

Parliamentary briefing and evidence to the Public Bill Committee on the Infrastructure Bill

Campaign for Better Transport
15 December 2014

1. Summary

1.1 Campaign for Better Transport is working with a wide range of transport, environment and health charities to promote a major amendment to the Infrastructure Bill, which would provide the same long-term funding certainty for cycling and walking as it currently does for roads (and which rail already receives). A joint briefing from all these groups on the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy amendment proposal is appended to this document and is being submitted separately.

1.2 In addition, Campaign for Better Transport has a range of concerns about the Bill as it is currently drafted and recommends a number of other amendments are made

1.3 Our additional recommendations are that the Bill must:

- contain a greater level of protection and accountability for communities and the environment.
- set the terms of reference of the watchdog – Transport Focus – to require monitoring of the effect of the SRN on local communities and the environment.
- include a statutory responsibility for the Strategic Highways Company to reduce air pollution on and around its network.
- include requirements for the Strategic Highways Agency to work more closely and widely with local government, communities and stakeholders when making strategic plans.

2. Overall views on the Bill

2.1 The Infrastructure Bill¹ includes major plans to reform the Highways Agency and change it to a Government-owned company, along with new funding and investment planning processes. The Bill would introduce five-year funding cycles and, to accompany these plans, the Government intends to increase in the Agency's capital budget from £1.5 billion in 2014-15 to £3.8 billion in 2020-21.²

¹ Infrastructure Bill <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2014-15/infrastructure.html>

² Investing in Britain's Future. HM Treasury, June 2013

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209279/PU1524_IUK_new_template.pdf

2.2 We are sceptical of the need for a separate company, and concerned about the effects of this on accountability and engagement with the wider community. The creation of a new Strategic Highways Company with a much larger budget, set in longer-term cycles, would achieve some of the objectives cited in terms of stability for contractors and secondary suppliers, but it is unclear whether a major reorganisation of the Highways Agency is a necessary part of achieving this.

2.3 Our concerns about the Bill as it is currently drafted are principally around the treatment of environmental issues – in particular air pollution – and the processes set out for the formation of the five-year Road Investment Strategies that will guide investment – in particular the interaction with local authorities and the local road network, and with local communities more widely.

2.4. The first of these concerns has recently been echoed by the Environmental Audit Committee and the second has been supported in evidence to the Transport Committee by a range of local authorities and the influential Local Government Technical Advisor's Group.

3. Environmental impact

3.1 The planned expansion of the SRN would have a huge impact on the environment, with new land required for bypasses and widening projects and increases in noise, pollution and visual impacts on local communities. Particularly worrying is the proposal for a new 'expressway' standard – effectively a policy for the long-term dualling of most of the network and grade separated junctions with local roads.

3.2 With Campaign to Protect Rural England, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, the Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust and RSPB, we recently warned of the potential impact of this on National Parks, AONBs and the World Heritage Site at Stonehenge.³

3.3 Recommendations:

- The Bill must contain a greater level of protection and accountability for communities and the environment.
- This could be done by increasing requirements for consultation and engagement during the formation of strategic plans and Route Strategies (see below).
- The terms of reference of the watchdog – Transport Focus – should be amended to require monitoring of the effect of the SRN on local communities and the environment. At present, the remit of the watchdog is restricted to 'users' of the network.

³ Charities warn National Parks under threat from Highways Agency dual carriageways, <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/media/15-july-NGO-roads-map>

4. Air pollution

4.1 We have also warned about the impact of major road expansion plans on air pollution, particularly where new roads are built near settlements already suffering from high levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter, or within Air Quality Management Areas.

4.2 Our involvement in the recent A556 Knutsford to Bowden Improvement examination and consultations on the A14 bypass of Huntingdon revealed how these projects were likely to raise pollution above EU legal limits.^{4,5} The A556 scheme has now been limited to 60 mph for at least the first five years of operation in order to reduce this risk. Proposals for hard shoulder running in the Smart Motorway scheme for the M60 in Manchester have been removed from the plans for similar reasons, illustrating how significant the impact of strategic roads can be on this major public health problem, and the need to consider the impact of strategies for the SRN at an earlier stage of planning.⁶

4.3 This issue has been given greater urgency by the UK Supreme Court ruling in May 2013 that the Government is failing in its legal duty to protect people from the effects of dangerously high air pollution,⁷ and the subsequent ruling by the European Court of Justice that the UK must act to clean up illegal levels of air pollution "as soon as possible".⁸

4.4 The Environmental Audit Committee published its own report on Action on Air Quality on 8 December, and specifically recommended that an amendment to the Infrastructure Bill was needed to give the new Strategic Highways Company a statutory responsibility to protect air quality in its operations.⁹

4.5 Recommendations:

- The Bill must include a statutory responsibility for the Strategic Highways Company to reduce air pollution on and around its network.

