

Briefing for two Commons debates on Thursday 21st October

COP26 and Limiting global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees

Commons Chamber, after Business Questions to the Leader of the House – and

UK's Climate Progress: the Committee on Climate Change's 2021 Progress Report

Westminster Hall, 1.30pm

Cycling UK was founded in 1878 and has over 70,000 members. Our core charitable mission is to make cycling a safe, accessible, enjoyable and 'normal' transport option and leisure activity for people of all ages and abilities. Our interests cover cycling both as a form of day-to-day transport and as a leisure activity, which can deliver health, economic, environmental, safety and quality of life benefits, both for individuals and for society.

Policy background

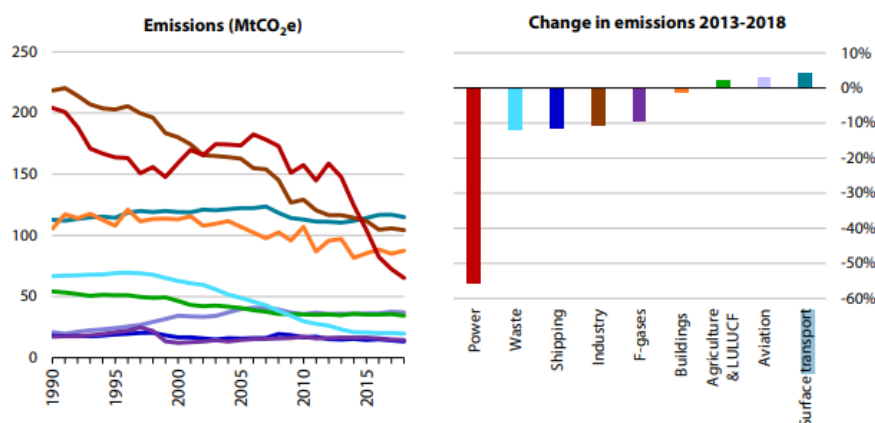
During 2020, the Government published a commendably ambitious '[Gear Change](#)' vision for cycling and walking, together with new guidance on [Cycling Infrastructure Design](#) (Local Transport Note LTN 1/20) and a [consultation on revisions to the Highway Code](#) to improve cycling and pedestrian safety. Cycling UK strongly commended all of these.

We were, however, more lukewarm about the Government's [Transport Decarbonisation Plan](#) (TDP), published earlier this year. Whilst we [welcomed](#) many of the individual initiatives outlined in the TDP, we felt it lacked a clear sense of overall direction. We particularly regretted the following key elements, as called for in our [consultation submission](#):

- Traffic reduction targets that are in line with the Government's wider 'net zero' target;
- Targets for increases in sustainable alternatives (including not travelling, as well as cycling etc) that are in line with these traffic reduction targets; and
- Funding allocations that are in line with these targets.

The policy and political case for road traffic reduction

The UK's territorial emissions of greenhouse gases (i.e. excluding international aviation and shipping) have fallen steeply since 1990, largely thanks to sharp emissions reductions from the power and waste sectors (red and brown lines below). By contrast, transport's emissions (light blue line) have hardly changed over this period. Improvements up to 2016 in the average vehicle efficiency of new cars have been largely offset by increases in road mileage. Hence transport share of total greenhouse gas emissions have grown sharply – from 19% in 1990 to 31% in 2018 - becoming the economy's largest emitting sector.



Source: BEIS (2019) 2018 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Provisional Figures; BEIS (2019) 2017 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final Figures; CCC calculations.

Notes: The chart on the right-hand side shows changes in sectoral emissions between 2013 and 2018 for all sectors except for Agriculture, LULUCF, Waste and F-Gases which cover the period 2013-2017; buildings emissions in this chart are temperature-adjusted.

There is a [growing body](#) of [evidence](#) (with a further report due to be published shortly), showing that reliance on electric vehicles will mean the transport sector fails to decarbonise sufficiently for the UK to meet its carbon budgets under the Climate Change Act 2008, and thus to be on course for net zero by 2050. Cycling UK and many other organisations have therefore called on the Government to set targets to halt and reverse the growth of road traffic, in line with its carbon budgets, and to put in place the policies and investment plans to achieve this aim.

