

CYCLING ENGLAND: WORK PLAN PROPOSAL 2005/6

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The overall direction of Cycling England is simple: “more people cycling, more safely, more often”.

1.2 The strategic action plan “Bike for the Future” was prepared by the National Cycling Strategy Board for England last year, and accepted in principle both by the Department for Transport (DfT) and other government spending Departments. It set out a series of activities to boost cycling and it is, therefore, the starting point for this Work Plan.

1.3 Cycling England has a remit to “make things happen, and make a difference”; its purpose is primarily executive, not advisory. Cycling England has put together a Work Plan based on 3 guiding principles. All its work must have:

- **Leverage** - in terms of both human and financial resources
- **Impact** - in that they show results quickly both to local authorities and to Government.
- **Focus** - creating “beacons of excellence”, rather than thinly-spread investment across the board.

Leverage

1.4 The principal source of investment in cycling is through local authorities from Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding, and amounts to about £42.5m p.a. Ensuring that this is spent in an effective and cost efficient way is a prime task for Cycling England. Most of the programmes recommended in this Work Plan entail a measure of “matched funding”, whether by local authorities or other partners, to ensure that Cycling England’s resources are spent to best effect, and to ensure high quality across the total investment.

1.5 In terms of people who Cycling England can enlist to support the Work Plan, as well as Cycling Officers in the local authorities, there are now 250 School Travel Advisers, many Workplace Travel Planners, and possibly – arising from the implementation of the Health White Paper – a national group of ‘health trainers’. All of these people, appropriately mandated, trained and equipped, can play a role in the encouragement of more cycling in various contexts.

1.6 By creating a culture of collaboration to coordinate these various resources, and by providing appropriate promotional tools, Cycling England will obtain significant added value from the budget.

Impact

1.7 If cycling is to be taken seriously at a political level, it is essential that investments made through Cycling England are seen to achieve positive results quickly. Over the past nine years, despite increases in Government investment, there has been no increase at all in the number of journeys by cycle. The recommended programmes are designed to have a demonstrable impact, albeit on a limited number of areas – outstandingly that of child cycle training and the school trip.

1.8 By helping coordinate existing resources from local authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGO’s) and the volunteer groups, Cycling England will demonstrate that a few successful programmes will not only boost cycling but also make a difference to

wider society through reducing congestion, improving fitness and health, cutting obesity levels, and helping the environment.

Focus

1.9 The recommended programmes are based on a principle of quality before quantity. “Bike for the Future” argued that the increase in cycling trips in the UK was limited by the lack of investment (per head of population) when compared with the rest of Europe. The emphasis sought in the delivery of programmes is on youth, place, and national support to local providers.

1.10 The Cycling England programmes are designed to be “beacons of excellence”, whether those are ‘Cycle to School’ schemes, local authority support packages, or specific health projects. Cycling England proposes to bring its three principles – leverage; impact; focus – together in 5 Cycling Demonstration Towns. With supportive local authorities and matched funding, the Work Plan will draw together the elements of both infrastructure and ‘soft measures’ at an investment level closer to the European standard, with the aim of creating a local environment supportive of cycling. Schools, local employers, the NHS, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), public transport operators, and voluntary organisations will work together with the local authority to test the hypothesis that a well co-ordinated and integrated set of measures can increase significantly the number of people who cycle.

1.11 ‘Impact’ and ‘Focus’ will guide Cycling England’s programmes within the direct remit of the cycling community. It will work to make its initiatives as well integrated and “joined up” as possible. The fact that Cycling England reports to the Government Group of cross-Departmental officials offers it a further opportunity and strength. That is the synergy which can be created between the specific programmes of cycling and the wider initiatives in health, education and the environment which Government Departments are undertaking. Cycling is inevitably a ‘fringe’ consideration for most local authorities, but if properly integrated into larger government projects, it can derive disproportionate importance and momentum. The pro-active role of the Government Group in encouraging and assisting this synergy will be of real significance.

