbury Bypass and Twyford Down (Docherty and Shaw, 2003; Dudley and Richardson, 2000). Road-building to ease congestion – or 'predict and provide' – has been widely criticised for encouraging more car use. The resulting increase in traffic quickly puts pressure on the new infrastructure, and in the absence of traffic restraint or policies to encourage more sustainable transport, may lead to the need to 'bypass the bypass' (Clarke, 1987).

Meanwhile, bus services were deregulated outside London, and the number of bus trips continued to decline. Against a background of continuously growing car use and travel distances, buses became ever more residual public services. In 1952 buses and coaches represented 42% of all personal travel by distance, while by 2009 they represented only 5%. The modal share of rail declined over this period by 18 to 8%. See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Billion passenger km, buses and rail



Source: Transport Statistics Great Britain 2010

Livingstone's Greater London Council (and its cycle unit) was abolished by the Conservative Government and a 1989 European Commission survey placed 'Britain alongside Belgium as the worst nation' for cycling (Banister, 1997; CTC, 1993: 10). Despite the set-backs, policy-makers and practitioners sought new solutions to long-standing concerns over traffic congestion and pollution, and by 'the late 1980s, the bicycle ha[d] re-emerged as an advocated form of transport for local journeys' (Price, 1997: 12).

## 3. Wheels start turning: Early to mid 1990s

In the UK, the main resurgence of official interest in cycling dates from the early 1990s (McClintock, 2002: 18). The new official stance was configured around three key themes: 1) congestion 2) safety and health 3) sustainability and the environment. Frequently the three were combined: the London Boroughs Association's 1993 Transport Strategy stated that 'reallocation of road space to buses, pedestrians and cyclists is needed to reduce the dominance of cars and improve safety and the environment' (CTC, 1993: 26). These themes have continued to shape cycling discourse and practice into the twenty-first century.

One factor contributing to the return of cycling in policy discourse was a resurgence of cycle campaigning. The Cyclists Public Affairs Group (C-PAG) - 'the cycling world's lobbying organisation to Parliament & Whitehall' - was formed (Ashton-Graham, 2007; Bicycle Association, 1997; CTC, 1993). The Bicycle Association 'increased their support for lobbying' (Ashton-Graham, 2007: 1), and encouraged 'central government to increase the percentage of journeys made by cycle to 5% by the end of [2000]' (CTC, 1993: 29).

RoadPeace the charity was established in 1992 to 'challenge the casual attitude to road casualties and offer support to the victims' (RoadPeace, 2010; Sustrans, 2010b). The first Critical Mass ride was held in London in 1994; the 1990s also saw anti-roads protests and Reclaim the Streets events that were outside the mainstream of cycle campaigning yet contributed to a rising awareness of the environmental consequences of car dependency and a search for alternatives (Critical Mass London, 2010). Finally, National Bike Week was 'reborn' (having been born in 1923) (Ashton-Graham, 2007: 1; Bike Week, 2010). Such activities, alongside the failure of 'predict and provide' to reduce congestion, contributed to awareness on the part of decision-makers that transport policy had reached a cul-de-sac.

### 3a. Congestion

A 'new realism' in transport policy began to emerge at the end of the 1980s, informed by the 1989 National Road Traffic Forecasts (DoT, 1989, Goodwin et al., 1991). While Roads to Prosperity had responded to these forecasts by proposing a dramatic increase in road capacity, others used the same forecasts to argue

for something very different. The Rees Jefferys Road Fund commissioned a study into Transport and Society from the Transport Studies Unit (TSU) at the University of Oxford. The resulting report, 'Transport: the New Realism' (1991) was particularly influential in analysing the limitations of 'predict and provide'. It considered the 1989 forecasts as a watershed, concluding that 'It is not possible to provide sufficient road capacity to meet unrestrained demands for movement' (Goodwin et al; 1991:3). Interestingly, the introduction states that the study writers feared being marginalised for criticising the established wisdom, but this did not happen. 'In effect, the same social pressures that had led the Rees Jefferys Road Fund to appreciate the importance of this issue, had led many other bodies along a similar path.' (Goodwin et al; 1991: 2).

Other official policy reports of the early 1990s concurred with the Rees Jefferys study. Also focusing on the 1989 forecasts, the Association of County Councils' Towards a Sustainable Transport Policy noted that cycling could 'play an important part' (1994: 32) in developing such a policy and recommended 'the promotion of cycleways, shared routes and exclusive sections of the carriageway as part of a comprehensive strategy' (1994: 33). In 1991, the Association of London Authorities published the report Keeping London Moving: The ALA Transport Strategy, which stated that (page 3) 'there have been major disasters in the past caused by a failure to define what we really want from London's transport. For example, the most obvious 'solution' to the problem of traffic congestion may seem to be to build more roads. In London, we know now that not only is this extremely damaging, it is one of the worst things we could do to improve traffic flow - just look at Westway or the M25.'

The 1990s saw this new paradigm become more popular within the policy community. Increasingly it became accepted that alternatives to driving were necessary because the predicted growth in motorised traffic was unsustainable and would lead to congestion and gridlock (Dudley and Richardson, 2000; Gazey, 1998). While the predict and provide model saw demand as leading to the supply of additional road space, now the supply of new road space was seen as generating additional demand. Similarly, rather than policy (road building) appearing as a solution to a pre-existing problem (demand for road space for motor vehicles), the policy was perceived as aggravating and

to an extent causing the problem.

The 1994 report by the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment concluded that new roads do generate extra traffic (Dudley and Richardson, 2000; SACTRA, 1994). The Countryside Commission's Trends in Transport and the Countryside: the Countryside Commission and transport policy in England predicted that given current trends in transport and land use (p.22) within the next thirty years '[T]he perception of rural roads and of the 'open road' would disappear entirely except in the most remote areas. Motoring for pleasure would only be possible in a few isolated rural areas, or at very off-peak times.'

In 1993, Planning Policy Guidance 6: Town Centres and Retail Development (PPG6) foregrounded the decline of traditional town centres alongside continuing congestion problems. It stated (para 11): 'The flow of [private motor] traffic through town centres should be reduced as far as practicable, but not to the extent of creating unacceptable congestion elsewhere or discouraging activity in the town centre in the evenings'. As part of an effective traffic management strategy it recommended 'provision of access and secure facilities for cyclists' (para 12) and argued that 'The quality and attractiveness of town centres can be further enhanced by... convenient and well-managed access for shoppers and other users (whether by public transport, by car, by cycle, or by foot' (DoE, 1993: para 15).

Part of the context for the turnaround on congestion was disquiet in Tory-voting rural constituencies over the prospect of new roads and more motor traffic in the countryside. An unlikely coalition developed in some areas uniting radical environmental protesters with affluent residents concerned over the deteriorating quality of their local environments (often described rather dismissively as NIMBYism, or 'Not in My Back Yard'). The highlighting of congestion as a major policy problem may also be double-edged for cyclists, given the common belief that cyclists 'get in the way' of motor traffic and the large numbers of motorists who feel that cyclists should not be in the roads (a recent survey found more than one in four respondents agreed that 'Roads are for cars not bikes': Pidd 2010a). Different negative effects of congestion may be foregrounded: it can be seen as a local environmental problem (e.g. through particulate emissions or through the loss of visual amenity) or as an economic problem (time lost through sitting in traffic), and the framing of congestion can have rather different consequences for analysis. However, the shift

in policy discourse from congestion as implying a need for new roads, towards congestion as an outcome of building new roads<sup>1</sup> did mark a significant shift at least at the level of policy rhetoric.

### 3b. Safety and Health

During the 1990s, cycling entered the public health policy arena, increasingly viewed as a means of dealing with the UK's burgeoning public health problems related to rising levels of obesity and physical inactivity. Surveying UK cycling policies in 1993, the CTC identified '[t]he active promotion of the health benefits of cycling [as] one of the critical policy areas during the next few years' (1993: 21). For many years cycling had been officially portrayed as 'risky' within a 'safety' discourse that tended to focus on the dangers rather than the benefits of walking and cycling (Horton 2007).

However, a watershed occurred with the publication of the British Medical Association's report *Cycling: Towards Health and Safety* which challenged the focus on safety in promoting cycling (BMA, 1992). The BMA report stated that 'even in the current hostile traffic environment, the benefits gained from regular cycling are likely to outweigh the loss of life through cycling accidents for the current population of regular cyclists' (BMA, 1992: 121). To improve these 'hostile' conditions, the BMA called for a wide range of policy measures, including vehicle speed reduction, safe cycle networks, prioritising cycling within the planning process, and making cyclists 'aware of their responsibilities as road-users' (BMA 1992: 124).

The BMA report emphasised that health agencies and authorities should take a lead in promoting cycling; in other words, cycling was moved firmly into a public health arena to be promoted by public health organisations. It 'helped pave the way for important changes in official policy on cycling in the UK, away from a preoccupation with accidents and acknowledging much more strongly health and environmental advantages' (McClintock, 2002: 18).

The health risks associated with increasingly sedentary lifestyles raised cycling's profile as a means both of regular exercise and disease prevention, with the Department of Health's *Health of the Nation White Paper* mentioning how 'regular cycling could lower the risk of heart attack, reduce stress and increase fitness levels' (Price, 1997: 12), suggesting 'health authorities provide cycle mileage allowances, cycle parking and showers at work' (CTC, 1993; 21; DOH, 1992; Sports Council, 1992). The National Association

1. Congestion was not seen as only caused by new roads.

of Health Authorities and Trusts are reported as having told the CTC that they were 'very much impressed by the recent BMA report, and would certainly wish to encourage cycling as part of a coordinated response to transport policies' (CTC, 1993: 24).

Despite the shifting focus on cycling as health promotion, government's approach towards cycling remained shaped by the perceived 'problem of cycling' as unsafe (and more cycling as even more unsafe) (CTC, 1993; McClintock, 2002). As CTC noted in 1993, 'the DOH appears reluctant to encourage cycling, for safety reasons' making 'few public pronouncements on the connections between vehicle pollution and ill health' (CTC, 1993: 21). The Association of County Councils/Association of District Councils/Association of Metropolitan Authorities publication *Taking Cycling Seriously* began by stating the common sense position (1993: 5): 'Cyclists are undoubtedly vulnerable road users. Some people respond to this fact by arguing that cycling should not be encouraged because it is dangerous'. The Association of County Councils described cyclists as a 'high risk category of road user' stating that cycling's 'potential use, probably influenced adversely by the lack of safe, adequate facilities, is therefore much higher than the actual use' (ACC 1994:33).

Challenging the assumption that more cycling would mean more road injuries and deaths, the concept of 'safety in numbers' began to be used at this time. Key evidence mobilised in support of 'safety in numbers' was a 1992 study of Danes who cycle 'twelve times as much by distance as their British counterparts annually, but with a tenth of the accident rate' (CTC, 1993: 10; Wardlaw, 2002).

