

**Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation response to the Transport Select Committee Inquiry into active travel**

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*CIHT is a charity, learned society and membership body with over 14,000 members spread across 12 UK regions and four international groups. We represent and qualify professionals who plan, design, build, manage and operate transport and infrastructure networks. Our vision is for world-class transportation infrastructure and services. Our values are to be Professional, Inclusive, Collaborative and Progressive.*

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1. CIHT welcomes the committee's inquiry into active travel as being timely and important. Local authorities across the UK are putting a renewed focus into tackling health crises, improving local high streets and improving congestion on the local highway network and active travel are a necessary part of the puzzle.
2. CIHT believes that the UK needs a high level national transport strategy to describe how we will make our transport networks efficient, sustainable and fit for the future and that active travel should be a key part of that.

### **What are the benefits and risks of active travel, and are they properly understood by the public and Government?**

3. CIHT argues that there are a variety of benefits and risks to active travel and that public knowledge is good in certain areas such as health, but less so in financial or traffic reduction terms. This is exacerbated by a lack of tools available to local transport planners and highway engineers which quantify these benefits, and the lack of acknowledgement of the impact transport schemes have for walkers and cyclists.
4. Therefore, the question is whether the benefits and risks of active travel are understood well enough to be realised on the ground through national decision making, funding and implementation.
5. **Health Benefits** are the most widely known benefits of regular active travel, including lowering chances of major causes of early death such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, cancer and many other so called 'lifestyle' diseases, there are also reported mental health benefits attributed to regular exercise.
6. Given that transport is a part of most people's everyday life, whereas carrying out dedicated exercise may be an additional burden, encouraging active travel is a feasible approach to increasing levels of physical activity. Reaching the NHS's recommendations of "150 minutes of weekly physical activity"<sup>1</sup> can be achieved by commuting for thirty minutes by bike five days a week. More information can be found in CIHT's report *Transport mobility and Wellbeing (2016)*.
7. **Economic** cost benefit analyses of active travel schemes have found that 'almost all of the studies (UK and beyond) report economic benefits which are highly significant'.<sup>2</sup> The national cycling and walking charity Sustrans regularly undertake benefit cost ratio (BCR) on their funded schemes. For example, the Yeadon to Guisely Links to Schools scheme involved the construction of a traffic-free path at a cost of £133,028 which had a BCR calculated at 3:1.<sup>3</sup>
8. Transport poverty, where the cost of transport result in households cutting expenditure on other necessities and/or reducing travel to the bare minimum,<sup>4</sup> is a growing concern. It is possible this can be lessened through active travel as it tends to be more economically viable than alternative methods.
9. **Traffic reduction** benefits of more active travel can include reduced congestion through replacing motor journeys with more spatially efficient transport and improved road safety through fewer vehicle movements. A recent report by data company Inrix suggested that British roads are some of the most congested in Europe and identified that the cost of congestion to the London economy alone would rise to \$14.5bn in 2030.<sup>5</sup> However, there is little understanding in government of cycling and walking as cheap, high capacity modes of transport that can improve traffic flow to the benefit of all road users.
10. **Exhaust emissions** being prevented are another key benefit of active travel. Developing new vehicle technologies will help improve roadside air quality, but the most immediate way to tackle air

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<sup>1</sup> NHS. (2018), *Physical Activity guidelines for adults*, available at <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/> (accessed 11/10/2018)

<sup>2</sup> Davies, A. (2010), *Value for Money: An Economic Assessment of Investment in Walking and Cycling*, Bristol City Council and NHS Bristol available at [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

<sup>3</sup> Ewens, A et al. (2016), *A Transport Journey to a Healthier Life*, available at [www.ciht.org.uk](http://www.ciht.org.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Mattioli, G (2017), *Socio-spatial patterns and potential economic stress impacts*, CogitatioPress

<sup>5</sup> Inrix (2016), *London Congestion Trends*, available at [www.inrix.com](http://www.inrix.com)

pollution would be to reduce the number of vehicle kilometres travelled. This requires greater uptake of walking and cycling to replace those journeys.

