

Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
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10.02.17



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Mayor's Police and Crime Plan

To Whom It May Concern:

We are grateful for the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan. Wheels for Wellbeing is an award-winning charity based in Brixton that supports disabled people to access the benefits of cycling, and we are increasingly campaigning for better recognition for disabled cyclists across London.

A key issue that we are campaigning for is the recognition of cycles as mobility aids. Under existing legislation, cycles are not listed as a mobility aid or 'invalid carriage' (unlike wheelchairs and mobility scooters), despite the fact that many disabled people use cycles for this very purpose. Indeed, for a large proportion of disabled people, cycling is much easier than walking as it puts less strain on joints and provides a more comfortable form of active travel for those with poor standing balance, frailty or who are unable to weight-bear.

We are aware that Section 72 of the Highways Act 1835 (as amended) gives police officers the power to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or a fine of up to £500 to those found cycling on a footway, which is often a matter of discretion for individual officers. However, over the past year we have had increasing complaints from disabled cyclists who have been instructed by the police to dismount their cycle on a footway or in a pedestrianised area (e.g. a shopping centre/station concourse), despite explaining that they were using their cycle as a mobility aid and that walking or pushing their cycle would be physically impossible. In some cases, disabled cyclists have even told us that they have been threatened with an FPN; something that wouldn't happen if they were using a mobility scooter or wheelchair in the same location.

As a charity that promotes cycling equality for disabled and older people, we feel strongly that by punishing disabled people for cycling on footways – in cases where they are using their cycle as a mobility aid – the police are sending out the wrong message. Such rigid, and at times punitive, enforcement of the law acts as a disincentive for many disabled and older people to take up cycling, who are also the groups most likely to struggle to lead an active lifestyle.

We therefore urge the Mayor to conduct a review into the policies and practices of the Metropolitan Police regarding the use of cycles as mobility aids, as well as consider the possibility of updating guidance and training in this area – both of which we would be happy to help with. Given the Mayor's commitment to make London a more inclusive city, we hope that he will take heed of our suggestions and help ensure that cycling works for the majority, not just the few.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Andrews, Campaigns & Policy Officer, Wheels for Wellbeing.



Lewisham