Regrettably, the Government [failed to take the opportunity](#) of its Transport Decarbonisation Plan to do this. Consequently, it is lagging behind the Scottish and Welsh governments, the advice of its statutory advisors on climate change, and public opinion:

- The [Scottish Government](#) recently announced a target to reduce car-kilometres by 20% by 2030, while the Welsh Government's recent [Wales Transport Strategy](#) aims to increase the proportion of trips made by walking, cycling or public transport from 32% in 2019 to 47% by 2040.
- The [6th Carbon Budget report](#) from the Committee on Climate Change (CCC, the Government's statutory advisory body on meeting its climate targets) called for action to reduce demand for car travel by 6% by 2030, increasing to 17% by 2050. Its more recent [2021 Progress Report to Parliament](#) calls for funding "to be rebalanced away from cars ... and towards public transport and walking and cycling".
- The [Climate Assembly](#), a demographically representative 'citizens jury', supported action to reduce road traffic levels in absolute terms.
- Recent [polling by Ipsos MORI](#) found that public support for urban road user charging has increased hugely over the past 13 years, from 33% in 2007 to 62% in 2020, with little difference between drivers and non-drivers, and even stronger support among 'captains of industry'. Public support rises higher still if the receipts are used to improve air quality or public transport, or to tackle climate change – whereas it falls sharply if they are simply returned to drivers in the form of lower vehicle taxes.
- Even more recently, [polling by the Social Market Foundation](#) found that road pricing in general (i.e. not just urban road pricing) attracted greater support (39%) than opposition (26%, with 36% neither supporting nor opposing). These figures showed little variation between drivers and non-drivers, or between different income groups or different nations / regions of the UK.

Other reasons to reduce car dependence

Besides climate change, over-reliance on motor vehicles has other large societal costs:

- *Congestion*: This is estimated to cost the UK economy [£30 billion a year](#).
- *Air pollution*: Pollution is estimated to hasten [between 28,000 and 36,000 deaths annually](#) in the UK, at an economic cost of [£20bn or more](#). The UK Government has [lost three court cases](#) over its failure to keep pollution within legal limits.
- *Road danger*: The cost of [road deaths and injuries in 2018](#) was estimated to be [£35bn](#).
- *Physical inactivity*: [Inactivity-related ill health](#) costs the UK around [£7.4bn](#) annually.

Hence there is a clear case for implementing policies to reduce demand for motorised travel, and improve provision for the alternatives, by:

- Rebalancing transport spending, i.e. reducing the [£27.4bn Roads Investment Strategy](#) and reallocating some of this budget towards cycling, walking and public transport; and
- Introducing road pricing and similar measures, both to restrain traffic demand and to provide additional funding for healthy and sustainable transport.

Investment in cycling and walking

Under the [Infrastructure Act 2015](#), the Government is required to publish and periodically update a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS). Its [first CWIS \(CWIS1\)](#) was published in 2017 and comprised just £316m of ringfenced funding, though with the prospect of securing around £900m of additional funding from other non-ringfenced sources. Cycling UK and other organisations [were dismayed](#) by this very limited funding settlement. Yet in practice, DfT officials did manage to secure a lot more non-ringfenced funding. By February 2020 they could claim that a total of £2.4bn was set to be invested in cycling and walking in England (excluding London) over the 5 years 2016/7 to 2020/1.

Then in May 2020, the Government announced [£2bn of funding for cycling and walking](#) over the 5 years to April 2025, drawn from a wider [£5bn funding pot for “cycling and buses”](#) which the [Prime Minister had announced](#) in February 2020.

This amounted to a very welcome 6-fold increase in ringfenced funding for cycling and walking compared with the previous 5-year settlement. However it still falls a long way short of what is needed to meet DfT’s own [CWIS1 targets](#) to double cycling trips and increase walking by 2025. We understand that unpublished research commissioned by DfT finds that meeting these targets would require spending of between [£6bn and £8bn](#) by that date. DfT had repeatedly promised to publish this research (initially [in February](#), then more recently [in June](#)), but has now declined a FoI request to do so.