2. ASSUMPTIONS

2.1 The programmes proposed are also based on three assumptions.

2.2 Firstly, from past experience with the National Cycling Strategy Board, Cycling England plans to work closely only with those local authorities who are willing to offer active support and funding. Assessments of the 149 local highway authorities made for the NCS Board over the past 3 years have identified both those authorities with commitment and those with potential.

2.3 Secondly, Cycling England’s Work Plan will help add value to existing work by various agencies and help to co-ordinate activities to ensure that they are as integrated as possible – for example, cycle training should take place at schools with a cycle parking scheme (and vice-versa); safe routes to schools infrastructure must be directed at schools with parking and training.

2.4 Thirdly, Cycling England’s programmes will channel grants to local authorities where outcomes are clearly measurable, and where Cycling England’s funds are matched.

3. PROGRAMME THEMES.

3.1 Cycling England will deliver programmes in the next three years against the main action areas of Bike for the Future. These also embrace government priorities included in "Cycling and Walking: An action plan" from June 2004.

3.2 Cycling England has divided its recommendations into 5 programme themes, set out in Appendix 1. The programmes have been broken down into specific projects, listing the outline costs, and the estimated cost sheet is shown at Appendix 2. Some projects are already in hand, as continuations of work previously approved by the DfT with the NCS Board.

3.3 The programme themes are:

PT1. Youth – Training and Schools Cycling.

Primarily to increase the number of trips by cycle to school, but also to benefit children's health, road safety and access to wider independence. This was identified in "Bike for the Future" as the best value-for-money, and most strategic programme, with cycle training and infrastructure improvements for school journeys at its heart.

PT2. National Support to Local Providers.

Tailored support for local authority implementation of LTPs and Local Area Agreements, working to maximise the impact of government expenditure on cycling levels. It is important to establish strong relationships with those local authorities and other agents who are willing to promote cycling actively. The English Regions Cycling Development Team (ERCDDT) identified 43 local authorities with "good potential". Instead of trying to provide a pro-active team on the ground trying to influence every one of its local authorities, and to appraise their performance annually, Cycling England plans a 3 stage process.

- i) a specific project with 'willing' authorities to strengthen their Local Transport Plans with respect to cycling, to be completed by Spring 2006.
- ii) the provision of a "Skills Package" for those Authorities committed to improving their delivery of more cycling. Some components of this are already in place: professional training modules, Regional Benchmarking, and support for the Local Authorities Cycle Planning Group (LACPG).
- iii) the measurement, against a simple shortlist of key performance indicators, of improvement among the "willing" group with feedback on further potential.

PT3. Place - Demonstration Towns

To increase cycling levels in 5 demonstration towns by concentrated and integrated investment over a 3 year period. This programme will fund and work with five local authorities to develop exemplary physical environments for cycling, supported by a comprehensive range of "soft measures" to encourage more people to cycle. The individual town projects will embrace all the 5 Cycling England programme themes, with schools, the NHS, PCTs, employers, and public transport operators all participating in linked schemes.

PT4. Health

To increase cycling activity as a recognised public health intervention. The importance of this programme should not be misconstrued from the low level of financial support shown in our plan. Our assumption is that there will be sufficient resource within Department of Health initiatives for the encouragement of physical

activity and healthier lifestyles: Cycling England will work to ensure that the importance of cycling in bringing about these outcomes is reflected in the DOH's various initiatives. Health concerns will also feed into PT2 - Place, with support for local providers as necessary.

PT5. Marketing & Communications

To motivate cycle use by increasing awareness of the relevance of cycling as a transport, health and leisure activity. All Cycling England's marketing activities will be directed at specific target audiences: Cycling England is not considering any broad-scale or national advertising. Marketing and communication efforts will be very precisely targeted in support of this Work Plan. Cycle training and its promotion fits well with the road safety objectives of the DfT, but until now there has been no attempt to coordinate communications from the different interests and create complementary messages ("more people cycling, more safely, more often") as an integrated proposition. Cycling England will extend this approach to coordinate communications with other government Departments.