Measures to improve safety for all road users began to gain official support, with consideration given to reducing vehicle speed and improving driver behaviour (CTC, 1993). Traffic calming, originally aimed almost solely at reducing casualties, became increasingly popular. In its 1993 review of policy, CTC stated, 'Traffic calming has become widely promoted, and there is now a broad-based programme to reduce vehicle speeds [...] The Department believes cyclists will benefit from changing cultural attitudes towards speed, in the same way that views have altered over drinking and driving' (CTC, 1993: 11 & 19).

Health promotion discourses have unlocked resources for cycling and enabled the mobilisation of a public health coalition for cycling; meanwhile safety issues continue to cause controversy and are mobilised both for and against cycling. Debates over bicycle helmets show no signs of dissipating, while the use of 'speed' or 'safety' cameras remains highly controversial, with

the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat administration authorising a mass switch-off in 2010 as part of 'ending the war on the motorist'. Cyclists have been portrayed as a threat to others' safety: local police forces take action against cyclists who jump red lights, cycle illegally on pavements, or ride without lights at night. Pedestrian safety is used as a justification for excluding cyclists from facilities (e.g. Llandudno promenade: BBC News 2010). Finally, the rebranding of cycling as a healthy practice will attract some people and potentially put off others; for example if cycling is perceived as 'difficult' and 'sporty', requiring specialist equipment or high levels of fitness.

### 3c. Environment

From the early 1990s, official policy discourse began to incorporate environmental concerns, due in part to the 1992 United Nations Environment and Development 'Earth Summit' (Price, 1997; McClintock, 2002). Within this, cycling was increasingly framed as a solution to environmental problems. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report, *Transport and the Environment*, 'criticis[ed] the DoT for failing to provide Britain with an effective and environmentally sound transport policy' and 'called for an increase in bicycle use to 10% of all urban journeys by 2005' (Price, 1997: 12; RCEP, 1995). Both the Earth Summit and the RCEP report 'were especially influential in persuading the Department of Transport to place a greater importance on those transport modes – such as cycling, walking and public transport – which would address the worsening local environmental and transport conditions' (Price, 1997:12).

Increasingly, environmental discourse was re-framed around climate change, seen as a pressing global problem by contrast with local problems such as particulate emissions. The Department of the Environment acknowledged that 'travel patterns influence CO<sub>2</sub> emissions' in its 1992 Planning Policy Guidance 12: *Development Plans and Regional Policy Guidance* (PPG12), and suggested 'In seeking to reduce [CO<sub>2</sub>] emissions, one aim would be to guide new development to locations which reduce the need for car journeys and the distances driven, or which permit the choice of more energy-efficient public transport – without encouraging more or longer journeys – as well as cycling and walking, as alternatives to the private car'. (6.12) Included on a checklist of issues that planning authorities should consider was 'vii) positive encouragement of facilities to assist walking and cycling' (6.14).

At the same time the Department of the Environment prepared its Climate Change consultation programme. Foregrounding voluntary action by individuals as

well as private and public sector organisations, the consultation document suggested that (1992: 23; 7.6i) as one 'possible further action' for public sector organisations: 'Local authorities should take account of accessibility by public transport to new developments. They should look at local transport policies to ensure that they encourage use of alternatives to the private car, especially public transport, walking and safe cycling e.g. by traffic management to limit car use in urban areas and measures to give buses priority.'

In 1994, the ALA report 'Transport and Sustainability in London' labelled London 'An Unsustainable City' (page 3), arguing that (p.12) '[t]he growth of road traffic in London is not sustainable'. Its strategy included (page 15) 'making cycling and walking attractive for everyone by promoting a London Cycle Network and development of pedestrianisation schemes'.

Climate change was used to justify the fuel price escalator, introduced by the then Conservative government in 1993 (and later scrapped by Gordon Brown as Labour Chancellor in 2000). The escalator had ensured that fuel duty would automatically rise above the rate of inflation; thus partially depoliticising a controversial issue by locking it into the budget process.

Increasingly transport research began to incorporate environmental issues. ECOTEC Research and Consulting (now Ecosys UK) was commissioned by the DOE and DOT to investigate links between travel, CO<sub>2</sub> and land use. Reporting in 1993, ECOTEC recommended (page 77) 'measures to encourage the use of CO<sub>2</sub>-efficient modes, particularly cycling and walking'.

Policies which emerged from the ECOTEC report began to make their way into the annual Transport Policies and Programme (TPP) Circulars to local authorities. The 1992 circular had as its first objective (DoT 1992b:2) to enable local highway authorities '(a) to improve their roads, to gain economic benefits through the reduction of journey times and new or improved access to industrial and commercial development, and to reduce accidents, in the most environmentally acceptable way. They would also '(g) make better provision for the needs of pedestrians, pedal cyclists and other vulnerable road users, with special regard to their safety'. In 1994, the objectives were no longer ordered, and the concept of 'balance' had developed: authorities were urged (DoT 1994b: 5) to 'offer a balanced mix of transport management strategies, public transport provision, and facilities for cycling and walking'.

By 1994, in its report to the UN, Sustainable

Development: The UK Strategy, the Department of the Environment 'highlighted the importance of the bicycle as a viable and sustainable transport mode' (DoE, 1994; Price, 1997: 13). 'This was the first time that an official policy document had accepted the need to reduce dependence on the car' (McClintock, 2002: 19). Policy-makers were now promoting cycling as a solution to global and local environmental problems, and an apparently powerful discourse of urgent environmental threat became linked to cycling policy. However, at the time of writing (late 2010) this shift in policy rhetoric has not resulted in nationally set CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets for personal transport, or national targets for reducing the volume of motor vehicle traffic.

### 3d. Policy and practice: the local and the national

By the mid 1990s, a broad range of stakeholders had begun to voice increased interest in cycling as a mode of transportation, whether appealing to congestion, to health, or to environmental concerns. However, how were such statements of support and intention making their way into policy and practice? '[D]espite Government's growing realisation of cycling's potential contribution, British cycle policy continued to develop slowly and incrementally' (Price, 1997: 13). With the lack of clear national guidance, funding, and regulation, local implementation remained relatively slow and patchy. 'There appears to be a growing mismatch between a general desire for more cycling and mechanisms to deliver this. This lack of alignment between need, policies and results is creating a number of strains in certain sectors' (CTC, 1993: 50).

One such strain was that between central government and local authorities. 'Even in the early 1990s, there was still no comprehensive cycling policy document. [...] Local authorities had to read various advice notes and piece together bits from various government documents to ascertain what it was that government was actually advocating as cycling policy' (Price, 1997: 12). Local authority organisations felt that government was not giving enough national support and guidance. In 1993, the advisory publication *Taking Cycling Seriously* by the Association of County Councils, Association of District Council and Association of Metropolitan Authorities, stated that 'Britain is lagging behind its European neighbours in terms of the extent of cycling' and made recommendations to local authorities to address this gap, including the creation of dedicated cycling officer posts (ACC et al., 1993: 7).

Critics argued that in the UK:

- 'No single compendium of cycle policy and practice exists for Britain' (CTC, 1993: 47)

- ‘No integrated framework exists [...] and overall cycle policy and promotion is highly fragmented’ (CTC, 1993: 7)
- ‘No overall design manual for cycle facilities exists for use in this country’ (ibid)
- ‘No clear appraisal mechanism exists to assess the benefits of cycle schemes’ (ibid)
- ‘[N]o integrated transport strategy [exists] - each mode is being treated largely in isolation’ (Gazey, 1996: 1).

CTC concluded its review of policy by stating, ‘It is above all, [...] an overall lack of cohesion from which cycling suffers. This is true not only of national government – local authorities and cycle groups are in similar disarray – but lack of inspiration from the top, especially in the policy field, is a powerful disincentive to others’ (CTC, 1993: 51).

Changes were however under way. The ‘radically-revised’ version of Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG 13) was published in 1994. It stated that local

authorities should both reduce the need to travel and the need to travel by car, while facilitating non-motorised alternatives, including through the better integration of transport and land use planning that encourages shorter journeys (e.g. residential density, mixed land use) (DOE and DOT, 1994; McClintock 2002; Price, 1997). PPG13 was influential for drawing attention to these matters, raising awareness of the high levels of car use for short journeys and offering advice on improving conditions for cycling (CTC, 1993; Price, 1997).

Approaching the middle of the decade, the Department of Transport’s 1994 A Blueprint for Cycling Policy, for ‘the first time set out policy intentions for cycling comprehensively’ (Price, 1997: 13). It acknowledged that underlying conditions on the road needed to alter, and that drastic actions needed to be taken to address environmental concerns. The actions proposed included the introduction of a Cycle Challenge bidding scheme and a National Cycling Strategy (NCS)’ (ibid).



## 4. Partial institutionalisation of cycling policy: mid to end 1990s

The second half of the 1990s can be characterised as marking the partial institutionalisation of pro-cycling policy. Indeed, '[b]y the mid 1990s optimism was running high in the cycling camp' (Reid, 2007: 2). '[A] new pro-cycling ethos ha[d] started to emerge amongst Central and Local Government which was not around even 5 years ago' (Price, 1997: 25). Ashton-Graham (2007: 1) argues that this period represented a greater cohesion and consequently effectiveness among cycle campaigners; 'a change from the 'storming and forming' of cycle campaigning to the 'norming' phase of cycling provision by local and national government'.

During this period interventions were both general (e.g. National Cycle Network) and more specifically targeted at particular groups. For example, the Safe Routes to Schools demonstration project was launched at ten schools in York, Leeds, Colchester and Hampshire, and like the NCN, was funded by the Millennium Lottery Fund and coordinated by Sustrans (ELTIS, 2010; DfT 2000a; McClintock, 2002; Whitelegg, 1997). The School Travel Advisory Group (STAG) was formed – 'charged with the task of greening travel to school' (Flavin, 2000: 2).

In 1995, Central Government set up the Cycle Challenge bidding scheme, designed to encourage local authorities to provide for cycling (McClintock, 2002). £2 million was allocated to the scheme (Zanzottera and Haigh, 1997); significant in the context of cycling policy but small by comparison to broader transport budgets. The scheme was important in its emphasis on non-infrastructure projects, offering matching funds to local authority partnerships such as health- and workplace- related schemes or those which integrated cycling and public transport (McClintock, 2002). It included funding for projects such as the Leeds Cycle Challenge that also aimed to inform the development of future local policy.

In 1996, the Transport Select Committee produced a report on risk reduction for vulnerable road users (CTC, 1993; TSC, 1996). Similarly, the Department of Health which only a few years earlier had been accused of appearing 'reluctant to encourage cycling', had by now changed its tune - the Secretary of State for Health stating in 1994, 'Cycling is not only an effective means of transport but an excellent prescription for better health' (CTC, 1993: 21). CTC published *A New*

*Direction for Cycling* (1996) and in the Department of Transport Green Paper, *Transport: The Way Forward* 'cycling was the only mode for which a national target is deemed appropriate' (DoT, 1996c; Price, 1997: 18). The Bicycle Association (1996) spoke of 'Government's new commitment to encourage cycling'.