5. Effect on local roads and the involvement of local authorities and communities

5.1 A Road Investment Strategy (RIS) which increases capacity (and therefore induces new

⁴ Response to Examining Authority's First Questions and first Written Representation on the A556 Knutsford to Bowden Improvement, Campaign for Better Transport, October 2013
http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/files/CfBT_A556_WR1_final_071013.pdf

⁵ A14 plans could breach EU air pollution limits, Campaign for Better Transport, October 2013
<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/media/16-10-2013-A14-air-pollution>

⁶ <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/media/14-oct-M60-plans-dropped-health>

⁷ <http://www.healthyear.org.uk/clientearth-triumph-in-the-supreme-court/>

⁸ <http://www.clientearth.org/news/press-releases/eu-court-rules-uk-government-must-act-to-clean-up-deadly-air-pollution-2699>

⁹ "The Government should give it a legal duty to protect air quality and introduce a specific clause to that effect in the Infrastructure Bill." Page 23, EAC Sixth Report – Action on Air Quality HC 212 <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/environmental-audit/HC-212-for-web.pdf>

traffic) on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) would be likely to have a significant knock-on effect on local roads, increasing congestion in towns, cities and rural areas around the SRN. In many cases, the expansion of the SRN close to urban areas would be in direct contradiction with local policies intended to reduce the need to travel and reduce road traffic.

5.2 We have been involved in the initial round of 'Route Strategies' and the six major 'Feasibility Studies' on strategic roads and have found that, while a range of stakeholders have been invited to meetings, the evidence base for the studies and the eventual proposals emerging have not paid sufficient attention to the effects on local roads or the likely roots of congestion close to urban areas through the addition of local trips to strategic journeys. An appreciation of the latter might lead to very different strategies for reducing congestion, such as investing off the network in alternative means of travel, but the resulting RIS focuses almost entirely on increased capacity on SRN.

5.3 The Local Government Technical Advisor's Group,¹⁰ the Local Government Association, and a number of local authorities made recommendations on greater involvement of local authorities in the formation of the RIS to the Transport Committee earlier this year.¹¹ The LGA said: "Route based assessments need to be a genuine coproduction between local authorities and the Highways Agency and need to consider all modes of transport and the local road network."

5.4 Recommendations:

- The Bill must include requirements for the Strategic Highways Agency to work more closely and widely with local government, communities and stakeholders when making strategic plans, including Route Strategies and further Feasibility Studies.

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Sian Berry, Roads and Sustainable Transport Campaigner
Campaign for Better Transport
sian.berry@bettertransport.org.uk

16 Waterside, 44-48 Wharf Road, London N1 7UX
Registered Charity 1101929. Company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales: 4943428

¹⁰ Local Government Technical Advisers Group evidence:
<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/transport-committee/better-roads-improving-englands-strategic-road-network/written/2999.html>

¹¹ Transport Committee Sixteenth Report. Better Roads: Improving England's Strategic Road Network HC840
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmtran/850/850.pdf>



Infrastructure Bill Amendment Briefing: Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

Issued 11th December 2014

Context

The Infrastructure Bill begins committee stage in the Commons on Tuesday 16th December.

The Bill includes a proposed five year investment plan for strategic roads whilst rail already has such a plan in place. However, despite strong all party support there is no similar framework in place for cycling and active travel more widely. Therefore a coalition of the country's leading transport, environment and health organisations are working with MPs to lay an amendment at report stage to establish a long term vision and strategy for walking and cycling: A Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS). This will be preceded at committee stage by a high level amendment calling for a long-term commitment to develop cycling and walking infrastructure as part of the Bill.