4. MEASURING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

4.1 Cycling England will evaluate the Work Plan and other government investment in cycling against key performance indicators, value for money measures and public service agreements. Lack of monitoring was a major shortcoming of the original National Cycling Strategy.

4.2 There is scope for improving the measurement of growth in cycling. This needs a unified methodology for local measurement, supported by robust National Travel Survey (NTS) data. Cycling England will recommend specific action to improve data collection for all on-road trips, and how to include trips on traffic-free routes.

4.3 Within each programme theme, Cycling England will specify individual projects, defined in terms of their duration and investment. These will be monitored and evaluated for their impact and cost-effectiveness. The outcomes need to be focused on key government targets, centred on cycling trips, and including the relationship between participation and trips, and accidents and trips. Cycling England will work with DfT and other Departments to identify measurements/indicators that are complementary, consistent and scaleable.

5. FUNDING ALLOCATIONS.

5.1 Cycling England has allocated initial budgets to each of the programme themes over a 3 year period, based on the allocation of £5m by the DfT. Priority has been given to those projects which are most cost-effective, and they have been subjected to a robust appraisal of their merits to ensure they will offer good value for money in terms of practical outcomes.

5.2 The proposed budget for 2005/6 is based on:

- projects already committed by DfT prior to Cycling England's formation;
- the funds needed to launch some projects, and to carry out preparatory or capacity building work in other areas;
- realistic expenditure levels to deliver demonstrable progress against key themes.

5.3 It is vital that early authority is given to this Work Plan, to minimise any risk of underspending. In the event of start-up delays, Cycling England has already decided that

any potential first year underspending should be transferred to the Young People programme. This has both the capacity and the flexibility for a rapid increase in spending over the next 6 – 9 months.

5.4 Proposals for 2006/07 and 2007/8 will pursue the same themes, but projects and investment will be modified in the light of Year 1 experience. A small number of projects will be let on a three year basis: otherwise budgets for Years 2 & 3 will be confirmed not later than three months ahead of each expenditure year.

6. CYCLING ENGLAND AND THE GOVERNMENT GROUP

6.1 To press ahead with the projects within the programme themes, Cycling England requires the approval of the Government Group. To be successful, however, we also need the explicit endorsement, commitment and active support of the Group, and of Ministers in the various Departments.

6.2 Apart from measures specific to cycling, there are many external interventions that can boost cycling numbers. These include congestion charging, speed restraint and home zones which have all brought about large increases in the number of trips by bike. All of these have required determination, leadership and political will, and the Government Group is a critical factor in providing this support to the work of Cycling England.

6.3 While cycling does, almost uniquely, offer benefits to several crucial policies which are high on the agenda of the government – decongestion, pollution reduction, healthy activity, reduction in childhood obesity, accessibility and environmental change, as well as sport and tourism – its potential value in these aims has so far not been recognised. Cycling is still treated as marginal within government Departments. This is despite the Select Committee's Report on Obesity (2004) which stated that attaining the government's target of trebling cycling "might achieve more than any individual measure we recommend in this report". Among our priority target group (young people), over 30% of those aged 7 – 17 would like to cycle to school, and cycling is the biggest out-of-school activity for them. For the new generation, it most certainly is not marginal. To be successful, Cycling England requires the integrated, co-ordinated advocacy and remit which the Government Group can offer.

6.4 A decision by the DfES to support the healthy activity imperative of the DOH, by making cycle training a mandatory item on the school curriculum, would have a profound effect on cycling for the whole of society, as well as for public attitudes towards it. A joint decision by DOH and DfES to part-fund cycle training in schools (e.g. through a voucher scheme) would help realise the benefits to health, safety and decongestion. Likewise, decisions to extend area-wide traffic calming and speed control measures in urban areas, would transform the environment for walking and cycling (cf. Hull).

6.5 Cycling England therefore requests the Government Group to help provide the vision and the leadership; to assist Cycling England with access across Departments; and to give positive support to its agenda. Without that, these programmes will be no more than creditable efforts at the margin: but with united will and effort, this could be the beginning of a real change in our culture and behaviour.

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