

MY CYCLE, MY MOBILITY AID: CYCLING & DISABLED PEOPLE'S MOBILITY

Cycling as a Mobility Aid

Many Disabled people use their cycle as a mobility aid because they find it easier than walking or using a wheelchair. Cycling provides independent mobility for Disabled people as well as the additional mental and physical health benefits.¹ However, cycles are not legally recognised as mobility aids, even when used in this way by Disabled people. This prevents Disabled people from accessing public spaces (such as shopping precincts, parks, public transport hubs and pedestrianised areas) with the same ease as non-Disabled people and it limits their social participation and opportunities for daily physical activity and active travel.

Solutions

There are a range of **legislative and non-legislative** options to give Disabled people who use their cycle as a mobility aid the same access opportunities as wheelchair and mobility scooter users.

Legislative

- 1) Amend current legislation to recognise cycles as mobility aids for Disabled people akin to wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Non-Legislative

- 1) Public information campaigns to raise awareness of the use of cycles as mobility aids.
- 2) Industry campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of fully accessible cycle infrastructure (as outlined in LTN 1/20), and the potential range of mobility equipment used in cycle lanes.
- 3) Revise the "Boateng Guidance"³ to recognise explicitly the use of cycles as mobility aids by Disabled cyclists.
- 4) Create a badge/lanyard scheme to identify those who use cycles as mobility aids (similar to the sunflower lanyard).

75% of Disabled cyclists use their cycle as a mobility aid and find cycling easier than walking.

45% have been asked to dismount and walk with their cycle.

14% have been permitted to use their cycle in a pedestrianised area after explaining it is a mobility aid.

"People tend to express the view that anyone fit enough to pedal a cycle cannot possibly be disabled. Disabled people are often considered only as those who are wheelchair-users. People are generally ignorant of the concept of a mobility aid – and even more so if it is a bike."

WfW Survey (2018)²



Credit: WfW

Technical Details: Mobility Aids

A mobility aid enables a person with an impairment to move around with greater ease and independence. Mobility aids include a wide range of equipment such as tactile maps, hand-rails and white canes. The WHO's Priority Assistive Products List includes tricycles alongside other mobility equipment.⁴ However, "mobility aid" usually refers to wheelchairs or mobility scooters.

UK legislation⁵ currently defines three classes of "mobility vehicle":

- Class 1 (manual wheelchairs): self/attendant propelled and not electrically powered.
- Class 2 (powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters): intended for footpath or pavement use only, with a maximum speed limit of 4 mph.
- Class 3 (powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters): for use on the road, with a maximum speed limit of 8 mph but with the facility to travel at 4 mph on a footpath or pavement.

Policy Implications

Recognising cycles as mobility aids would contribute to wider government priorities:

- 1) Meeting the aspirations set out in *Gear Change*.⁶
- 2) Ensuring **equitable access to public spaces** and streetscapes in line with the Equality Act 2010 (see also LTN 1/20).⁷
- 3) Promote sustainable transport choices to tackle **air pollution** and **climate change**.
- 4) Reduced sedentary lifestyles amongst Disabled people, leading to **improved health outcomes**.⁸



Credit: WfW

"I have had MS for 30 years and wish I had realised earlier that I could cycle much better than I could walk!"

"I have spinal issues and I can't walk any real distance. But I can cycle on a normal bike without a problem. It gives me my independence."

"I have hidden disabilities/long term conditions. I cycle for many reasons. Sometimes my mobility is fine, other times, my knees/hips/feet could be flaring and it's then that my bike becomes my mobility aid."

WfW survey (2021)²

References:

- ¹Inckle, K (2020) Disability Cycling & Health: Impacts and Missed Opportunities in Public Health. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 22(1): 417-427 <https://www.sjdr.se/article/10.16993/sjdr.695/>
- ²WfW survey 2018 and 2021 (forthcoming) <https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/campaigning/publications-and-research/>
- ³See: <https://road.cc/content/news/108119-transport-minister-responsible-cyclists-can-ride-pavement>
- ⁴WHO Priority Assistive Products List https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/207694/WHO_EMP_PHI_2016.01_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- ⁵The Use of Invalid Carriages on Highways Regulations, 1988 [The Use of Invalid Carriages on Highways Regulations 1988 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/119/section/1)
- ⁶https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf
- ⁷Equality Act (2010) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>; LTN 1/20, ch.1, section 5.4 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951074/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf
- ⁸Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-a-briefing-for-local-authorities>

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