### 4a. National Cycling Strategy

In 1996, the UK's first National Cycling Strategy (NCS) was launched with the aim 'to increase cycle use' (DoT, 1996a: 4). Its central target was to 'double the number of trips by cycle (on 1996 figures) by end 2002 and quadruple the number of trips by cycle (on 1996 figures) by end of 2012' (ibid). 'The main feature of the NCS [was] to create a focus for those in a position to influence a change in physical conditions, the attitudes of individuals and the outlook of organisations' (Price, 1997: 17). The NCS aimed to 'establish a culture which favours the increased use of bicycles for all age groups; develops sound policies and good practice; and seeks out innovative, practical and effective means of fostering accessibility by cycle' (DoT, 1996b: 13).

The Strategy included 18 objectives, each of which corresponded to specific 'mechanisms' and 'outputs', identifying how the objectives would be met and results measured. They included:

- to achieve convenient cycle access to key destinations;
- to improve cycle safety;
- to provide for increased cycle use within all local highways and traffic management schemes;
- to design for safe and convenient cycle use of the road network;
- to reallocate road space to cycling;
- to provide cycle parking facilities at all major destinations;
- to reduce cycle theft by improving cycle security and recovery;
- to raise awareness and expertise amongst transport providers, service providers and employers;
- to raise the status and awareness of cycling amongst potential cyclists and other road users;
- to encourage and enable cycling amongst schoolchildren;
- to fully recognise and encourage cycle use for business trips;
- to unlock financial and staff resources to meet the Strategy objectives;

- to ensure cycling is considered in other transport, regeneration and environmental programmes
- to monitor the results of the NCS (DoT, 1996a)

Developed through a 'partnership approach' of central and local government, as well as public, private and third sectors, the NCS was not 'owned' by any one group, but was rather a voluntarily-endorsed 'consensus document' (DOT, 1996b; Price, 1997: 16). A range of stakeholders - the National Cycling Forum (NCF) - from central and local government, campaigning organisations and businesses were to oversee its implementation and progress. That said, ultimately the onus was on local authorities achieving their local targets and thus contributing to the central target (Bicycle Association, 1996; DoT, 1996). Communication of the Strategy took place at a local level, through a series of seminars across England, with local Cycling Strategies due by 1999 (Price, 1997).

Therefore, the cohesiveness and centralised leadership which local authorities had for years been seeking to improve conditions for cycling, seemed to have finally arrived with the NCS. By its very nature (a 'consensus document'), support for the NCS was widespread. However, partly due to its perceived high ambitions (by UK standards that is, 'in line' with experiences elsewhere in Europe), reception was also critical (NCS, 2002; Price, 1997). Even early on its effectiveness, credibility and success were doubted: 'the Government has not made any new money available to reach the target' (Bicycle Association, 1996); the NCS 'does not reflect the reality of the terrain and the land that has to be travelled over to implement it... [t]o this end it is a 'list of wishes' (Price, 1997: 26); 'The targets in the national cycling strategy are impressive, but without the necessary drive we will fail to reach them' (Lock in Hansard, 1997: 961).

The NCS did contain the recognition that it was simply one component that would need to be combined with others, namely 'action to reduce car use, car dominance, car speeds and car dependence' (Price, 1997: 26-27). 'A NCS can be justified by the arguments that any new wave of policy will have to start somewhere' but '[w]ithout this, the NCS will be at best cosmetic' (ibid). Ultimately however, the Strategy marked the first time Government had 'set concrete objectives to achieve an increase in cycling, and as such, marked a 'breakthrough in UK transport thinking' (NCS, 2002: 1).

#### 4b. The National Cycle Network

The second significant cycling initiative of this time was the launch of the National Cycle Network (NCN) (Sustrans, 2010d). 1995 saw Sustrans (formerly

Cyclebag) awarded Millennium Lottery funding for the NCN, to be delivered through a network of volunteers and local authority partners. The first 2,500 miles of sign-posted cycling (and walking) routes included disused railway lines and canal towpaths, bringing former transport infrastructure back into use for a new era. In addition, and connected in places to the NCN, the National Byway was launched mostly along off-road or low traffic routes (National Byway, 2010).

The aim of the National Cycle Network is to provide a network of 'quiet lanes, on-road routes and traffic-free paths' (Sustrans 2010d), prioritising low-traffic (ungraded) roads where different potential on-road routes exist. It now consists of over 12,000 miles of routes with additional proposed routes planned, aimed at serving both 'transport' and 'leisure' uses and covering both urban and rural areas. The network has received increasing support, with 'volunteer rangers' helping to monitor and maintain the routes. Sustrans reports that usage of the NCN continues to increase, with the motor traffic free sections the most popular, although this is not captured in national cycling statistics because monitoring of traffic levels by the DfT, TfL (in London) and local authorities does not comprehensively or consistently target walking or cycling on traffic-free routes.

The complex series of partnerships required to construct the NCN have led to sometimes protracted negotiations over individual routes, such as over land ownership issues where some local landowners may be obstructive and some local authorities reluctant to use compulsory purchase orders (Melia 2008). Problems are dealt with on a case-by-case basis: for example, off-road routes are sometimes delayed by opposition from heritage groups to the hard surfacing of paths (e.g. Pennine Waterways News 2010).

While the NCN represents a watershed in UK cycling provision and continues to grow, it is widely acknowledged that the infrastructure provided has been variable. Replying to questions from Guardian readers, Sustrans' Gill Harrison identified the role that funding constraints have played in this outcome: 'We would love to see an NCN of the same standard as the routes in Holland and Germany but that would require government commitment and investment. In those countries the governments invest between £10 and £15 per head of population compared to English governments whose average input is less than £2 (Cycling Demonstration Towns and City excluded)' (Harrison 2010).

#### 4c. Urban Cycling Infrastructure

Beyond the NCN itself, the 1990s saw the widespread

building of cycle-specific infrastructure in urban areas across the UK, although not generally in the form of cycle tracks on the 'Dutch model'<sup>2</sup> (segregated both from motor traffic and from pedestrians). The 1996 Institute of Highways and Transportation (now Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation) publication *Cycle Friendly Infrastructure* (produced with the participation of the Bicycle Association, the CTC and the Department of Transport) instead recommended a hierarchy of solutions:

1. Traffic reduction
2. Traffic calming
3. Junction treatment and traffic management
4. Redistribution of the carriageway
5. Segregation – cycle lanes and cycle tracks

New guidance published in 2008 as *Cycle Infrastructure Design* (Local Transport Note 2/06) slightly modified this hierarchy while keeping it basically intact:

Consider first:

1. Traffic reduction
2. Speed reduction
3. Junction treatment, hazard site treatment, traffic management
4. Reallocation of carriageway space (e.g. bus lanes, widened nearside lanes, cycle lanes)
5. Cycle tracks away from roads

Consider last:

6. Conversion of footways/footpaths to shared use cycle tracks for pedestrians and cyclists.

The modification makes it clear that off-road cycle tracks also segregated from pedestrians – although low down the hierarchy – are considered to be superior to shared use pavement provision, whereas the original publication effectively equated any provision segregated from motor vehicles, whether separate from pedestrian provision or not. This approach to infrastructure contrasts with that taken by Sustrans in designing the NCN. Sustrans aims to build traffic-free parts of the NCN where possible, and its NCN Monitoring report 2008 (Sustrans 2009) emphasises the positive aspects of the traffic-free sections numerous times; for example, the first, seventh, and last bullet points on p17.

The merits of the different approaches have been much debated in the UK cycling policy world. On one hand, the Hierarchy of Provision has been praised for

### Reducing road speeds

Increasingly the requirement to mix or be in close proximity to high speeds and volumes of motor traffic has been officially recognised as a deterrent to cycling, as signalled in the hierarchy of provision. The Road Traffic Reduction Act passed in 1997 (OPSI, 1997); the National Speed Policy Review was launched in 1998 (DETR, 1998b); and beginning in 1999, 'local traffic authorities no longer need to obtain the consent of the Secretary of State before implementing 20 mph speed limits' (DfT, 1999). A year later, the Government published its White Paper on road safety, *Tomorrow's roads - safer for everyone* (DETR, 2000c), as well as *New directions in speed management: a review of policy* (DETR, 2000a).

The Slower Speeds Initiative was formed by a coalition of organisations with the aim of raising awareness, reducing speed and influencing policy, enforcement and driver behaviour (SSI, 2010). Sustrans began promoting 'home zones', where traditional notions of street priority are eliminated; the idea being that pedestrians, cyclists and drivers all share the same space on equal, social and uncertain terms in order to reduce driving speeds (Sustrans, 2010a).

encouraging the reduction of traffic and speeds, rather than removing cyclists from the roads. On the other hand, reducing traffic volume and speeds remains politically controversial and has proved difficult to implement, particularly as local politicians retain the responsibility for introducing such measures and fear the political consequences of being perceived to be 'anti-car'.

As implementation depends upon locally dominant priorities and views about cycling infrastructure, both the levels of investment and the UK's cycling infrastructure more generally remain more locally variable than in countries such as the Netherlands. It is also worth noting that any item on the hierarchy of solutions can be implemented with better or worse consequences for cycling. The priority given to cyclists within schemes varies, even where infrastructure is cycle-specific: one issue identified by cycling organisations has been the tendency of segregated

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The 'Dutch model' is widely associated with such tracks; other forms of infrastructure and other interventions and cultural factors supporting cycling (for example, the focus on cyclists in the Dutch driving test) are discussed less frequently.



cycle routes to give way at side junctions, forcing cyclists to stop more frequently than motor vehicles and effectively prioritising motor traffic on subsidiary routes over cycle traffic on main roads.

Other forms of infrastructure are not primarily aimed at providing for cyclists, and the effects (intended or otherwise) upon cycling may vary. Traffic calming has been implemented primarily as a casualty reduction policy, and such policies have frequently remained politically and administratively separate from the encouragement of sustainable transport. Posited relationships between the two are not always evidenced and strategic connections have not always fed down into joined-up thinking where implementation is concerned. An example is road humps that are uncomfortable for cyclists to use (e.g. non-sinusoidal), and placed such that cyclists are encouraged to cycle in 'the door zone' to avoid them.

Finally, the existence of the hierarchy does not necessarily determine outcomes: while pavement provision has been described as the least desirable solution, pavement cycling provision is now a common sight across the UK as are on-road cycle lanes of variable (and indeed varying) widths.

#### 4d. Parliamentary debate on cycling

By the end of 1997 and following the election of a Labour government, cycling had entered the House of Commons. A Parliamentary debate on cycling was held in order 'to stress the need for the Government to have a coordinated and coherent strategy to promote cycling in all areas' (Clarke in Hansard, 1997: 948). MP Charles Clarke of Norwich made the case for suppressed demand due to policy failure:

'[T]he number of people who cycle is not simply a matter of geographic convenience but depends on whether respective Governments have focused their policies on making such journeys work.. The scope for [...] an increase in bicycle use in Britain exists if local and national Government apply themselves to introducing policies to put cycling at the core of an integrated transport strategy.'