It also falls far short of the rates of spending by the Scottish and Welsh Governments:

	Ringfenced funding announced	£ per person annually
England	£2bn funding announced for 2020/1 to 2024/5 – though only £588m allocated so far (£250m in 2020/1 , £338m in 2021/2).	Annual average £7.07 (or £8.42 if London receives separate funding).
Wales	£75m in 2021/2	£23.66.
Scotland	£115m in 2021/2 , increasing to £320m by 2024/5	£21.02 in 2021/2, increasing to £58.50 in 2024/5

It falls even further short of what will be needed to deliver “a world class cycling and walking network for England by 2040”, as promised in the [Transport Decarbonisation Plan](#). In terms of cycle provision, we take this to mean a cycle network that is at least as dense (as well as being as high-quality) as the Dutch cycle network. This comprises [35,000km of protected cycle lanes](#), which amounts to ¼ of the [length of the Dutch road network](#). The equivalent for [England’s road network](#) would be a cycle network of 76,000km. Therefore, using [DfT figures](#), we provisionally estimate that creating in a “world class cycling network for England (i.e. excluding junctions and bridges) will require **investment of around £38bn**, or an **annual average of at least £2bn** between now and 2040.

Value for money

Authoritative estimates of the average benefit:cost ratios (BCRs) of investing in cycling and walking range from [5.6 : 1](#) (DfT) to [13 : 1](#) (Bristol City Council and NHS Bristol). This is substantially higher than for other large transport infrastructure projects – DfT’s [guidance on assessing the value-for-money of transport investments](#) regards BCRs above 2:1 as ‘high’ value for money, and ratios above 4:1 as ‘very high’.

[Research by Leeds University](#), commissioned in 2015 by Cycling UK, found that if cycle use in England increased from less than 2% of all journeys (current levels) to 10% by 2025, and to 25% by 2050 (as recommended by the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group’s [‘Get Britain Cycling’ report](#)), the cumulative benefits would be worth £248bn between 2015 and 2050.

We can therefore roughly estimate that, if the creation of “a world class cycling network by 2040” (costing around £40bn) resulted in Dutch levels of cycling in England by 2050, the benefit-to-cost ratio would indeed be around 6:1.

We therefore ask MPs to urge the Government to release its unpublished research on CWIS funding requirements and benefits, and to act on this in the Spending Review. DfT would then be able to draw up a genuinely ambitious 2nd Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) – this is due to be published early in 2022.

How should this funding be spent? - overview

Around 70-80% of the investment in active travel should take the form of capital funding. The lion's share of this should be for local authorities to implement their [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans \(LCWIPs\)](#) - including networks of protected cycle lanes and junctions, 20mph schemes, 'low traffic neighbourhoods', 'mini-Hollands' and 'school streets' schemes, as well as urban realm improvements.

Further capital investment should be earmarked for: cycling and walking improvements along and across the corridors of the [motorways and trunk roads](#) and [other A roads](#), as well as the [HS2 rail scheme](#); the [National Cycle Network \(NCN\)](#); for improved provision for combining [cycling and rail](#) or [bus](#) travel; and to support the introduction of [bike share schemes](#). We also highlight the opportunities to use post-Brexit agricultural subsidies to invest in improvements to the quality and extent of the [rights of way network](#), particularly by filling gaps in the network (or the parts of the network that are available for cycling), and by improving the lighting and surfacing of parts of the network which are most useful for day-to-day (as well as recreational) cycling and walking.

This capital investment should be complemented by revenue investment, accounting for around 20-30% of total spending on cycling and walking. This should be used to support:

- [cycle training](#) for people of all ages and abilities;
- programmes to promote cycling and walking in [schools](#), [workplaces](#) and [community settings](#) (including '[social prescribing schemes](#)' under which GPs 'prescribe' cycling or walking for patients needing increased physical activity);
- purchase subsidies for electrically assisted pedal cycles (or '[e-bikes](#)'), [cargo-bikes](#), bikes for school pupils on free school meals, and [non-standard cycles for people with disabilities](#); and
- support for [bike share schemes, particularly in more disadvantaged areas](#).

This investment will need to be complemented by action across Government to create supportive policy conditions, e.g. in terms of health, environmental and planning policy; improved access to the rights of way network; strengthened road traffic law and enforcement; support from schools, colleges and businesses; and from the tax system.

A fuller statement of our proposals were included in Cycling UK's [original submission](#) to the 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review, with abbreviated updates being provided in our more recent submissions to the [inquiry on active travel investment](#) by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Cycling and Walking, and to the [2021 Spending Review](#).

Roger Geffen
Policy Director

September 2021