

Gear Change

A bold vision for cycling and walking

This briefing sheet is a summary of *Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking* – A cycling and walking plan for England - published by HM Government July 2020. Download the [full document](#). It is accompanied by the revised *Local Transport Note LTN 01/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design*

Commentary

The vision is on the face of it a radical change, and is to be welcomed. It has a great deal to say on cycling, but relatively little on walking.

A last attempt in getting highway authorities to update their street design standards? The UDG's survey on the use of Manual for Streets estimated that that around 80 per cent of highway authorities were still using motor-vehicle optimised street design and adoption standards based on pre-Manual for Streets principles. Government has no powers to instruct highway authorities on the street design; however the withholding of public funds as proposed in the vision, and the creation of an enforcer of best practice, in the form of Active Travel England, may well be effective. If this fails, primary legislation will be needed.

Under-resourced local authorities key to delivery and enforcement

A great deal depends on local authorities which, since the Global financial crisis, have seen their overall resources nearly halved, and their in-house expertise greatly reduced. The £2 billion funding over 5 years equals £400 million per annum or £7 per head of population. It compares with the £27.4 billion Road Investment Strategy (RIS2)

Giving local authorities responsibility for enforcement of moving traffic offence adds to their burdens. Elements of the media have reported "Gear Change" as a renewal of the "war on the motorist". Local authorities will find themselves in the front line in this so-called war, with few skilled staff to respond to the demands.

Standards impossible to achieve on many streets – most through-routes and high streets are medieval or older. They are narrow with insufficient room for 2 metre wide cycle lanes. Most streets created in the 19th century and up to the 1950s have 24ft wide (7.3 metre) carriageways, which provide lane widths that the new LTN says are unsuitable for cycling. The document states that "We will not fund or part-fund any scheme that does not meet the new standards and principles described in theme 1 and in the Appendix. We will not allow any other agency or body to fund such schemes using any of our money." The reality is that it will be difficult or impossible to introduce or retrofit many existing streets to the standards of LTN 1/20, and under this policy there will be no funds available for any improvement. Further work is urgently needed to provide design and management solutions for this legacy of narrow streets.

Why?

Benefits given include health, well-being, congestion, footfall in shops, climate change, environmental and air quality, and economy.¹

Over the course of lockdown weekday cycling is up 100 percent. And on some weekends that increase has been around 200%² The plan hopes to take advantage of this change in behaviour

Themes

Theme 1. Better streets for cycling and people

There will be first hundreds, then thousands of miles of safe, continuous, direct routes for cycling in towns and cities, physically separated from pedestrians and volume motor traffic, serving the places that people want to go. Reallocating roadspace from parking or motoring to cycling/walking if necessary, closing roads to through traffic, with simple point closures, such as retractable bollards, or by camera enforcement.

- A small number of routes from key suburbs into a city could become bus and cycling corridors, while the other main roads remain through routes for motorists.

- Side-street routes, if closed to through traffic to avoid rat-running, can be an alternative to segregated facilities or closures on main roads, but only if they are truly direct.

Theme 2 Putting cycling and walking at the heart of transport, place-making, and health policy

Government will enable people to cycle and protect them when they cycle, significantly increasing spending

- a long-term cycling and walking programme and budget, like the roads programme and budget
- new local and strategic A road schemes to include appropriate provision for cycling
- all new housing and business developments to be built around making sustainable travel, including cycling and walking, the first choice for journeys
- national urban road audits to help inform future allocation of road space
- cycling for the carriage of freight, and work to reduce unnecessary motorised freight and servicing traffic

Theme 3: Empowering and encouraging Local Authorities

Increased funding, greater support

Theme 4: Enabling people to cycle and protecting them when they do...

What?