Forty-one minutes into the debate, MP Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby):

'The debate is fascinating, but the case for encouraging cycling is so obvious that we should not have to put it in such a little debate; it should be central to Government policy. [...] Given the strength of the argument for cycling, it is amazing that so little is being done. Other countries do much more.'

'People pay lip service to [cycling], but they do not do anything. A dynamic drive from the top downwards is needed to push the case for cycling, and to bring it into all transport considerations. Pious words and endless deference – which, it is fair to say, we do hear – are not enough. I do not know why more is not done.' (Hansard, 1997: 958)

The Government consultation paper, *Developing an Integrated Transport Policy: an opportunity to contribute* (DETR, 1997) was published in preparation for the Integrated Transport White Paper, *A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone* (DETR, 1998a). The paper acknowledged a 'consensus for radical change in transport policy'; the need to reduce dependence on cars, including by encouraging walking and cycling. It established the independent research and development body, the Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT), empowered local authorities and the Mayor of London to introduce congestion charging and argued that safety issues should spur improvements for cycling, rather than justifying further decline: 'Safety should be an additional incentive for action, not a reason for delaying priority measures for cyclists (ibid: 2 and 33).

#### 4e. Local Transport Plans

In 1999, 'one of the biggest upheavals in local transport planning for decades' saw the end of the one year Transport Policy and Programmes (TPP) process in England and introduction of five-year (England and Wales, three-years in Scotland) Local Transport Plans (Matthew, 1999: 1). Local authorities were required to produce a strategy covering the LTP period along with a bid for the capital funds required, to deliver the identified local transport needs. All local highway authorities in England (excluding London) were asked to produce a cycling strategy as part of this. In London, via the GLA Act of 1999, the Mayor's Transport Strategy obliges all the London boroughs to set out how they are going to implement the Mayor's strategy locally. The policies setting this out are produced by the boroughs as Local Implementation Plans.

Part of the idea of the LTP and LIP processes was to facilitate longer-term thinking at a local level and CTC described the new process as offering cyclists 'huge opportunities in terms of participation, partnership & policy-making' (ibid). The first round of LTPs covered the period of 2001-2006 in England and Wales.

Perhaps not unlike the new LTP process, the recently-formed devolved UK assemblies now offered the 'potential to create local solutions to suit local circumstances' (Smyth, 2003: 30). However, as Smyth pointed out in 2003,

'it so happens that the UK has, to date, maintained a single transport strategy of sorts. The elements of this broad strategy are, in the main, common not just to the approaches of Westminster and the devolved institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but also to those of the Greater London Assembly and English local authorities. At the rhetorical level, they include a renewed emphasis on public transport with increased investment in buses and trains, initiatives to support walking and cycling, a transfer of freight from road to rail, and a determination to relieve congestion, reduce pollution and cutback on the emission of green house gases. But it is not just the broad aims that are consistent, since the range of actions being considered or undertaken by the different bodies is also similar' (30-31).

For those preparing LTPs, as well as other local authorities working on health and environmental strategies, the Health Education Authority targeted its report *Making THE Links: integrating sustainable transport, health and environmental policies* (HEA, 1999). Jointly produced with the Departments of Health and Environment, Transport and the Regions and focusing on the need to better integrate the policies of these three related but often 'at best uncoordinated and at worst conflicting' sectors, this practical guide recognised the role of transport as 'intrinsically linked to the broader determinants of health – such as income levels, access to a car, clean air, green space and a safe environment, access to services and amenities, access to healthy food, social networks and employment' (CTC, 2000a: 2; HEA, 1999). This was a welcome advancement, for as a National Cycling Strategy newsletter put it a few years later, 'Despite all its benefits, cycling is unlikely to gain significant political support unless it can be linked to other higher-profile policy objectives' (NCS, 2002: 3)

#### 4f. The Cycle to Work scheme

At the end of the decade the Government's Cycle to Work scheme, made possible through the 1999 Finance Act, offered a 'tax exemption to allow employers to loan cycles and cyclist safety equipment to their employees to cycle to work' with the option to later purchase the bike (DfT, 2008d; 11; Guthrie, 2010; OPSI, 1996). The original version of the scheme was likely to save employees a third or more of the purchase price of the bicycle, depending upon their tax band (higher earners save more as it is a salary sacrifice scheme) and their employer's VAT status. The employer has to agree to implement the scheme, and there are local variations: some employers offer the scheme year-round while others only open it for one or

a few months every year.

By 2010 the Cycle to Work Alliance stated that '[t]here are currently over 255,000 people taking advantage of the scheme.' (Cycle to Work Alliance, 2010). As this scheme has been specifically aimed at boosting commuting, it will be interesting to see whether in 2011 the Census shows any change in the levels of cycle commuting (although this information on its own cannot prove a causal effect). In August 2010, new rules produced by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) somewhat diminished the attraction of the scheme although it remains in place.

#### 4g. Additional publications

A number of important and practical publications emerged at this time, including:

- Cyclecraft, a guide to adult cycling techniques (Franklin, 1997)
- Providing for Cyclists: A Code of Practice by the Cyclists Public Affairs Group, CTC and Sustrans (CPAG et al., 1997)
- Cycle Friendly Infrastructure: Guidelines for Planning and Design - 'the Bible of cycle planning' by Bicycle Association, CTC, the DOT and Institute for Highways and Transportation (IHT et al., 1996)
- Funding Cycle Schemes to assist councils in identifying a diverse range of resources for their proposed cycle projects by the Bicycle Association, Sustrans & DETR (BA, 1998)
- BikeFrame: A model cycling strategy, guidance for local planning by Cyclists' Public Affairs Group and CTC (CPAG, 1997)

The end of the decade saw the publication of the 25th Edition of the Government's Transport Statistics Great Britain (based on 1998 figures) (DETR, 1999). As CTC summarised its findings:

The general decline in walking, cycling and local bus services is set against a background where over the past twenty-five years total passenger transport has increased by 58%. The length of motorways has increased by 88% and the growth in traffic has exceeded this with a growth of 96%. Household ownership of at least one car has increased by a third and ownership of at least two cars by no less than 180% so that today 72% of households own at least one car and 28% at least two. Total energy consumption by transport continues to rise amounting to 54.6 million tonnes of oil equivalent compared to 45.35 in 1988. Carbon dioxide emissions from transport also continue to rise and are projected to rise by between 51% and 37% by 2020 based on 1995 levels (CTC, 1999a: 3)

## 5. No change, or all change? 2000s to present

Into the new century, cycling's modal share remained low. According to the 2010 edition of Transport Statistics Great Britain, it has remained around 1% of all distance travelled since 1968. The 2009 National Travel Survey reported that little had changed regarding bicycle use on a national level since 1998/00:

'On average in 2009, people made 16 stages by bicycle compared to 19 per person per year in 1995/97. However, distance travelled by bicycle has increased 6% from 43 to 46 miles per person per year during this period. Cycling accounted for 2% of trips of less than 5 miles in 2009. Frequency of bicycle use has remained fairly stable over time since 1998/00. In 2009, 14% of respondents said they ride a bicycle at least once a week and a further 9% said they did so at least once a month. 68% said they use a bicycle less than once a year or never.' (DfT 2010e: 3).

Figures on cycling cannot easily be compared over time at a city level due to the relatively small numbers but there are indications that cycling may be rising in some areas despite the overall relatively static figures. In London, the size of the city and the number of traffic counters recording cycle trips make annually collected transport data a relatively reliable city-level indicator on changes in cycling. This indicates that cycle trips on the Transport for London Route Network (TLRN) approximately doubled between 2000 and 2008 (TfL 2009c). Outside London, an audit of the first six Cycling Demonstration Towns found that their 'growth rate in cycling levels ... matches growth rates in London, and also other international cities which have demonstrated sustained long-term commitment to cycling.' (Cycling England, 2010).

In the new century as during the 1990s, guidance from government has avoided setting national targets for motor traffic reduction (Butcher 2010), or stabilising, reducing, or redistributing car ownership. In Tackling congestion and pollution: the Government's first report (DfT 2000b) the Department for Transport stated:

'78. Our analysis has shown that, even if the measures in A New Deal for Transport are applied very intensively, national road traffic levels would still be well above 1996 levels in ten years' time. Our present judgement is that reducing national road traffic to below 1996 levels is unlikely to be achievable.

79. We explained in Chapter 1 why we are not setting

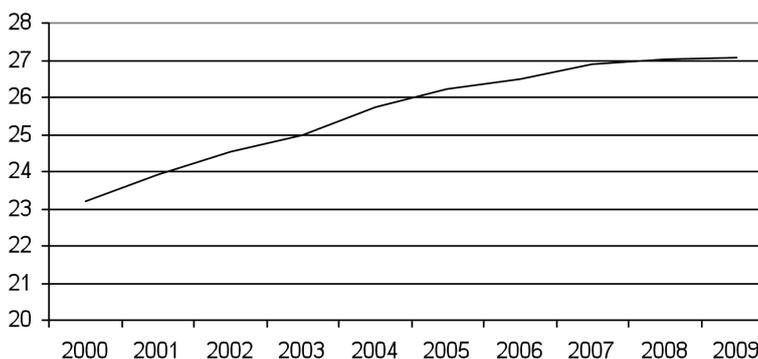
a national road traffic reduction target. The key issue is not the national volume of road traffic but outcomes such as congestion and pollution.' (our emphasis).

While local authorities were still encouraged to produce plans including traffic reduction targets, the lack of a national target marked a shift at a national level towards a 'pragmatic multimodalism' (Shaw and Walton 2001) highlighting the need to support and widen 'choice'. For example, in response to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England which had concluded traffic reduction was a primary aim, the Secretary of State responded that 'an absolute reduction in traffic is unrealistic in the life of the plan and in any event there is no national policy to reduce traffic growth per se; the Government's aim is to tackle the consequences, congestion and emissions by providing people with more choice' (Rochford Planning Policy and Transportation Committee, 2007: 3).

During the first decade of the twentieth century motor traffic volume has broadly continued to rise, from 640 billion passenger km in 2000 to 680 billion passenger km in 2010; according to Transport Statistics Great Britain, 2010. Car ownership also continued to rise. See Figure 5.

Given the populist appeal of pro-motoring rhetoric, it is unlikely that the London Congestion Charge (credited for contributing to increased cycling rates: Litman 2006) would have been introduced had there been a referendum, and indeed referenda in Manchester and Edinburgh were soundly defeated. However, following the introducing of the Congestion Charge

Figure 5. Licensed private cars, 2000–2009 (millions)



Source: Transport Statistics Great Britain, 2010

public support grew and its architect Livingstone was re-elected Mayor the following year.

Amidst a backdrop of nationwide protests to rising fuel prices and launch of the first 5000 miles of the National Cycling Network, MORI opinion polls commissioned by Commission for Integrated Transport and Sustrans revealed that approximately 80% of the public wanted improvements for cyclists, including more cycling routes (CTC, 2000b; CTC, 2000c; IPSOS-MORI, 2000; IPSOS-MORI, 1998). The Office of National Statistics' October 2002 Omnibus Survey concerning people's attitudes to walking and cycling revealed the average satisfaction rating for cycling conditions was 4.6/10 (CTC, 2003c; DfT, 2003).

The Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy was published in 2000, calling for the doubling of cycling by 2005 and quadrupling by 2015 (DRD; 2000; McClelland, 2005). Cycling Scotland was launched in 2003 by the Scottish Executive with the vision to 'establish cycling as an acceptable, attractive and practical lifestyle option for people in Scotland' (CS, 2010). A Walking and Cycling Action Plan for Wales was published in 2009 calling for a trebling of the children cycling to school and adults to work by 2013 (WAG, 2009).

### 5.1 Safety

In terms of legislations to tackle road safety, there were limited changes during the 2000s. Although the 2004 Road Safety Bill – the first since 1967 – was criticised for 'seriously lacking in ambition to tackle the real safety problems on Britain's roads, particularly speeding' (Geffen, 2004-5: 2), the 2004 Traffic Management Act was praised for its 'enshrining of the principle that highway authorities have a duty to move people, not vehicles' (Reid, 2007: 3).

The 2006 Road Safety Act introduced a new punishable offence – 'causing death by careless driving', complementing the more serious 'causing death by dangerous driving' (OPSI, 2006). CTC raised its concern that cases which had previously been considered 'dangerous' would now face lesser penalty as 'careless', in turn 'reinforc[ing] the impression that driving dangerously is not really a serious crime' (CTC, 2008b; CTC, 2008d: 7-8). Between 2003 and 2006, the 'number of drivers in England and Wales prosecuted through the courts for 'dangerous' driving fell by over a third', 'while the number of penalty notices issued for 'careless' driving offences (excluding the use of a hand held mobile phone while driving) was up 101% from 2005 to 2006' (ibid). Furthermore, the new Road Safety Act did not correct the 'mismatch between the tough sentences now available for drivers who kill compared with those whose driving

is potentially lethal but where nobody actually dies (including cases where someone is maimed instead)' (CTC, 2008b: 6).

Unlike many other European countries which adhere to 'strict liability' laws automatically holding the most powerful party in a collision liable for civil damages unless fault can be proved otherwise, UK cyclists injured by motor vehicles must still prove the driver's fault in order to receive compensation (HoC, 2008). Between 2005 and 2007, 'police allocated blame entirely to the driver in over 60% of collisions where a 25+ year old cyclist was seriously injured. For slight and serious injuries to these adult cyclists, both participants were held to be at fault in about 10%, while the cyclist was considered to be solely at fault in about a third. For fatalities, blame was allocated more often to the cyclist – but in these cases, the cyclist was not there to tell their side of the story, of course' (Geffen, 2010: 4; TRL, 2009).

The National Policing Plan (NPP), 2005 – 2008 offered 'police commitment to deal with all forms of illegal and anti-social use of the roads, including drink driving, speeding, dangerous or careless driving and behaviour that is threatening to road users' (CTC, 2005a: 4; Home Office, 2004). Transport 2000 (renamed the Campaign for Better Transport in 2007) launched two speed-reduction campaigns during this period, 'Revitalising Communities on Main Roads' and '20's Plenty', both aimed at improving street life (CTC, 2004c; CTC, 2005b). In 2005, 40% of offences involving the police related to speed (MoJ, 2005). Public support for 20mph zones was expressed in the 2005 British Social Attitudes Survey which found 75% of respondents supported a 20mph limit in residential areas (CTC, 2010e; NCFSR, 2005). The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, in its proposal for the post-2010 Road Safety Strategy, announced its support of making 20mph the default speed limit in urban areas (PACTS, 2009).

The Road Traffic Regulation Act (Amendment) Order 1999 (SI 1999 No. 1608) gave traffic authorities the powers to introduce both 20 mph speed limits and 20 mph zones without obtaining the consent of the Secretary of State. It is important to understand the difference between 20mph 'zones' and 20mph 'limits'. The former must be enforced by physical means that restrain traffic, most notably speed humps but also other vertical deflections such as rumble strips and traffic tables, plus horizontal deflections such as chicanes and build-outs narrowing the carriageway. The latter needs only signs stating 20mph.

In 2007, Portsmouth became the 'first British city to impose a 20mph limit on almost all of its residential



roads', implementing the scheme area by area, using signs (not humps) as enforcement features (CTC, 2007c: 3). An increasing number of cities began implementing or considering area-wide urban 20mph default speed limits for places such as residential streets and town centres. The DfT guidance *Setting Local Speed Limits* (2006b, pp.19-20) states that signs alone were seen in trials by TRL to reduce speeds by only a few mph, so should only be implemented where speeds are already relatively low – 24mph is quoted, which is what Portsmouth followed.

While the measures described above attempt to make cycling environments safer, there was renewed debate about what safety measures cyclists themselves should take (e.g. wearing helmets and high-visibility clothing, the use of lights, cycling techniques). The British Medical Association shifted its position from advocating but not requiring helmets to supporting compulsion (Geffen, 2004-5; Horton, 2009) while the Royal College of General Practitioners remained neutral on the subject due to ambiguous evidence. A 2004 Private Members Bill calling for compulsory wearing of helmets was defeated after strong resistance from cycling campaigners.

Traditionally, cycling safety has been assessed in terms of absolute casualty numbers; however, measuring cycling safety on a per-kilometre basis more accurately assesses exposure (e.g. BMA 1992) and ensures that reduced cycling levels are not conflated with increased cycling safety. For example, a doubling in cycling might well lead to an increase in cycling casualties, however; if the increase in casualties is less than double, cycling has actually become safer. By 2009 the Department for Transport, in its draft consultation to the Road Safety Strategy, agreed that 'cyclist safety should be based on exposure to risk, not numbers of injuries' (CTC, 2009e: 2; DfT, 2009d). Meanwhile, 'safety in numbers' (the argument that increased numbers of cyclists increases cyclist safety) resurfaced, this time in a CTC campaign highlighting London's increased cycling rates combined with decreasing casualties (CTC, 2009g).

## 5.2 National Cycling Strategy Update

Alongside various initiatives and policy changes – perhaps most notably the launch and then the increased resourcing of Cycling England – the 2000s also marked a retreat from ambitious targets to increase cycling. The National Cycling Strategy's target to double cycling by 2002 was abandoned, as was the call that had been made to treble the number of cycling trips by 2010 in the Government's new Ten Year Plan for Transport (DETR, 2000b).

In its 2004 White Paper, *The Future of Transport* - a

Network for 2030, the Department of Transport abandoned the 1996 National Cycling Strategy's central target to quadruple cycling by 2012 'as a part of a wider rationalisation of its suite of targets' (DfT, 2004c; DfT, 2005a: 4). In response CTC commented 'This decision is not entirely surprising considering successive Governments have failed to show any lead to local authorities for example investment in cycling has been absolutely minimal since the NCS publication in 1996' (CTC, 2000b: 1).

Meanwhile, changes to the organisational structure of the NCS were under way. In 2001, the National Cycling Forum was replaced with the smaller National Cycling Strategy Board and a new £2 million Cycling Projects Fund launched (DfT, 2005a; NCS, 2002). By 2005, this scheme had supported 'nearly 300 small-scale schemes to encourage higher levels of cycling' (DfT, 2005a: 8). Reporting to the new Board was the new English Regions Cycling Development Team (ERCDT), whose mission was to 'accelerate the delivery of the National Cycling Strategy', including through the dissemination of best practice (CTC, 2002: 1; DfT, 2005a). CTC had launched its Local Authority Benchmarking Project offering 'hard evidence of what can be achieved in a UK context, specific examples of best practice covering the whole spectrum of cycling policy and a support network enabling participants to draw on the wide-ranging skills and experience of their peers' (Russell and Basterfield, 2007).

## 5.3 Launch of Cycling England

In 2004, the National Cycling Strategy Board published *Bike for the Future* (DfT, 2004a), 'setting out organisational and funding arrangements to revitalise the National Cycling Strategy' (CTC, 2004-5b: 1). A split was proposed between the NCS Board and its delivery arm, which would be launched as Cycling England, as well as the establishment of a steering board comprised of representatives from the government departments who provide the funding (DfT, 2005a: 2). The 2005 DfT review of the delivery of the NCS acknowledged that despite examples of local success, the national cycling trend was 'unpromising':

'In fact, over the last decade, the number of cycling stages in England has fallen by a quarter, from 21 stages per person per year in 1992/1994 to 16 in 2002/2003. Cycling currently makes up around 1% of all trip stages. Total distance cycled has also fallen, though by a smaller amount, from 41 miles per person per annum in 1992/94 to 35 miles per person per annum in 2002/2003' (ibid: 3).

The review pointed to the significant differences between local authority strategies as evidence that

'there is no single blueprint for achieving higher levels of cycling: different local circumstances call for different measures' (DfT, 2005a: 4). It echoed some of the early critics of the NCS who feared its highly ambitious targets contrasted too much with reality:

'the existence of an aspirational national target had not been effective in supporting better performance management of cycling by local authorities... while some local authorities have found the target useful 'it's something to aim for' many more considered it counter-productive at local level, since it is difficult to encourage political or officer commitment to take action to meet a target which is considered unattainable in the first place' (DfT, 2005a: 4)

It acknowledged continuing cultural and political barriers to investing in cycling:

'the LTP system identifies cycling as one of a large number of 'products' that central government is purchasing from local government in return for the capital investment. But, in practice, our work with local authorities reveals that cycling, in most cases, is a significantly lower priority for transport investment than other outcomes, such as better public transport or small-scale highway improvements. Despite the transformation in the availability of local transport capital since 1997 and the increased investment in cycling under the LTP regime, levels of expenditure on cycling still lag well below those in successful cycling cities outside the UK. Central government cannot insist that local authorities adopt a particular cycling programme, nor would it want to, given that the direction of local government policy is to increase the autonomy of local government' (DfT, 2005a: 14; our emphasis).

The review stated:

'Our new approach to cycling is to encourage the development of soundly based local targets to which we can reasonably expect local authorities to be accountable [...] to support the development of challenging but realistic targets' (DfT, 2005a: 4).

Financially, the review concluded:

'There is a clear picture of increasing levels of funding (in the form of capital projects) which have not been matched by increases in the number of cycling trips. [...] By contrast, cycling on Sustrans' National Cycle Network is rising by 10% per annum. It is hard not to conclude that, on the whole, local authorities are failing either to build facilities in the right places, and/or of the right quality and/or to

adequately promote those facilities' (DfT, 2005a: 12).

Therefore, given cycling's potential to 'contribute to a wide range of local priorities', 'it would be advantageous for 'the cycling world' to be able to draw support and funding from a wider range of funding pots than at present' (DfT, 2005a: 14) In other words, the Department of Transport was suggesting it was time to move beyond cycling as 'just transport' and to include a broader public sector constituency (e.g. cycling as healthy) that could both help to fund provisions for cycling as well as hold them accountable. This contrasts with the approach taken in some other European countries such as the Netherlands, where cycling is funded through mainstream transport budgets (e.g. cycle path maintenance is covered as part of highway maintenance rather than from a specific 'cycling' pot) and hardly at all through other funding streams.