### **How do recent trends in walking and cycling and factors contribute?**

11. According to the national travel survey the amount people walk has reduced over the past thirty years, from 244 journeys per year in 1985/86 through 198 in 2002 to 184 in 2015<sup>6</sup> and it is often believed that this is because people are using cars for journeys they previously made on foot. However, given that there has been an overall reduction in short journeys this may not be the case.
12. The overall number of journeys shorter than 1 mile reduced from 224 in 2002 to 173 in 2015. Of this reduction of 51 journeys, 31 were for shopping or personal business, 11 for visiting friends at home, 4 for visiting friends elsewhere and 4 for commuting. While for some purposes, such as education, escort education, other escort and entertainment / public activity there has been barely any change. This suggests that the reduction in short walking journeys is mainly a result of reducing the use of local shops and services, and of making fewer local social visits.
13. There is little understanding of why this is the case and the rise of internet shopping and social media are likely to have an impact but also how we design and plan our towns and cities. Active travel is well suited to short local journeys and requires building so that there are destinations available within easy reach.
14. In terms of cycling we have seen very little change over the last 10 years which, despite local variations, suggests that current methods used to encourage cycling are failing to have significant effect.
15. CIHT argues that there needs to be a step change in how we plan and fund transport infrastructure to ensure that sustainable modes of transport are sufficiently supported. Too often we see housing developments, junctions and new roads built on an assumption that motor vehicles will be the dominant method of travel and therefore we build to cater to that. Without moving from a 'predict and provide' to a 'decide and provide' we will continue to reinforce these trends.
16. CIHT believes that there is a need to educate transport planners, highway engineers and urban designers about the evidence and skills needed to make active travel an attractive option. To aid in this CIHT has produced several guides about streets and transport in the urban environment including:
  - a. Planning for Cycling (2014), Rob Gallagher and John Parkin
  - b. Planning for Walking (2015), Kit Mitchell and Terence Bendixson
  - c. Involving the Public (2015), Kris Beuret and Angela Koch
  - d. Creating Better Places (2018), Phil Jones et al

### **Are there fundamental planning issues which need to be addressed as part of an any approach to active mode travel?**

17. CIHT argues that the benefits will not be realised, and negative trends will not be reversed, without improving the UK's approach to land use planning. Land use planning is fundamental to integrating active travel into daily life, and without a planning system that integrates walking and cycling at every level it will not be possible to achieve the scale of change necessary to improve the nation's health, reduce air pollution or reinvigorate our nation's high streets.
18. The key issue is getting the right balance between the "movement" and "social" functions of streets and spaces. This requires understanding how architecture, street design and transport planning are enabled, or prevented by, the planning system. CIHT has four clear areas where existing planning legislation does not obtain best outcomes for active travel and fails to take account of the full range of government policy priorities affected i.e. cutting carbon, improving air quality, promoting healthy

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<sup>6</sup> All data in this section is from the annual National Travel Survey

living, and providing good accessibility to employment and services) as location is fundamental to each of those goals.

19. Firstly, there needs to be **clear criteria for the siting of development**, as building large housing developments on former airfields away from established communities, schools and social areas inevitably generates more journeys – and this currently means using motor vehicles.
20. Secondly, **development locations must be accessible by cycling and walking** and this should be a key factor in determining the suitability of a development proposal. If new developments are only accessible by busy roads, without cycle tracks or footways then that will be the dominant method of transport for residents.
21. Thirdly **transport authorities and operators must be involved throughout the planning process**. While there are statutory consultations our members tell us these can often be perfunctory in nature, having engagement from initiating the local or strategic plan through to the determination of planning applications is key.
22. Finally, the **site layout** for developments should make appropriate provision for buses, cycling and walking as once road alignments, bridges and junctions have been built it is cost-prohibitive to reengineer them. Certain road designs such as cul-de-sacs, narrow bridges and highspeed roundabouts can be prohibitive to regular active travel.
23. These ideas are not an impractical wish list. Many objections to development proposals are made on transport and environmental grounds and by building in practices that reduce motorised traffic and lower congestion local residents are more likely to accept new developments saving on costly legal battles. They can also save money by preventing the need for costly adaptations after development is complete and by diverting journeys to more space efficient modes which reduces the need for costly highways infrastructure upgrades in future. Thereby making transport provision part of the solution to housebuilding rather than a hurdle to be overcome.
24. CIHT is producing a new guide that will be published in 2019 entitled “Better planning, better transport, better places” which will enable these ideas to be taken forward by for practitioners and communities.

#### **What are the consequences of poorly maintained local authority roads for cyclists and walkers?**

25. CIHT argues that asset management of carriageways, footways and dedicated cycling infrastructure is a vital part of encouraging active travel. Poorly maintained local authority highways pose a significant danger to cyclists and deter users of the roads. Carriageway defects can directly cause falling or damage to bikes but can also cause cyclists to take unexpected paths for passing drivers and ultimately create more risk.
26. CIHT understands that current record keeping around slips, trips and falls on footways is irregular and unreliable due to lack of reporting by those involved and limited recognition of the issue by local councils. This can make it difficult to identify footways in poor condition and in turn can have a major impact on the mobility of vulnerable people including the elderly and disabled.
27. CIHT recommends that highways authorities adopt an evidence-based approach to asset management of pedestrian and cyclist facilities on highways as described by UKRLG in their document *Asset Management Guidance for Footways and Cycle Routes: An Approach to Risk Based Maintenance Management (2018)*. Local authorities can then justify their decisions and ultimately direct resources to where they have the greatest impact. This can lead to fewer legal claims, avoid unnecessary maintenance of certain areas, save money and ultimately increase quality of life for residents.