General Funding Promises:

- £2 billion of new investment in addition to existing funding will be provided over the next five years, the great majority of which will be channelled through local authorities.
- The cycling budget will be held by a new commissioning body and inspectorate, Active Travel England, led by a new national cycling and walking commissioner. To be established in the next few months.
- Active Travel England will examine all applications for funding and refuse any that are not compliant with the new national standards. It will inspect finished schemes and ask for funds to be returned for any which have not been completed as promised, or which have not started or finished by the stipulated times.
- All future funding will be conditional on work starting and finishing by specified dates. If work has not started or been completed by the specified times, Government will ask for funds to be returned. Exceptions may be made in certain circumstances
- Funding only schemes which meet the new standards. Government will not fund or part-fund any scheme that does not meet the new standards (see below). Government will not allow any other agency or body to fund such schemes using any of its money.
- Active Travel England will also begin to inspect, and publish annual reports on all highway authorities, grading them on their performance on active travel and identifying particularly dangerous failings in their highways for cyclists and pedestrians
- Active Travel England's assessment of an authority's performance on active travel will influence the funding it receives for other forms of transport:

Miscellaneous Funding promises:

- **Investment in Mini-Holland schemes** for up to 12 willing non-London local authority areas.
- **Improvements to the National Cycle Network:** The aim is to make the whole network either off road or traffic calmed by 2040: significantly increasing funding, removing obstacles, increasing the proportion that is traffic-free or protected from traffic, and providing

¹ Infographic from DFT (2018) Government Response to Call for Evidence Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy: Safety Review (2018). Available at [weblink](#)

² Sport England (2020) Coronavirus. Research into how the coronavirus crisis has affected people's activity levels and attitudes towards exercise. [weblink](#)

smooth, all-weather surfacing on the traffic-free parts that is still consistent with its mainly rural nature, extending the Network where it can be done in accordance with new design standards

- **Safe cycle routes to stations** - substantial sums to be invested particularly in commuter towns and increase cycle storage at stations

Active Travel England summary of purpose:

- hold the budget
- approve schemes
- inspect schemes
- training, good practice and advice, knowledge sharing
- inspect highway authorities
- review major planning applications / statutory consultee

Other Policies

New powers for local authorities.

Government will commence the remaining elements of Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, allowing local authorities, rather than the police, to enforce against moving traffic offences such as disregarding one-way systems or entering mandatory cycle lanes.

See Schedule 7 Part 4 for the list of signs to be enforced.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/18/schedule/7>

Government will issue guidance to local authorities about the powers including on the importance of ensuring citizens are properly informed about them and the need for traffic signing to be properly designed and placed, so that it is clear to drivers what restrictions are in force.

Motorists are to be issued with a warning for a first offence, and fines for subsequent offences.

- **Low-traffic neighbourhoods** will be created in many more groups of residential streets by installing point closures. "We will consult on creating a **community right to close side streets and create low-traffic neighbourhoods**, with groups of residential side streets able to petition local authorities for rat-run closures."
- **School streets** to be increased in number
- **A zero emission city** - create at least one zero-emission small or medium-sized city: zero emission transport system
- **New cycling design guidance** will be enforced by a new inspectorate, Active Travel England
- **"A" road schemes** :ensure new local and strategic A road schemes include appropriate provision for cycling
- **Freight by bicycle** - Promote cycling for the carriage of freight, and work to reduce unnecessary motorised freight and servicing traffic. Extend the e-cargo bike grant programme as part of Government's wider programme to decarbonise deliveries. (Ensure that all deliveries (except perishables and items which require specialist carriers) are made to consolidation centres on the edge of the city centre, or the edge of the city, then taken to their final destinations in a far smaller number of vehicles, including cargo bikes and electric vans wherever possible. explore options to allow local authorities to better co-ordinate the number of deliveries and waste collections in certain areas, still allowing competition and choice but reducing the number of operators and vehicle movements. Government will conduct further pilot projects to allow local authorities to franchise certain delivery and waste management services where appropriate.)
- **Health** - Government will work more closely with the NHS, incentivising GPs to prescribe cycling and building cycle facilities in towns with poor health. Government will choose several pilot places with poor health and low physical activity rates to deliver personalised care by working through social prescribing in primary care networks to incentivise GPs to prescribe cycling wherever appropriate. A stock of cycles would be available to lend, with training, access to cycling groups and peer support
- **Offences and sentences**
 - causing serious injury by careless, or inconsiderate driving – new offence
 - longer maximum sentence for causing death by dangerous driving or careless driving when under the influence of drink and drugs.
- **Regulations**
 - HGV sideguards from 2021 required to be fitted to HGVs when new are retained and adequately maintained.
 - Consider extending London HGV vision standards to the UK
- **National e-bike support programme** - Government will establish a national e-bike support programme, which could include loans, subsidies, or other financial incentives, using the learning from other schemes in the UK and abroad for e-bikes, adapted e-bikes and other e-vehicles.