Cycling England succeeded the National Cycling Strategy Board in 2005 and began officially reporting to a cross-section of government, comprised of the Department of Health; the Department for Culture, Media & Sport; Department for Children, Schools and Families; the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; in addition to the Department for Transport (DfT, 2008). Cycling England's vision of getting 'more people cycling, more safely, more often' was supported by an initial budget of £5 million, significantly less than the £70 million proposed for it by the NCSB (Cycling England, 2010; DfT, 2008e; Geffen, 2005). By 2008, CE's three-year budget had grown to £140 million thanks in part to a 'contribution from the Department of Health as part of its new obesity strategy' (CTC, 2008a: 1; DfT, 2008e). The Highways Agency's 2008-09 budget for the English 'strategic road network' was £6,937 million (Highways Agency, 2008).

#### 5.4 Cycling as cost-effective

Increasingly, cycling organisations began to justify their funding in terms of cost-effectiveness, given the policy benefits that could flow from increased cycling rates. In its 2008-2012 spending plan, *Bike For the Future II*, Cycling England estimated a 'rate of return of between 3:1 and 4.5:1 for every pound spent' (CTC, 2007d; DfT, 2008a: 8-9).

In contrast to traditional methods which tend to assess factors related to cycling qualitatively (e.g. accessibility, convenience, continuity, comfort), Cycling England was telling a financially quantifiable and therefore arguably more fundable 'cycling story' (Cabinet Office, 2009: 75). In its report *Valuing the Benefits of Cycling*, Cycling

England cited the 'overall benefit of cycling to be 3.2 times the costs', that 'on conservative estimates, a 20% increase in cycling trips between 2005 - 2015 [would] release a cumulative saving of £500m' (DfT, 2007b: 55). However, a revised follow-up study entitled *Planning for Cycling* increased the 'per cyclist value' over ten-fold (DfT, 2008d). Using different methodology - WHO's Health Economic Assessment Tool for Cycling as well as 'values for journey ambience improvements' - the 'total value to society from each additional cyclist now lies at an average of £590 per year' or 10 times the £58.77 reported in *Valuing the Benefits of Cycling* (DfT, 2007b; 6; WHO, 2008) In other words, based on this 'rule of thumb calculation', '[a] £10,000 investment in cycling will therefore prove cost-effective if this means just one extra person cycles regularly throughout the life of the project' (Peck, 2009: 13).

Around the same time, the Institute for Transport Studies at Leeds University, Sustrans and the University of Bolton were working with the Department for Transport on the economic appraisal of cycling and walking schemes (Sustrans, 2006). Consistent with government methods for assessing other modes of transport, results found a benefit to cost ration of 20:1: that is, for every £1 spent on cycling and walking, £20 worth of benefits were estimated to be reaped. This compares to 3:1 for rail and roads (Sustrans, 2006).

While the demonstration of 'cost-effectiveness' helped cycling promoters to speak the language of government, there is nevertheless a tension within such an approach. Where calculations are phrased as 'benefits to society', this in itself does not unlock resources: there must be political commitment to value such 'benefits' (as with the use of cost-benefit analysis to support road schemes, where traditionally thousands of tiny time savings are summed to produce an impressively high 'benefit to society'). Conversely, organisations in an increasingly competitive and cost-sensitive context may wish to show that increasing cycling will (for example) financially benefit the local NHS: this may be rather harder to demonstrate, given the diverse potential benefits related to cycling and the long time-frame over which they may occur.

### 5.5 Public transport integration

Over the years, the cycle policies of various UK rail operators have fluctuated, from not having a policy towards cycling to the banishing of bikes or of bike charges, confusing inconsistencies somewhat reflected in the 2004 Strategic Rail Authority's *Cycle Policy*, which according to CTC, allowed 'rail operators free rein to choose whether to introduce or extend bans on cycle carriage without consultation, whether to impose charges for cycle carriage, or whether to provide cycle

space at all' (CTC, 1993; Geffen, 2005: 2; SRA, 2004). In London, the Docklands Light Railway refuses to accept non-folding bicycles, while the Manchester Metro, which has replaced a traditional rail line on which bicycles were allowed, will only take folded and bagged bicycles.

Although aimed at improving cycle-rail integration, campaigners pointed out that *Cycle Policy* did not set 'clear rules about cycle spaces on trains, charges for using them, peak hour restrictions and consultation arrangements' (CTC, 2004-5c: 8). The current privatised UK rail network is complex, involving a variety of franchising relationships and leasing agreements, making it more difficult to impose a single integrated policy. Operators have cut back on station staffing and encourage customers to buy tickets online; however, this causes problems for cyclists as most online ticket outlets do not allow bicycle reservations. As 'walk-up' fares have become increasingly expensive, customers are encouraged to buy advance purchase tickets that can only be used on the named service. Not all services allow or require bicycle reservations, and an advance purchase customer whose bicycle cannot then be carried on her booked service must purchase a new walk-up ticket – or leave his or her bicycle behind.

One of the biggest shake-ups of the bike-rail debate occurred with the 2009 publication of *Better Rail Stations*, which set out £14 million to increase cycling to stations from 2 to 5% within five years (DfT, 2009a). For '[a]lthough half the nation owns a bicycle and 60% live within a 15-minute ride of a station, only 2% of passengers currently use their cycle to access the local station' (ibid: 45). The 5% target was to be reached with the help of Cycling England's *Cycle Rail Task Force* as well as the transformation of facilities, including the creation of 10,000 cycle parking spaces at 350 stations, and ten 'Cycle Hubs' providing supervised secure storage, repair and hire (DfT, 2009a; DfT, 2009c; DfT, 2010a).

The focus for public transport integration appears to be around providing better bicycle storage facilities in some train stations, rather than providing increased cycle carriage on trains or providing dedicated cycle routes to stations from residential or commercial areas. *Better Rail Stations* also recommends (point 17, p7) 'joint initiatives with local authorities to create segregated cycle routes', but this recommendation was not widely reported or taken forward. There are currently no plans to enable carriage of bicycles on buses including 'rail replacement buses' run by train companies while engineering works take place.

### 5.6 The LTP2 process



Meanwhile, there was growing talk of a 'reality check' in relation to the first round of LTPs, which had not required local authorities to involve cyclists' representatives in the planning process. In response to the first Annual Progress Reports, CTC stated '[r]eports on cycling and walking issues tend to have been sketchy, even unrealistic, reflecting low priority in some cases, wishful thinking in others' (Field, 2002: 2).

In its review of the delivery of the NCS, the Department of Transport had highlighted the LTP process as one way central government can influence local authorities, and in 2004, the Department made the number of cycling trips a mandatory indicator for the second round of LTPs (DfT, 2004b; DfT, 2005a: 19). However, CTC pointed out that buried within the Government's LTP2 guidance was the statement that 'no reduction in cycle use' was a 'satisfactory' local minimum standard (Geffen, 2005: 2). Following the submission of draft LTP2s in summer 2005, a study for the Department for Transport by Atkins Consultancy found that although 78% of the plans included a cycling target, those targets were 'much less ambitious' than the first round of LTPs five years earlier (Atkins, 2005: 4-5; Geffen, 2005-6). Plymouth City Council (2006) produced a comparative analysis of provisional LTP2 cycling targets demonstrating that two-thirds of authorities had set targets for an average annual increase in cycling trips of between 0.1% to 5% (38% of authorities setting a target between 0.1 and 2%); while 13% of authorities had set targets for no increase.

Financially the LTP2s spelled bad news for cycling and other projects falling under the LTP2's Integrated Transport Block, whose budget was set to decrease by £138 million over the coverage period of five years despite a '4.5% increase in the overall transport budget' (Geffen, 2005: 2). Revenue funding for 'smarter travel measures' such as school and workplace travel plans, travel awareness campaigns, individualised marketing and cycle training would not be provided by Government through the LTP2 system but must be sourced at a local level (Geffen 2005).

As part of the LTP2 process, guidance was also issued to local authorities on 'Accessibility Planning' as per the Social Exclusion Unit's report, *Making the Connections: Transport and Social Exclusion* (SEU, 2003; Geffen, 2004). Mainly focused 'on identifying missing links in the bus network' (ibid), CTC highlighted the complete omission of walking and cycling - the guidance providing 'no methodology for assessing the most important accessibility barriers faced by pedestrians and cyclists' nor 'incentive for councils to improve cycle accessibility' (Geffen, 2005: 2).

Namely due to its lack of scrutiny to hold local authorities accountable to certain standards, its lack of dedicated funding, lack of delivery mechanisms, but also due to its failure to sufficiently address climate change, speed policy and the role of transportation in health and social exclusion, the LTP2 process was considered a disappointing follow-up to the first round of LTPs five years prior at the launch of the National Cycling Strategy (Geffen, 2004).

The Local Transport Act 2008 made a number of changes to the way the LTPs work, removing the obligation for authorities to set out action over the next five years. Three main parts to the LTP3 are set out: (1) Long-medium term vision for transport; (2) Implementation Plan – which is updated as funding changes; (3) Supplementary documents.

### 5.7 Soft & Smarter Measures

The start of the new century had inaugurated a shift in focus from what had largely been infrastructure-based cycling interventions to a variety of 'soft' and 'smarter' measures, such as skills training, marketing, and 'invisible infrastructure' (e.g. congestion pricing, 20 mph zones, bus lanes) (CTC, 2010e: 4; Reid, 2007). Although the LTP2 budget no longer provided revenue funding, the DfT encouraged local authorities to support smarter travel measures, stating that '[t]he Department continues to believe that many of the best local transport policies, in terms of effectiveness and value for money, are of this nature [revenue-funded]' (DfT, 2005b: 67).

Smarter travel research blossomed as did programmes. To give one example, Transport for London, which has a Smarter Travel Unit, 'has put a major emphasis on smart measures with an ongoing programme that has included large scale activity on workplace travel plans, school travel plans and personal travel planning, promotion of car clubs, and the designation of Sutton (in 2006) and Richmond (in 2008) as equivalents to the Sustainable Travel Towns' (Sloman et al 2010: 14).

Jones and Burt presented a rationale for such a shift:

'Of course, there is more to cycling than infrastructure. Indeed, it could be argued that the best cycling facility is a road with lots of other cyclists on it, something that existed in places like Oxford, Hull and Cambridge long before serious efforts were made to provide dedicated cycling facilities. This suggests that 'cycle routes' are neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for high levels of cycle use. Attention must be given to other factors.' (Jones and Burt, 2002: 12)

Within some programmes, cycling became one of a variety of 'smarter' options. In 2004, the Department of Transport selected three Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns (Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester) to receive five-year funding to implement a programme of 'smarter choice' measures to reduce car use (DfT, 2010b). Each town approached the scheme slightly differently according to local circumstances, employing such interventions as personal travel planning, travel awareness campaigns, public transport marketing, workplace and school travel plans, as well as the promotion of walking and cycling. During the time-period of the intervention, the project was considered 'successful in reducing travel by car, and increasing the use of other modes, and that the programme offered very high value for money' (DfT 2010b: 54).

