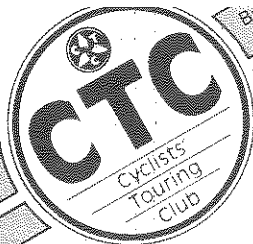


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Britain's national  
cyclists' association  
Working for all cyclists

# Information

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## INFORMATION SHEET A5

### CYCLING POLICY

#### STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

Published January 1982

1. In May of 1981 the Department of Transport and the Welsh Office published a consultation paper on cycling policy. The paper described what the Government is already doing to encourage cycling and what it proposes to do, and asked for views on how further progress can be made. Over 300 responses have been received, the great majority of them welcoming the consultation paper proposals and suggesting further ways of helping cyclists and improving safety.

2. The Government very much welcomes the revived interest in cycling, which can bring benefits to the community in terms of reduced congestion, pollution and energy costs, and I hope that the growing recognition of cyclists' needs will lead to more widespread action to improve facilities which in turn will encourage more people to cycle.

#### FACILITIES FOR CYCLISTS

3. Much of the action proposed in the consultation paper has already begun. Cycling officers have been appointed in each of the regional offices to make sure that the needs of cyclists are taken fully into account when trunk roads are designed or improved, and to liaise with local authorities on the provision of cycling facilities. Many of those consulted urged that the cycling officer should have greater authority; in response to these suggestions a senior engineer will be given overall responsibility for cycling in each regional office.

4. Some responses pointed out that new trunk road schemes had cut cycle crossing points without providing a satisfactory alternative. The Department recognises the need to provide cycle facilities wherever new trunk roads cross significant flows of cyclists, or where junctions used by many cyclists are improved.

5. But most cycling is on local roads, where improved conditions for cyclists will depend largely on the actions and priorities of local highway authorities. The Department will invite county councils to make specific reference to cycling proposals in their Transport Policies and Programmes, and will give them favourable consideration in making allocations. This will apply also to districts exercising highway powers under agency agreements. The Government sees no need to direct that a fixed proportion of the local authority expenditure accepted for Transport Supplementary Grant should be used for cycling projects. The amount of cycling varies from county to county, and expenditure priorities must remain a matter for local decision.

6. Some responses suggested that local authorities should be required to make provision for cyclists in certain traffic regulation schemes, such as environmental road closures, right-turn prohibitions, bus lanes, or the provision of parking facilities. The Department will encourage local authorities to consider the needs of cyclists in all their traffic regulation and planning activities.
7. The Department's programme of financial help for innovatory cycle schemes is intended to assess the effectiveness of new arrangements and to demonstrate to local authorities what can be done for cyclists at relatively modest cost. The programme will be extended to include one or two large-scale projects designed to monitor the effect on cycling demand of developing a continuous urban route or network. New proposals and applications for grant aid would be welcomed from local authorities, including districts exercising highway powers by agreement with their counties.
8. Responses to the consultation paper provided much valuable information about the road design features which cyclists find helpful. All suggestions as to standards and possible innovations will be taken into account as the Department reviews and improves its advice on cycling facilities and highway design. A comprehensive revision of the advice in LTN1/78 "Ways of helping cyclists in built up areas" is intended when more experience has been gathered from innovatory schemes, but in the meantime summaries of the results of schemes are available to local authorities who request them. The Regional cycling officer and a small group of professional engineers at headquarters are also available to advise local authorities about cycling schemes.
9. Many responses from cyclists expressed concern about the state of road surfaces. Highway authorities recognise the importance of good road surfaces to cyclists, but surveys of road surface conditions do not suggest that an overall deterioration is taking place. There were a number of suggestions that reinstatement agreements between local authorities and statutory undertakers should be mandatory. The Department doubts whether this would improve the standard of repairs. The need for a continuing high level of expenditure on the maintenance of local roads has been recognised in the Transport Supplementary Grant settlement for 1982-83.
10. Since the consultation paper was published the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1981, which includes some new cycle signs, have come into force, and consultation will shortly begin on an additional package of signs. The responses welcomed the increased freedom for local authorities to use cycle signs without any authorisation by the Department.
11. The consultant's study of disused railway lines in England and Wales, commissioned by the Department of Transport and identifying those with potential for conversion to cycle routes, has been completed. The main report, which includes a map of the lines, will be published shortly. The Department would welcome the inclusion in TPP's of plans to implement conversions, which can also provide useful and satisfying work for Youth Opportunity Schemes. MSC assistance will be available for some routes, and the Countryside Commission also makes grants available for conversions outside urban areas.

