

## Consultation response (08.12.16)

### Background

Wheels for Wellbeing is an award-winning charity that supports disabled people of all ages to enjoy the benefits of cycling. We do this by running drop-in cycling sessions across south London, with our fleet of cycles and team of dedicated instructors and volunteers. We also increasingly campaign for the recognition and removal of barriers to cycling for disabled people nationally. We organise and facilitate the Inclusive Cycling Forum (ICF), a steering group made up of disabled cyclists. The Forum's aim is to discuss and develop new ideas that will lead to a more inclusive cycling culture in the UK; in turn, these are used to inform the direction of the charity's ongoing campaigns and policy work.

**We are responding to this inquiry as we believe that encouraging a broader range of people to cycle can help reduce urban congestion. Disabled and elderly people, as well as people experiencing ill health, frequently rely on the use of private car hire and taxis to get around; but often this is because cycling infrastructure and facilities have not been designed to be inclusive enough, or is due to the perception that cycling is the preserve of the young, fit and brave.**

**Opening up cycling opportunities to disabled people has the potential to significantly increase cycling levels, reduce congestion and improve the environment.**

### Integrated strategies

*Parking schemes, including workplace parking levies*

1. Increasing the availability of cycle parking will encourage more people to cycle who might otherwise rely on the use of a car, private car hire or public transport to get around. However, a lack of reliably available and adequate cycle parking prevents many from taking up cycling, as it creates uncertainty and lessens the likelihood of someone embarking on a cycle journey in the first place. By increasing the quality and quantity of cycle parking facilities, local authorities will help to reduce residents' reliance on motorised vehicles, which will in turn both ease congestion and improve air quality.
2. Many disabled people rely on the use of private car hire (e.g. taxis) to get around. However, we know that a significant and growing proportion of disabled people are taking up cycling. With increased inclusive cycle parking facilities, many more disabled people might also take up cycling. But whilst there is generally good provision of parking for disabled drivers (typically 4-6% of all off-street car-parking

spaces are designated for use by disabled people),<sup>1</sup> there are currently no equivalent standards for accessible **cycle** parking.

3. More specifically, there is a lack of readily available and/or appropriate parking for *non-standard* cycles (such as tricycles, cargo bikes and tandems) which are frequently used by disabled people, as well as small businesses and parents. As mentioned above, just as there are designated parking bays for disabled drivers, there needs to be an equivalent for disabled cyclists too. Opening up cycling facilities to a wider range of cyclists will increase levels of cycling (particularly amongst under-represented groups) and reduce car traffic and congestion, whilst promoting a sustainable and active form of travel.

4. New offices and commercial spaces are being built with little or no consideration for disabled cyclists (e.g. without inclusive cycle parking and accessible showering facilities). But by offering such facilities employers will be providing equity and choice for disabled people who may wish to cycle into work, as opposed to driving in, relying on private care hire or car shares – again helping to reduce traffic congestion and having the added benefit of improving employee’s health and wellbeing. Such measures will also ensure that new premises are built with the needs and requirements of disabled people in mind, as required under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as part of the Equality Act 2010.

5. We recommend that government pilots a ‘Blue Badge’ scheme for disabled cyclists that would grant access to purpose-built cycling facilities for disabled people, based upon a set of agreed criteria, method of assessment and devised in partnership with disabled cyclists (Wheels for Wellbeing would be willing to assist).

6. We urge local authorities to consider the potential for cycle hire schemes to appeal, and be made accessible, to a much broader range of people. For example, by increasing numbers of e-bikes available for hire, local authorities would be widening the appeal of cycling to many more people – including disabled and elderly people, as well as those with balance and breathing issues (and those living in hilly areas). The same goes for other forms of cycle, including cargo bikes, which can be used by parents to transport children. Such cycle hire schemes could be coordinated in conjunction with existing inclusive cycling hubs, like Wheels for Wellbeing, and would help to encourage greater levels of cycling – both in and outside of urban areas.

7. We recommend that ‘park and ride’ schemes are encouraged to incorporate opportunities for cycle hire, which would further incentivise cycling and reduce reliance on public transport.

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<sup>1</sup> *Blue Badges and parking for disabled people in England* (House of Commons Library, Briefing paper SN1360, 9 August 2016), pp. 18-19. See: [file:///C:/Users/neil/Downloads/SN01360%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/neil/Downloads/SN01360%20(2).pdf) (accessed 15/11/16).

## *Cycling and walking infrastructure*

8. Designing cycling infrastructure in a way that is fully inclusive will encourage more disabled people to take up cycling, thus reducing reliance on private car hire and lessening congestion. This means ensuring that the dimensions and requirements of non-standard cycles (such as tricycles and tandems) are met – for example in the provision of step-free routes; sufficiently wide cycle lanes; appropriate speed reduction measures (e.g. sinusoidal, as opposed to cushioned, speed bumps – the latter can cause difficulties for cycles such as tricycles, which might be knocked off balance); and appropriate filtered permeability (e.g. ensuring ample width between bollards to allow a wider/longer cycle to pass).

9. In addition to the above point, it must be noted that when roads are congested cars frequently take over, or overlap, space designated to cycle lanes. This is an issue for all cyclists, but particularly for those using non-standard cycles, for which a wider berth is commonly required. In a similar vein, non-standard cycles are unable to ‘traffic-weave’ in the same way that a standard bicycle can, and so in heavy traffic there is no advantage to cycling if you are unable to get passed vehicles.