Other 'smart' programmes focused more specifically on cycling, combining a variety of measures. In 2005, Cycling England appointed six Cycling Demonstration Towns - Darlington, Lancaster, Exeter, Aylesbury, Derby and Brighton and Hove - to 'innovate and trial programmes to get more people cycling, more safely, more often but ultimately [to] provide the case to prove to Government that investment in cycling can bring benefits across all sorts of agendas' (Darnton, 2006: 8). Employing a variety of interventions to address unique local circumstances and to meet respective local cycling goals, each town received and matched Department of Transport and Cycling England funding, resulting in an annual per resident cycling spend of £10 (compared with the £1 English average) (DfT, 2005a; DfT, 2008). By 2009, results from the six towns showed an average 27% increase in cycling, which the evaluation found to be significantly higher than comparable areas (DfT, 2010c).

In 2008, 11 new Cycling Demonstration Towns and the first 'Cycling City' were launched. They were Blackpool, Cambridge, Chester, Colchester, Leighton/Linslade, Shrewsbury, Southend-on-Sea, Southport with Ainsdale, Stoke, Woking and York, along with Cycling City Bristol. Like the original six, each of these communities received and matched Cycling England funding. On average in 2008, English councils were spending slightly more than previously: '£1.20 per person on cycling' (CTC, 2008f: 4).

### 5.8 Schools and work

Efforts to reverse the downward trend in cycling trips to school and increase in car use continued, with the School Travel Advisory Group's aim to 'return by 2010 to the level of walking, cycling and bus use in the mid 1980s' (Flavin, 2000: 3). Similarly, the Travelling

to School Initiative was launched in 2003 by the Department for Transport and then Department for Education and Skills, 'setting out the requirement for all schools in England to develop a school travel plan by 2010' (DfT, 2008e: 10). In 2004, the Department for Transport and Sustrans began piloting Bike It - 'training, cycle parking and promotion through a series of carefully targeted marketing materials, aimed at children, parents, teachers and local authorities' in 40 schools in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Leicester, Derby, Yorkshire and Greater Manchester (CTC, 2004-5a; DfT, 2008e: 24). Also delivered by Sustrans, the Links to Schools programme was launched in 2004 to 'connect schools and their communities to the National Cycle Network' (Sustrans, 2010c). In 2005, Bike To School Week and London school travel plans were introduced (CTC, 2004-5a).

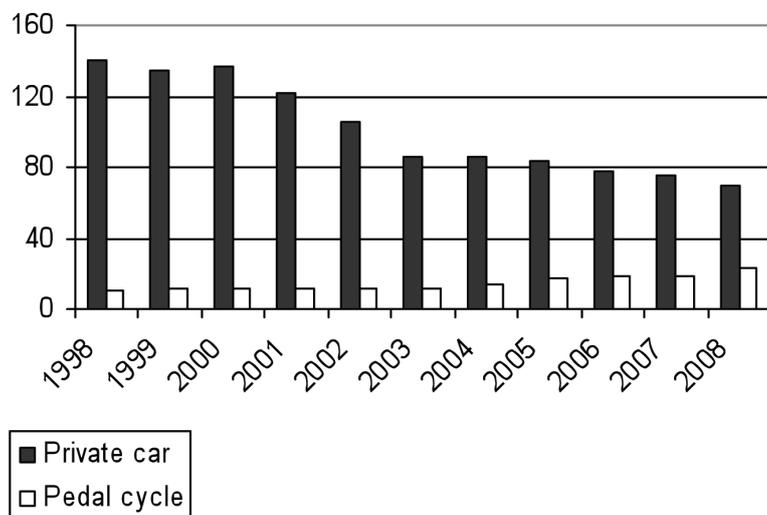
In 2006, Cycling England began piloting Bikeability, 'the new consumer brand-name for the Cycle Training National Standard, the new 'Cycling Proficiency for the 21st Century' (CTC, 2006c: 1). With research having shown 'a 50% decline in cycling over just one generation', Bikeability was launched with the aim of training and encouraging more young people to cycle by 'ensur[ing] that no child leaves primary school without the chance to receive on-road cycle training' (CTC, 2007b: 11). Bikeability includes on-road training at Levels 2 and 3 and the scheme is marketed to adults as well as children. Meanwhile, Cycling England's Bike Club initiative (coordinated by the CTC Charitable Trust, UK Youth and ContinYou) began to 'develop new cycling clubs and cycling opportunities in after-school and youth club settings' and corporate sponsorship enabled the programme to extend to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (CTC, 2009b: 4; CTC, 2009c).

By 2009, approximately 25,000 employers had signed up to the Government's Cycle to Work scheme (with 120,000 bicycles bought as a result), 'suggesting that the scheme has only been made available to a small fraction of the workforce' (Brignal, 2009; Guthrie, 2010: 5). Also in 2009, the DfT launched the Cycle to Work Guarantee, aimed at getting large employers to sign up to certain standards of cycle provision to encourage staff to cycle to work (DfT, 2009b).

### 5.9 London

At the beginning of this review, we cited Shaw et al (2009: 562) who suggest that only in London did 'evidence of divergence from the UK government and other devolved administrations emerge at the level of [transport] strategy.' Transport including cycling policy in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and in election year 2008-9, then Mayor Ken Livingstone

Figure 6. People entering Central London by car or bicycle during the morning peak: 1998–2008, thousands.



Source: Transport Statistics Great Britain 2010, from Transport for London: Travel in London 2.

pledged £62 million for walking and cycling – five times spending five years earlier – and announced plans for a cycle hire scheme and ‘commuter cycle routes’ (DfT, 2006; TfL, 2008). In summer 2008, new mayor Boris Johnson committed £55 million for cycling and in 2009 he announced that this would double the following year. According to TfL’s 2010 Annual Report overall TfL expenditure was over £5.6 billion in 2010 (TfL 2010c).

Cycling in London has been on the increase since 2000: TfL reports ‘a 91% increase in TLRN cycling levels post 2000 ... [a]s a result, the number of cycle trips in London is now estimated to be in the order of 500,000’ (TfL 2009c: 2). According to TfL (2010b: 5) at the trip level ‘cycling mode share increased from 1.1 to 1.7 per cent over the same period.’

Different reasons have been suggested for this, including the 2003 launch and 2007 extension of the Congestion Charge (‘the most radical attempt to change travel behaviour and reduce traffic congestion by fiscal means anywhere in the democratic world’), the 7th July 2005 tube bombings, availability of bus lane space for cycling, as well as the relatively slow traffic speed in London (Begg, 2003: xv). According to Transport Statistics Great Britain 2010, in the London morning peak (7am–10am), average motor traffic speeds on locally-managed A roads averaged just over 16mph between 2007/08 and 2009/10 with speeds on comparable roads in other regions at least 50% faster. During daytime in Central and Inner London, motor traffic speeds are similar to cycling speeds. Transport for London reports that ‘[a]verage speeds in central London [during the working day] tend to be around 14

kilometres per hour; those in Inner London are typically about 20 kilometres per hour, and those in Outer London typically between 30 and 34 kilometres per hour.’ (TfL 2010b: 88).

The rise in cycling in London has been accompanied by a larger modal shift from car travel to public transport; by 2007 over a million people were entering Central London on public transport during the morning peak, nine times greater than the number travelling by all private modes combined (car, taxi, motorcycle and bicycle). Comparing people driving and cycling into Central London over this period indicates that while in 1998, fifteen times more people drove than cycled, in 2008 the ratio was approximately 3:1.

Perhaps because of this, cycling in London has become politically high-profile. The Evening Standard newspaper launched in 2007 a ‘Safer Cycling’ campaign with a ‘charter for cyclists’ and began to cover cycling more sympathetically.

The Standard’s charter for cyclists

1. A real cycle network across London
2. Better cycle lanes with proper segregation
3. Enforcement of special advanced stop lines for cyclists
4. HGVs to be fitted with special cyclist safety mirrors
5. Compulsory cyclist awareness training for all bus drivers and new HGV drivers
6. Cycle-friendly streets: fewer oneway systems that funnel cyclists into the middle of traffic
7. More cycle parking across London
8. Police crackdown on bike theft
9. Make safe the Thames bridges: some of the most dangerous places for cyclists
10. Campaign to alert self-employed that they can claim a 20p-a-mile cycling allowance against tax
11. Better cycle-bus-rail co-ordination: adequate parking at stations
12. Cycle training for all children and any adult who wants it

(Evening Standard 2007).

By 2009 Mayor Johnson called for a ‘cycling revolution’ (TfL, 2009a), announcing new initiatives to encourage cycling, and he subsequently set a target to increase cycling fourfold by 2025 compared to 2000 levels, which would equate to 5% of all trips. Critics have argued that this is still relatively unambitious (for example, Berlin already has a modal share for cycling that is more than twice London’s 2025 target):

‘Cycling has already grown by about 117% in London since 2000. Once natural growth from population increases have been excluded, it means Transport for

London (TfL) is only aiming for a mere 130% growth during the twenty year currency of the new Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS2). This would mean a shift to cycling of just 3 in 100 trips.' (CPRE 2010: 2).

Mayor Johnson's Cycle Superhighways project (based upon a cycle commuter network announced by then Mayor Livingstone in 2008) is the latest attempt to create a network of cycle routes in the capital, following the London Cycle Network (LCN) and LCN+ schemes. The London Cycle Network (LCN) was a set of numbered radial and orbital routes, amounting to almost 3,000km. It had 'been under development since 1994 when the Government Office for London and the 33 London Local Authorities began to plan and implement a wide range of strategic cycle routes and facilities across London. The network was originally planned as a five-year programme, but this was soon extended to ten years and the length of the proposed network was substantially increased.' (LCN 2000).

In 2002, Mayor Livingstone established the established the Cycling Centre of Excellence (CCE) at Transport for London, which was given responsibility for the new LCN+ project. Acknowledging that some already installed infrastructure had been 'variable quality' (TfL 2005), LCN+ aimed 'to introduce quality conditions on to the London Cycle Network', (LCN undated) focusing upon a subset of 'strategic' routes (900 km) scheduled to be completed in 2010. However, in November 2005 the London Assembly reported that '[to] date less than 50 per cent of the planned routes have been completed'; in 2008 Boris Johnson cut LCN+ funding and withdrew the commitment to finish the network by 2010 (Mulholland 2008a). The focus was now upon the sixteen Superhighways intended to provide fast commuting routes from Outer and Inner London to Central London. The first two were launched on 19 July 2010; reporting in 2010 the Greater London Authority (GLA 2010: 27) said that they had received a 'mixed reception' commenting that '[a]lthough the cycle superhighways are designed to provide safer cycling routes, it is not clear the pilot routes are achieving this.'