Other promises

- **Active Travel England** will be a repository of expertise in scheme design but also in implementation and stakeholder management, which are just as important. It will have an extensive role promoting best practice, advising local authorities, training staff and contractors and allowing local authorities to learn from each other.
- **Cycling and walking provision at the heart of Local plans** - Government will work with the Local Government Association to place cycling and walking provision at the heart of local plan making and decision taking for new developments. Active Travel England's functions will be as a statutory consultee within the planning system to press for adequate cycling and walking provision in all developments of over a certain threshold, and provide expert advice on ways in which such provision can be improved.
- **Bikes on rural buses** - In many rural areas, where demand is lower, Government will work with bus operators to allow a limited number of bikes on board and will investigate the use of external racks.
- **Cycle Training** - Government will offer cycle training to everyone who wants to undertake it, whether free or at a nominal charge.
- **Bike Theft**: more bikes could be fitted with GPS tracking chips, allowing owners to find and recover them if they are stolen. Government will work with the police led National Cycle Crime Group to support the establishment of regional cycle crime enforcement partnerships based on hotspot intelligence to disrupt organised cycle theft and help reinvestigate cycle crime as a priority.

Annex: 22 principles for cycle infrastructure design taken from Local Transport Note 01/20

Maintenance is as important as route creation (principle 13)

Consideration of the opportunities to improve provision for cycling will be an expectation of any future local highway schemes funded by Government.(principle 6)

General points about routes:

- Routes and schemes must take account of how users actually behave;
- routes are to be direct, continuous, physically separated from pedestrians and volume motor traffic, particularly at junctions, on useful journeys.
- P18 Routes must feel direct, logical and be intuitively understandable by all road users.
- P10.Schemes must be legible and understandable (P11) signposted and labelled.
- P8 Cycle infrastructure must join together, or join other facilities together by taking a holistic, connected network approach which recognises the importance of nodes, links and areas that are good for cycling.
- P4 Side street routes, if closed to through traffic to avoid rat-running, can be an alternative to segregated facilities or closures on main roads – but only if they are truly direct.

Detailed design

- P2 Cycles must be treated as vehicles and not as pedestrians.
 - On urban streets, cyclists must be physically separated from pedestrians and should not share space with pedestrians.
 - Where cycle routes cross pavements, a physically segregated track should always be provided.
 - At crossings and junctions, cyclists should not share the space used by pedestrians but should be provided with a separate parallel route.
- P5 Cycle infrastructure should be designed for significant numbers of cyclists, and for non-standard cycles.
- P3 Cyclists must be separated from high volume motor traffic, both at junctions and on the stretches of road between them.
- New cycle route provision on busy roads which consists of painted markings or cycle symbols will no longer be funded.
- New cycle provision which involves sharing space with pedestrians, including at crossings, will no longer be funded.
- P7 Cosmetic alterations should be avoided.
- P9 Cycle parking must be included in substantial schemes
- P14 Surfaces must be hard, smooth, level, durable, permeable and safe in all weathers.
- P16 Access control measures, such as chicane barriers and dismount signs, should not be used.
- Recommended width for cycle lanes 2 metres wide in each direction, or 3 to 4m (depending on cycle flows) for bidirectional tracks

Owen Huxford August 2020