#### **Is the funding associated with CWIS adequate and do you have any concerns around a lack of ringfencing?**

28. CIHT argues that the strategy can only be effectively delivered through evenly shared and committed funding, and this remains a major area of concern. The strategy is asking Local Authorities to do more but is not necessarily providing the resources to do so. Providing the new and necessary infrastructure to deliver the governments ‘ambition’ will require significant capital investment, supported by reliable long-term revenue to provide consistent conditions.

29. The various funding sources throughout the strategy provides great uncertainty for local authorities and therefore diminishes the chances of a commitment to walking and cycling funding. Certainty and continuity of funding is fundamental to the strategy being a success.
30. CIHT further notes that a great deal of capital funding is in the hands of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) via the Local Growth Funds and their track record to date of spending on walking and cycling infrastructure is not a positive one. LEPs do not necessarily have the skill set to assess walking and cycling needs at the local level or to direct funding to the most appropriate location.
31. CIHT suggests that there is a lack of awareness of how much effective cycling infrastructure can cost with London's East-West Cycle Superhighways (CS3) costing £2.2 million/km<sup>7</sup> and that most local authorities would balk at the cost. However, this needs to be put in the context of real cost benefit analysis, including revenue and maintenance. To truly assess value for money as providing the new and necessary infrastructure to deliver the governments 'ambition' will require significant capital investment, supported by reliable long-term revenue to allow consistent conditions.

### **Are the current mix of initiatives to support active travel is appropriate, particularly with respect to safety?**

32. CIHT argues that cycling and walking are unique modes of transport and deserve to be treated as such when designing our streets and highways. This has been accepted for over thirty years with CIHT's first guidelines on cycling entitled "providing for the cyclist" being published in 1983 and the year after the Department of Transport presented a paper which stated on page 1 that "Cycling has become more popular in recent years but unfortunately cyclists are vulnerable in traffic" and that "Segregating cyclists from motor vehicles by bridge or subway, is the preferred means of providing a safe passage for cyclists to cross major road negotiate busy junctions"<sup>8</sup> yet we have not seen a significant national rollout of dedicated cycling facilities.
33. The current mix of initiatives are based around a long-term framework over a sustained period (with a 20-30-year time horizon) are clear when it comes to determining infrastructure priorities, and one that should contain national plans for walking and cycling.
34. The Department should provide firm and measurable targets for both walking and cycling comparable with the Cycle Delivery Plan 2014 which included the target to increase the percentage of children aged 5-10 that usually walk to school from 48% in 2013 to 55 % by 2025.<sup>9</sup> This has been replaced by an aspiration to "Increase the percentage of children aged 5-10 that usually walk to school".<sup>10</sup>
35. CIHT urges the government to review legislative options in the following areas as mentioned in our response to the Cycling and Walking Strategy Safety Review.
- Presumed liability when a motor vehicle collides with a pedestrian or cyclist
  - Mandatory passing distances when motor vehicles are overtaking cyclists
  - Vehicles giving way to oncoming cycling and foot traffic when turning left
  - Civil parking enforcement of pavement and verge parking
  - The legal position of users of courtesy crossings

### **What can be learnt from international approaches in supporting active travel?**

36. It is clear the UK is not in the top tier of nations of active travel and we need to look to the Netherlands and Denmark for best practice, with Copenhagen reaching 41 per cent of trips to work

<sup>7</sup> Hosick, M (2016), *Boris's £47m East-West bike route to open in April*, available at [www.mayorwatch.co.uk](http://www.mayorwatch.co.uk)

<sup>8</sup> Bevis, P.J. (1984), *Cycle Facilities in Towns: The Department of Transport's Experience* DfT Traffic Advisory Unit

<sup>9</sup> DfT. (2014), *Cycle Delivery Plan*, DfT.

<sup>10</sup> DfT. (2017), *Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy*, DfT

or study<sup>11</sup>, and Amsterdam 48 per cent of all trips by cycling.<sup>12</sup> There is also a lower level of risk of death per kilometre cycled in both countries. However, there is no single 'standard' that can be copied and applied to the UK context.

37. There are some important elements that can be observed, that are those with the highest levels of cycling are those where cyclists are routinely offered segregated protection from motor traffic, in routes that are direct and prioritised equally or over motor traffic. Research also shows that cyclists on segregated provision have one ninth the level of risk as on road in the UK context.<sup>13</sup>
38. The condition and maintenance of the road network is also an overriding factor in the provision of safe and attractive routes – as well as maintenance of off-road cycle infrastructure, maintenance of the road network.

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<sup>11</sup> Copenhagen Kommune (2017), *Copenhagen: City of Cyclists 2017*, Copenhagen Kommune, available at [www.cycling-embassy.dk](http://www.cycling-embassy.dk)

<sup>12</sup> Ministerie van Infrastructuur (2017) *Mobiliteitsbeeld 2017*, available at [www.kimnet.nl](http://www.kimnet.nl)

<sup>13</sup> Dr Aldred, R. (2018) *Injury research, under reporting, inequalities and safety in numbers*, CIHT Podcasts available at [www.ciht.org.uk](http://www.ciht.org.uk)