The Cycle Hire scheme originally announced by Ken Livingstone was rebranded as Barclays Cycle Hire. It opened to registered users in July 2010 and to casual users in December. Mayor Johnson stated that the target was to generate 40,000 additional cycle trips per day; by November 2010 there were 5,000 available bikes at 344 docking stations with around 8,180 docking points (GLA 2010). Reporting in November 2010 the GLA (2010: 7) found 'great enthusiasm for the cycle hire scheme', welcoming it while raising questions about customer service and a lack of clarity over the levels of corporate sponsorship obtained.

Other cycling initiatives in the capital have included 'The Mayor of London's Skyride', initially set up under Ken Livingstone as Freewheel, an annual mass ride on streets closed to traffic which in recent years has expanded to outer London and cities around the country (Skyride, 2010) and 'Biking Boroughs', launched in 2010 and aimed at raising the low cycling levels of outer London (TfL, 2010a). There has not been any specific funding attached to implementing the Biking Boroughs initiative, apart from £25,000 per borough to fund research/strategy papers: the aim was to encourage boroughs to make cycling more prominent within their funding bids.

'Cycle Fridays' were launched in 2009, aimed at encouraging new commuter cyclists (TfL, 2009b); and more local initiatives included Kensington and Chelsea Council's decision in 2009 to begin testing a contra-flow scheme common elsewhere in Europe, designed to provide more convenient routes for cyclists by allowing two-way cycling on normally one-way streets (Webster, 2009). In 2008, the average per resident spend in London was £7 (CTC, 2008f: 4), significantly above the UK average but still significantly below levels in European countries seen as demonstrating 'best practice'.

### 5.10 Cycling and social inclusion

Meanwhile, efforts were under way to counteract UK cycling's gender, age, racial and socio-economic imbalances by repositioning cycling as an 'everyday' activity for everyone (e.g. Bike Week's 2010 slogan was 'Everyday Cycling for Everyone!'). Government acknowledged the potential role of cycling in reducing social exclusion and increasing opportunities for all sections of society, and corresponding campaigning became more visible (NCS, 2002: 2). Cycling thus became an 'inclusion' issue as well as a health, environmental, and transport issue, and funding streams began to address 'cycling as inclusion'.

The CTC Charitable Trust was founded partially to promote cycling to a wider audience. In 2007 it won £6.3 million in lottery funding for its Cycle Champions programme to introduce cycling to 'sections of society that are known to have lower physical activity levels and are less likely to choose cycling as a lifestyle or transport choice' (CTC, 2010e: 2).

The Community Cycling Fund for London (CCFFL), funded by TfL and the Big Lottery Fund, was previously known as the Cycle London Promotion Partnership (CLPP) and has been running since 2003. In March 2007 London Cycling Campaign assumed administrative responsibility and the name

of the fund was therefore changed to CCFfL to reflect this alteration. The purpose of CCFfL is 'to provide small grant funding to enable community projects to experience the benefits of cycling.' (TfL/LCC 2007: 2). The criteria in 2007 were as follows:

'Promote Demonstrates and promotes cycling, and builds confidence of infrequent or lapsed cyclists new to cycling in London.

Inclusive Reaches out to groups under-represented in the cycling community such as women, children/youths, ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

Access Increases access to cycling for groups where opportunities are limited by income, equipment, skills, information or confidence.

Partners Develops projects with local partnerships with other non-cycling specific organisations (e.g. travel plans, health, nature, heritage).

Publicise Provide positive messages supporting the status of cycling to the public.' (TfL/LCC 2007: 22).

Later a sixth criterion was added and projects must also promote cycling 'as a form of transport'.

### 5.11 Climate change, obesity, and 'active travel'

By the mid-2000s, climate change and the 'obesity epidemic' were making headlines, and cycling as at least a partial remedy to both was being considered with greater urgency. The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change and the Eddington Transport Study were published in 2006 (DfT, 2006a; HM Treasury, 2006), followed by the Department for Transport's response, *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System* (DfT, 2008c) as well as its *Low Carbon Transport Strategy* (DfT, 2009c). Government-wide, a multitude of reports set out recommendations to tackle the health and environmental crises, including through increased levels of cycling.

A report by Davis et al (2007:2) for the Institute for European Environmental Policy drew these issues together, assessing 'the contribution of [the] growth in car travel to the decline in human energy expenditure and consequently to the parallel growth in obesity in the UK; and at the same time [calculating] the contribution to climate change through carbon dioxide emissions as car travel has replaced walking... [seeking] to demonstrate that two of the main challenges facing the UK in health and environment have common origins and some common solutions.' This report was distinctive in explicitly focusing upon the motorisation=ill-health equation, alongside the more common cycling=health equation that began to

An early example of a community-based cycling project is the Cycling for Women project, run by the Women's Design Service (WDS) during 2003-2004 and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This was an action research project to find out some of the reasons why cycling in London is disproportionately an activity undertaken by men rather than women. As well as questionnaires, surveys and focus groups, the project undertook to kit out ten women in two different inner London boroughs – Camden and Lambeth – with all the equipment and training to enable them to start cycling for transport, and to follow their progress. Cycle training and maintenance classes as well as a tutorial on locking one's bike properly to deter theft were included in the package offered to women of various ages, ethnicities, cycling abilities and personal situations (some were provided with equipment such as child seats and trailers to enable them to cycle with their children). Findings included the deterrent effect of fast traffic and the need for secure bicycle storage at home (WDS, 2004).

be made during the 1990s.

Cycling became re-defined alongside walking as 'active travel'. The Select Committee on Health referred to cycling as having a potentially key role in the fight against obesity (CTC, 2004a). The Department for Transport published its *Action Plan for Walking and Cycling* (DfT, 2004) and the Association of the Directors of Public Health (ADPH) along with 70 other concerned bodies launched *Take Action on Active Travel*, calling for, amongst other things, 'an investment of 10% of transport budgets in cycling and walking' (ADPH, 2008).

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence published its *Guidance on the promotion and creation of physical environments that support increased levels of physical activity* (NICE, 2008). The *Active Travel Consortium* (ATC) was awarded £19.9 million in 2007 by the Big Lottery's Wellbeing Fund 'to identify people who are currently inactive and help them incorporate cycling and walking into their everyday lives' (Big Lottery, 2010). *Bike Week 2005* was themed 'Everyday cycling for health and fitness' (Bikeradar, 2005) and the *Bike4Life* brand was launched as part of the Department of Health's *Be Active, Be Healthy* plan (DoH, 2009). Finally, in 2010, the Government published its *Active Travel Strategy*, which declared the dawn of a 'Decade of Cycling' (DfT, 2010a).

However, as climate change as well as health

discourses became embedded in policy-making, it became clear that they could be used to support a variety of policy positions. For example, in 2009 the Department for Transport reversed its previous policy and supported 'green wave' systems for traffic lights, which enable vehicles travelling at certain speeds to meet a succession of green lights. The new stance was that 'green waves' were to be encouraged in the name of climate change, although the Campaign for Better Transport criticised the policy on the grounds that

green waves 'don't tackle congestion in the long term because they don't give people alternatives to driving' (BBC, 2009). By contrast, green wave systems have been developed for bicycle traffic in other European cities such as Copenhagen (City of Copenhagen 2009).



## 6. Dawn of a new era?

The May 2010 general election and ensuing Government reshuffle ushered in new Transport Secretary Philip Hammond, who on his first day in office was quoted as stating: 'We will end the war on motorists.' (Morrison, 2010). Initiatives to this end so far have included ending central funding for new fixed speed cameras and ending national policies on parking. This means an end to upper limits for car parking in new developments, and a removal of the instruction to local authorities to set the local cost of parking at levels which encourage people to use alternative forms of transport. Hammond was also quoted as saying that removing national parking policies forms 'a key step in ending the war on the motorist. For years politicians peddled the pessimistic, outdated attitude that they could only cut carbon emissions by forcing people out of their cars.' (Hope, 2011). In accordance with this approach electric cars have hit the headlines with grants of £5,000 for people purchasing such vehicles, and active travel has been de-prioritised.

Having abolished Cycling England the government has ended ring-fencing for cycling funding as part of the 'localism' agenda. Meanwhile, a Local Sustainable Transport Fund was created. Writing on behalf of the Department for Transport, Nick Bisson its Director of

Regional and Local Transport Policy stated that:

'The Department is establishing a £560 million Local Sustainable Transport Fund to challenge local authorities outside London to bid for funding to support packages of transport interventions that support economic growth and reduce carbon emissions in their communities as well as delivering cleaner environments and improved air quality, enhanced safety and reduced congestion. The profile of this Fund is £80m in 2011/12, £140m in 2012/13, £160m in 2013/14 and £180m in 2014/15.' (Bisson, 2010)

In the context of cuts to other areas of transport funding, money for cycling outside London is likely to come from bids to this fund (the Integrated Transport Block originally introduced in 2000 to fund Local Transport Plans has provided some funding for cycling-related projects, but is simultaneously being cut). These will compete with projects that target other forms of transport but also address the aims of supporting local economic growth and cutting carbon emissions. The first three years of the fund provide for £380m, by contrast with Cycling England's £140 million for cycling alone during the last three years of its life.



## 7. Conclusions

The previous thirty pages have outlined the changing discourses, programmes and policies related to cycling, and we invite the reader to draw their own conclusions. However, we add a brief comment on what we have learned through researching and writing this review.

As the Department for Transport concluded in 2005: 'Despite [...] investment and increased government interventions, the number of cycling trips has not

risen overall: there are pockets of increased activity and there are exemplary success stories in some towns and cities but on the whole cycling levels have not increased in proportion with the quantity of public funding committed to it' (DfT, 2005a: 1). 'Policy interventions have not yet delivered systematic increases in cycling and walking' (Cabinet Office, 2009: 66) and there is a 'gap between intent and outcomes, between 'political rhetoric and the realities of the policy process' (Docherty and Shaw, 2003: xix).

However, despite this, it would not be fair to say nothing has changed. Data from the Cycling Cities and Towns programmes and from London suggest that it is possible to reverse the UK's long-term stagnation and decline in cycling levels. But clear signs of change on the ground have happened so far in a relatively fragmented way and at a local rather than national level. Even within London there are substantial differences between Inner and Outer London and much of the increase in cycling levels has taken place in Central or Inner London (TfL 2009c).

The Cabinet Office's 2009 Analysis of Urban Transport highlights the local/national tensions, that although

'it is for local leaders to shape their cities [...] there are concerns that the mechanisms Government has established [...] may not be used to their full potential by local authorities. Many local authorities lack an overarching vision for an integrated urban transport system. This is particularly evident for walking and cycling, buses and traffic management. The current approach is often characterised by uncoordinated programmes and agencies working in isolation.' (Cabinet Office, 2009: 5)

Finally, we are concerned that further devolution of difficult decisions on transport to a local level may prolong and exacerbate these problems, even in those authorities where decision-makers are supportive of cycling. The removal of national standards and ring-fencing will create additional pressure for local politicians to justify decisions such as parking standards, rather than referring critics to national policies. After all, it is easier to be 'an academic commenting on the government's track record on transport than it is to be the politician at the sharp end making the tough decisions' (Begg, 2003: xiv).



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