Why we need a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

- There is no secure, long term funding plan for cycling and walking, whilst the Road Investment Strategy has set out a secure, long term investment plan for strategic roads of £24bn that was announced in June 2013.
- Less than half of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) have included any projects for cycling or walking in their Local Growth Fund plans, amounting to around 5% of investment¹².
- Inactivity already costs the UK economy around £20 billion every year¹³. With one in six deaths being linked to physical inactivity (equal to smoking as a cause of death)¹⁴.
- Currently the inactivity epidemic contributes to 40-50% of cancers, 75% of cardiovascular disease, 80% of strokes, 80% of type 2 diabetes and 30% of dementia that are all preventable¹⁵. For example, walking for a mile every day would reduce prostate and breast cancer patients' risks of dying by 30%¹⁶.
- Road collisions, carbon emissions, noise and air pollution add at least a further £18 billion every year in costs¹⁷.

¹² Written parliamentary question 216381, 5th December 2014 <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2014-11-28/216381/>

¹³ Designed to Move, (2013), Designed to Move: A physical activity agenda, <http://www.designedtomove.org/>

¹⁴ Lee I-M, et al. (2012) Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy. The Lancet 380: 219–29 & Murray et al. (2013) UK health performance: findings of the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010. The Lancet 381: 997–1020

¹⁵ Richmond Group, (November 2014), What is preventing progress? Time to move from talk to action on reducing preventable illnesses

¹⁶ Campbell A, Foster J, Stevinson C, Cavill N. (2012) The Importance of Physical Activity for People Living With and Beyond Cancer: A Concise Evidence Review (Macmillan Cancer Support)

¹⁷ Cabinet Office (2009) Costs of urban transport; <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20091204001009/http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/308292/urbantransportanalysis.pdf>



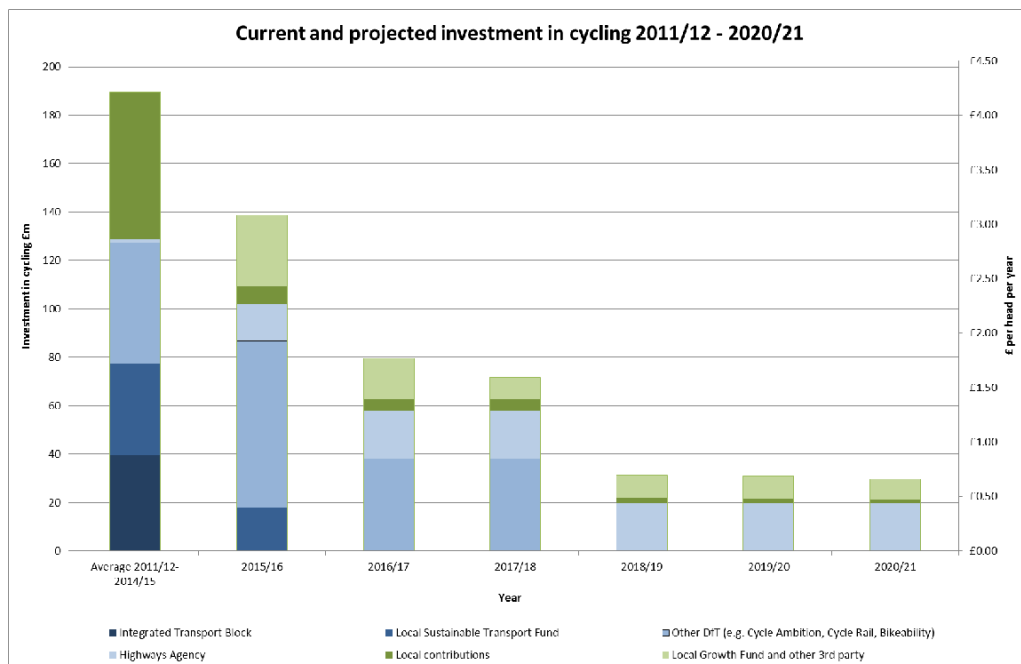
A step-change in ambition, strategy and funding for cycling and walking is needed, entrenching an aspiration for significant change into law.

In the last two decades, the UK has had many cycling strategies, walking plans and other delivery documents. Yet we continue to fall further behind other countries. Although the 1996 National Cycling Strategy aimed for an increase in cycling from under 2% to 8% of all travel by 2012 there has been no overall increase in this time. Meanwhile cycling in Germany has surged from 10% to 15% in under a decade, with the aim of reaching 20% by 2020.