## SAFETY

12. All responses to the consultation paper stress the safety of cyclists as a major concern. Child cyclists are a particularly vulnerable group. The Department's publication "Road Accidents Great Britain 1980" shows much higher casualty rates in relation to distance travelled than for adult cyclists. Many responses suggested that there was scope for improving child cycle training.
13. Many of the suggested improvements should be achieved by the introduction of a new and extended ROSPA National Cycling Proficiency Scheme next year. The new scheme aims to improve the educational methods involved in teaching cycling, and to make it an integral part of traffic education in schools. The scheme will offer a graded series of awards and includes more on-road training.
14. The need for parental involvement in the safety of child cyclists was rightly stressed by many respondents, who emphasised the responsibility of parents to check the condition and maintenance of their children's bicycles.
15. There was general agreement on the importance of making both cyclists and their cycles as conspicuous as possible, although many stressed that this should not absolve motorists of the duty to take care. Research at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory confirms that the clothing on the market varies considerably in effectiveness and the laboratory is contributing to the preparation of a further British Standard, governing both the material and design of garments.
16. Many responses stressed the need for more and better publicity to improve cyclists' safety by influencing the behaviour both of motorists and cyclists. The Department has repeated in the London television area the successful campaign first carried out in the Anglia region and hopes to extend it to other regions.
17. A number of responses stressed the importance of research to the evaluation of publicity, training and educational priorities. In addition to the programme of innovatory cycle schemes there are many relevant projects, in progress or planned, at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory. These include:
  - an analysis of cycle accidents based on Police statistical returns;
  - a detailed study of cycling accidents based on a large sample of child and adult hospital casualties;
  - studies of various items of safety equipment;
  - studies of the incidence of cycle accidents at various types of location, and the development and assessment of remedial measures, including (a) redesign of roundabouts (large and small); (b) conversions of pedestrian subways to shared use with cyclists to avoid hazardous road junctions; (c) cycle crossings of main roads; (d) segregated cycle lanes (with flow and contra flow) on urban roads.

18. Government sponsored research is being conducted at the Motor Industry Research Association into the safety of lorries. A high proportion of more serious cycling casualties are due to impacts with heavy vehicles, often caused by falls beneath the wheels of lorries after a minor collision. The White Paper on Lorries, People and the Environment (Cmd. 8439) announced that the Government intends to make side guards mandatory for all heavy vehicles.

19. Respondents agreed that the Highway Code could be expanded to strengthen the advice on cycling. It was proposed that there should be more illustrations, more advice on how cyclists should tackle junctions and roundabouts, more advice on conspicuous clothing and on the need for motorists and other road users to understand cyclists' needs. The next revision of the Code may not be for some years, but in the meantime a children's Highway Code prepared by the County Road Safety Officers Association is being published which includes a section on cycling.

#### THE LAW

20. There was considerable support for the suggestion that all new bicycles should be legally required to meet minimum standards of safety and construction based on the new British Standard for Bicycles. The standard includes wet and dry braking performance requirements, and standards for the strength of various components. Most responses were opposed to the inclusion of integral lights and front fork locks in the standard. Pedal reflectors were generally thought to be effective as a conspicuity aid; there was less agreement about the value of spacers.

21. The Department propose to proceed with draft Regulations which would make it an offence to supply a bicycle which does not comply with prescribed standards and is not so marked. Separate arrangements will be made for specialist machines. These proposals will be subject to consultations with interested bodies in the usual way.

22. There was general support for the proposal that it should be an offence to drive a motor vehicle on any cycle track. Legislation to this effect will be introduced as soon as an opportunity arises. The proposal to extend local authorities' power to provide and maintain barriers on cycle tracks was also generally supported.

23. The Consultation Paper proposal to simplify the procedure for converting footpaths to cycle tracks was warmly welcomed by many cycle groups and local authorities, but there was concern, particularly from organisations representing pedestrians and blind and disabled people, about the effects on the safety and convenience of footpath users. Similar concern was expressed about footway conversions, although these are not subject to the same procedural problems as changes in the status of footpaths.

24. There are situations where the joint use of footways or footpaths is the only practical way to get cyclists off carriageways where they are seriously at risk. But the Department accepts that footpaths and footways should not be converted for use by cyclists without very careful consideration of the implications for pedestrian safety and convenience. Where there is a case for allowing cycling on a section of footpath or footway, for example, as part of a route segregating cyclists from motor traffic, the potential effects on pedestrians, including the elderly and disabled, should be carefully assessed. These effects will, of course, vary according to the width, alignment and slope of the footpath or footway, and the number and kind of pedestrians who use it and of cyclists likely to do so if sharing is allowed.

25. Before any conversion there should be full consultation with representative organisations. Much can be done to reduce risks by incorporating safeguards, including physical segregation of cyclists and pedestrians wherever possible, and by designing facilities to reduce potential conflicts. Before simplifying the procedure for the conversion of footpaths the Department intends to revise its advice to local authorities about shared facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, and will consult the Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially-sighted People.

26. The revised advice may in due course lead to a code of practice (including minimum standards below which sharing would be inadvisable) which could be recommended to local authorities contemplating footway sharing, and as part of a simplified footpath conversion procedure. However, in the last analysis such conversions should be a matter for local decision in the light of local circumstances. The Department does not think it would be right to make conversions subject to ministerial consent.

#### CONCLUSION

27. The Government welcomes the evidence provided by the responses to the consultation paper that local authorities, other interested bodies, and cyclists themselves are giving careful thought to ways in which cycling can be made safer and more pleasant. The Government remains committed to the encouragement of cycling and will continue to support these efforts, without attempting to impose central direction upon the variety of local circumstances.