

Consultation response

Question 1

The Government would be interested to hear views on the approach and actions set out in section 8 of this strategy

We support the Department's use of 'better mobility' as a phrase in replace of 'better transport'; however, we are deeply disappointed that the draft Strategy fails to refer to disabled people as being part of the cycling community.

We strongly support plans to increase awareness of the use of cycles as mobility aids, which is a vital step towards improving the inclusivity of cycling. Recognition of cycles as mobility aids will encourage more disabled and elderly people to cycle, as it will end the discriminatory practice whereby those using a cycle as a mobility aid are forced to dismount; rather, they will be secure in the knowledge that they are able to use their cycle as a mobility aid and continue their journey into previously restricted areas. Similarly, transport interchanges must make information regarding access by non-standard cycles clearly and readily available. However, whilst we welcome these plans, we ask the Department to go further and to take steps to ensure cycles are legally recognised as mobility aids, with the same legal status as all other types of 'invalid carriage'. Research must be commissioned to look at designing a standard for the storage of non-standard cycles on public transport, which are currently not accommodated due to their size: we would be happy to work with the Department in the piloting of such a project.

Investment in e-cycles is desperately needed and we look forward to the outcomes of the pilot schemes currently being carried out. E-cycles are often an essential form of transport for people with a range of health issues - including poor balance, frailty or breathing difficulties - who find cycling easier than walking, but who may be unable to weight-bear and require battery assistance to overcome the challenges of arduous terrain. We also recognise the critically important role of e-cycles in enabling elderly people to stay active for longer, particularly when they no longer retain the ability to drive, and the potential for encouraging greater numbers of people with mobility issues to take up cycling.

In relation to point 8.12, we recommend that rights of way improvement plans must recognise the access needs of disabled cyclists: they should be based upon a set of standards that acknowledge the disabled cyclist's right to travel through a cycle route independently, unhindered and in comfort. It is also imperative that the design of cycling schemes considers the interface between disabled pedestrians and disabled cyclists, who often share the same road spaces. The needs of both must be recognised when planning new infrastructure (e.g. bus bypasses, segregation methods and pedestrian crossings) to ensure that the interests of these groups are not pitted against each another, allowing for a shared solution.

As well as including a target for increasing the numbers of children walking to school, the Strategy must also include a target for the number of children *cycling* to school, which does not appear to be mentioned in the draft version.

We call for a review of all building and infrastructure standards to properly assess the needs and requirements of disabled people, with a suggestion that this be piloted in one of the Healthy New Towns demonstrator sites.

With regard to Bikeability, we urge that local authorities are obliged to produce data on the proportion of those children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in England who are receiving tuition under the programme. We would also like to see a similar measurement used to assess the proportion of Bikeability sessions delivered in special schools, as opposed to mainstream schools, and the proportion of cycle instructors who have been trained to work with disabled children and adults.

Question 2

The Government would be interested to hear views on the potential roles of national government departments, local government, other public bodies, businesses and the voluntary sector in delivering the strategy and what arrangements could best support partnership working between them

Greater provision, and access to, inclusive cycling opportunities is needed locally. Local authorities must be encouraged to identify and develop strategic partnerships with local cycling and disability groups to form inclusive cycling ‘hubs’ – local centres that provide access to a range of different cycles such as tricycles, handcycles and tandems, as well as offering training, information and advice. Establishing a number of hubs within a locality or region will encourage the development of inclusive cycling peer networks, allowing disabled cyclists (as well as those who have difficulty accessing such provision) to share experiences, information and knowledge. Local inclusive cycling hubs could share best practice with each other, hold regular meetings and act as forums for debate.

To deliver an effective inclusive cycling and walking strategy, more joined-up thinking is required at a local level. Public health; transport; environmental; sport and leisure; SEND; mental health; and social care services must work together to provide appropriate inclusive cycling opportunities for the most isolated and hard-to-reach communities. We would emphasise the importance of partnership working, collaboration and communication in extending the reach of cycling to the disabled and elderly communities and in developing active travel for all. The recognition of the needs of disabled people as both pedestrians *and* cyclists is paramount to the success of any cycling and walking strategy.

Question 3

The Government would be interested to hear suggestions and evidence of innovative projects and programmes which could be developed to deliver the objectives outlined in Section 4

We would recommend you to take a close examination of our work at Wheels for Wellbeing: based in south London, we provide inclusive cycling opportunities for

disabled people of all ages and ability – last year alone 1,300 disabled people cycled with us. We would also put forward as a case study Cycle Training UK, who's Positive Spin programme provides cycling opportunities for people diagnosed with dementia. Bath & North East Somerset Council's 'Wheels for All' programme is another good example of best practice in inclusive cycling. All of the aforementioned provide unique lessons in how to bring cycling to communities that are hardest to reach, as well as to those individuals most likely to experience social isolation as a result of poor transport links.

Question 4

The Government would be interested to hear your views on how to increase cycling and walking in typically under-represented groups (for example women, older people, or those from black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds)

We are extremely disappointed that disabled people have not been mentioned as one of the under-represented groups cited above. For any cycling and walking strategy to be fully inclusive, it is essential that disabled people be recognised.

Given the fundamental lack of academic literature surrounding disabled people and cycling, we urge the Department to commission new research into this area. It is important to determine a baseline for the proportion of disabled people who cycle in England if we are to measure the success of the Strategy in improving cycling levels amongst under-represented groups. Therefore, it is essential that such research be undertaken immediately to ensure optimum efficacy of the Strategy. Similarly, it must be ensured that disabled people are included as one of the Strategy's key performance indicators, which will help to determine its impact and success.

Imagery is a key barrier that prevents more disabled people from taking up cycling. There is a significant dearth in the amount of available images - both in policy and design publications - depicting non-standard cycles. We urge the Department to build an image bank of non-standard cycles that is made accessible to local authorities, which can then be used for training purposes.

Investment should be targeted at those groups hardest to reach. It is clear that by developing cycling infrastructure that considers the needs of those groups with the highest requirements *first* (instead of focusing on the needs of 'mainstream' cyclists), we will end up with infrastructure that is fully inclusive and can be used by everyone, regardless of ability or need. It follows that all cycling infrastructure must be designed with the needs of disabled people in mind in the first instance, establishing routes that provide step-free, seamless, door-to-door travel.

For more disabled people to be encouraged to take up cycling, it is paramount that cycles are recognised as mobility aids. To mitigate the costs of such a measure, we would recommend the following:

- Extending the Motability Scheme to include cycles;

- Extending grants that can be used for electric cars to support disabled and elderly people to purchase e-cycles (which are otherwise prohibitively expensive);
- Revising legislation on Value Added Tax (VAT) so that mobility aids are exempt from this form of taxation; and
- Piloting cycle hire schemes for non-standard cycles.

We wish to be involved in the piloting of design standards for the parking and storage of non-standard cycles. In particular, we strongly recommend that the Department considers the extension of the blue badge scheme to users of non-standard cycles, which we would like to see trialled.

All local authorities must be encouraged to adopt an 'inclusive cycling footprint', which outlines their commitment to designing and delivering infrastructure that is fully inclusive and considers the needs of disabled cyclists. Councils should also be supported in information campaigns that raise awareness of the opportunities for disabled people to cycle, as well as providing inclusive cycling training for their staff.

Finally, we recommend that guidance for providers of cycling sports events be issued to ensure the recognition of non-standard cycles in the sport and the widest possible participation of people.