Similarly, the average number of walking trips in the UK has also fallen by 30% since 1995/718, alongside a significant drop in the number of children walking to school. Getting more people active has never been more important to the health of the nation.

The Government has estimated that total spend on cycling in England is currently around £5 per person a year, or less than 0.7% of transport spending. Of this around 80% is directly or indirectly attributable to dedicated funding from government, the largest component of which is the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, which has been extremely effective in attracting local investment.

As the table below shows without sustained and substantial investment from government, total spend on cycling and walking will fall sharply after 2015/16, to a fraction of current levels and far below the £10 per head per year stated in the Government's Draft Cycling Delivery Plan.



¹⁸ National Travel Survey: England 2013. Statistical release July 2014.



To increase cycling and walking in this country a new approach to funding needs to be adopted, one that learns from the successes in turning round the rail network and making it the fastest growing network in Europe. Our amendment to the Infrastructure Bill, which is supported by health, transport and environmental bodies, would harness for cycling and walking the success of mechanisms that have delivered record investment in the rail network.

We already have cross party support for long-term continuity of funding for cycling and walking as shown by the two all party inquiries and resulting reports: The 'Get Britain Cycling' report from the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group and 'Tackling Physical Inactivity – A Coordinated Approach' from the All Party Commission on Physical Activity. However, there is at present no means of taking forward the recommendations from these reports. This amendment is an opportunity to deliver these recommendations.

Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy

This amendment would create a statutory 'Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy' (CWIS). Like the High Level Output Statement (HLOS) for rail and the Roads Investment Strategy (RIS) for strategic roads, the CWIS would be made up of four elements:

- a long-term vision to increase walking and cycling rates across the whole population, in rural as well as urban areas;
- a Statement of Funds Available for the next five years that would be spent specifically on cycling and walking;
- a detailed Investment Plan of programmes and schemes - for example to improve cycle-rail integration, retrofit safe walking and cycling paths along busy roads and give provincial towns and cities London-style cycling measures and exemplary public spaces;
- a Performance Specification of measures and targets - for example increases in cycling and walking levels, improvement in safety, and the proportion of schools and stations with safe routes to them.

This statutory approach would offer significant advantages, namely that it would:

- Generate cross-party consensus, as there is for rail infrastructure;
- Secure a transformational level of long-term investment, creating a 'cycling and walking infrastructure pipeline' – by contrast much recent funding has come in dribs and drabs with strict time limits, making it challenging for local authorities to plan ahead and deliver schemes to high standards;
- Obtain economies of scale for programmes of minor schemes as well as making sure funding is shared across the country;
- Create a robust, regular review process that includes statutory scrutiny to maintain momentum and ambition.

It might be argued that such an approach is top-down and conflicts with the philosophy of



localism and the reality of growing devolution. However, the creation of ring-fenced or the top-slicing of budgets in HLOS for matters such as station improvement, level crossing safety and freight has worked well with growing localism.

Investment in cycling and walking has a strategic role in supporting local economies as demonstrated by Campaign for Better Transport’s report highlighting the cycling and walking opportunities for Local Enterprise Partnerships ([Improving local transport helps the economy](#)) and by CPRE at the parish council and neighbourhood level with its Transport Toolkit (www.transporttoolkit.org.uk).

In the event that the Government is not ready to support this amendment at this stage, the Minister should provide an assurance that he will consider this further and provide a fuller response at the Third Reading.

Who’s supporting this?

This briefing has been written by a coalition of the country’s leading environment, transport and health organisations that includes: British Cycling; Campaign for Better Transport; Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE); CTC, the National Cycling Charity; Living Streets; Sustrans and the Richmond Group (British Heart Foundation, Asthma UK, British Lung Foundation, Age UK, Breakthrough Breast Cancer, Diabetes UK, The Neurological Alliance, Macmillan Cancer Support, Stroke Association and Rethink Mental Illness).

For more information:
Rachel White, Political Advisor, Sustrans
Rachel.white@sustrans.org.uk

More information

Understanding the Roads Investment Strategy (and by implication the process for the CWIS) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-the-road-investment-strategy-now-and-in-the-future>

Get Britain Cycling <http://allpartycycling.org/inquiry/>

Tackling Physical Inactivity – A Coordinated Approach <http://activitycommission.com/>