

# Get Britain Cycling

Summary &  
Recommendations



ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY  
**CYCLING GROUP**



## Background to the Inquiry

The Get Britain Cycling inquiry was an initiative of the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group (APPCG), a cross party body with members in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, with the aim "to enable more people across the UK to take up cycling, cycle more often and cycle more safely by interviewing or receiving written evidence from expert witnesses on the obstacles that must be overcome and suggesting concrete, effective measures to be undertaken by central and local government as well as the wider world of business and the third sector".

The members of the group who served as the inquiry panel were as follows:

### Co-Chairs

Ian Austin MP, Julian Huppert MP

### Panel Members

Lord Berkeley, Ben Bradshaw MP, Steve Brine MP, Oliver Colvile MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Jim Fitzpatrick MP, Fabian Hamilton MP, Meg Hillier MP, Lord Hoffmann, Mark Lazarowicz MP, Jason McCartney MP, Lord Scott, Sarah Wollaston MP

### Coordinator

Adam Coffman

This is one of three outputs from the Inquiry: this Summary report of the recommendations from APPCG; a separate second volume report written by Professor Phil Goodwin; and a third volume to be published online at <http://allpartycycling.org> comprising all the submitted evidence and transcripts of the witness sessions.

The APPG administration is supported by the Cycling Alliance, consisting of the Association of Cycle Traders, the Bicycle Association, British Cycling, CTC, Cyclenation, London Cycling Campaign, and Sustrans. The Inquiry was mainly funded by News International, in connection with The Times Cities Fit for Cycling campaign, launched after journalist Mary Bowers was very seriously brain-damaged in a collision with a lorry while cycling to work. The Bicycle Association also contributed to the costs of the inquiry.

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*Cycling makes life  
better for all*

## Foreword

Too many people in the UK feel they have no choice but to travel in ways that are dangerous, unhealthy, polluting and costly, not just to their own wallets but also to the public purse. Urgent action is required to address Britain's chronic levels of obesity, heart disease, air pollution and congestion if we are to catch up with other countries in the developed world.

There is an alternative. When more people cycle or walk, public health improves, obesity reduces and roads become safer. By changing how people travel, we can create places where people want to live, work, shop and do business. We can make people healthier, happier and wealthier. We can reduce costs to our NHS.

To realise the full potential of this vision will require a fundamental cultural shift in how we think about the way we travel. Cycling needs to be not just a personal option, when we decide how to travel for work, school or leisure. It should be a core issue when planning our streets, roads, buildings and communities. We need to train cyclists and drivers alike to travel legally and safely.

Above all, we need a bold vision from government that puts people first. We need those strolling the corridors in Westminster, throughout Whitehall departments and in town halls around the UK to recognise the powerful case for substantial investment in cycling, and the huge benefits this would deliver for town and countryside alike.

The demand is there. The Olympics and Tour de France helped cycling catch the public's attention in 2012. The Times' Cities Fit for Cycling campaign has captured the public imagination; a Parliamentary debate on cycling last year galvanised extraordinary cross-party support; and the evidence presented at this inquiry has shown a remarkable degree of consensus among cycling organisations, local authorities, health professionals and others about what needs to be done.

Yet massive and unnecessary barriers are preventing us from capitalising on this enthusiasm. A window of opportunity is open, but not forever: as memories of sporting success fade and the frustration of limited opportunities continue, we are in danger of squandering the Olympic legacy and failing to create a healthier, more active UK.

This generation of politicians has the chance to be long remembered for having a vision for cycling that includes us all. Put simply, Britain needs to re-learn how to cycle. This report sets out how this can be done.

Ian Austin MP and Julian Huppert MP

**Co-Chairs, All-Party Parliamentary Cycling Group**



## Cycling in Britain: The Potential for Growth

British passion for cycling is growing rapidly, but is still far lower than many other countries. In The Netherlands, 27% of journeys are made by bike, followed by Denmark on 19%. Even Germany manages 10%, with Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, Italy and France all lying between 5% and 9%. Britain however languishes towards the lower end of the European league table, with less than 2%.

Some cities are performing well. Having put cycling closer to the heart of transport for decades, Oxford and Cambridge boast continental levels of journeys made by bike (17% and 30%). Across the country some local authorities are showing that by working together with communities, real improvements can be made and substantial benefits delivered to cyclists and non-cyclists alike.

In 2009, the six cycling demonstration towns, including Exeter and Darlington, recorded an increase in cycling of almost a third. This boost was delivered at an average cost of just £3m per town. And other cities have woken up to the benefits of cycling and have begun to catch up: in 2011 Bristol (up 63%), Manchester (up 21%) and Nottingham (up 9%) boasted of significant increases over the previous decade, albeit from low bases.

London boroughs like Hackney have also made extraordinary progress. The proportion of commute trips made by Hackney residents has more than doubled in a decade (up from 6.2% to 14.6%) and it is now one of the few places in Europe where more people commute by cycle than by car (down from 21.7% to 12.4%).

The number of cycles on London's main roads has more than doubled since 2000. During the rush hour there are now more bikes than cars crossing the Thames over bridges including Blackfriars, Southwark and Waterloo. The Mayor's new vision for cycling, boosting spending to around £12.50 per head annually, could be transformational.

Wales has a commitment through its Active Travel (Wales) Bill, which would require councils in Wales to map existing provision for cycling, identify the gaps, and plan accordingly. Scotland is aiming to increase cycle use to 10% of all trips by 2020. The rest of the UK can match this.

We should not be daunted by how far we still have to go to reach the levels of other European cities. Cycle commuting in New York doubled in four years thanks to investment in high-profile cycling improvements, and further expansion is planned. Seville recently managed a ten-fold increase in cycle use in just three years - from 6000 to 60,000 cycle journeys per day between 2007 and 2010.

In part the challenge is to contest cycling stereotypes. Cycling is a profoundly democratic activity open to people of all incomes, men and women, young and older - each with their own style, pace and pattern of use. However, the image is frequently of 20-something, affluent men jetting to the office or riding long-distance at the weekend. The benefits of cycling - living longer, moving quicker, spending less and being happier - are true for everyone. It's time this universal appeal is made clear, and by reaching out to every community and age group across the country, we could take pride in getting Britain to realise its cycling potential.

***“Frequent cyclists are typically white, male, between 25 to 44, and on a higher than average income” – these groups, and people like them, still have a substantial potential for growth. But “much of the potential comes from women, ethnic minorities, younger and older people, and those on a lower income”***

***TfL 2013***

## Vision

Our vision is to realise the full potential of cycling to contribute to the health and wealth of the nation, and the quality of life in our towns and local communities. We believe this is both possible and necessary.

We need to get the whole of Britain cycling: not just healthy people or sporty young males, but people of all ages and backgrounds, in urban and rural areas.

We need to change the culture of how we use our roads, so that people are no longer afraid to cycle or allow their children to do so. Our streets, roads and local communities, need to become places for people, where cycling and walking are safe and normal.

Increases in cycling recently achieved by towns in Britain (even with quite modest investment), and other cities like Seville and New York, suggests that this is possible, if the funding and the political will is there.

Some strong messages came from the enquiry:

- the need for **vision, ambition and strong political leadership**, including a national Cycling Champion.
- the Government needs to set out an **action plan for more and safer cycling** with support from the Prime Minister down.
- We need **transformation of our towns, streets and communities**, and to the way we think about cycling, whether as drivers or as people who might take up cycling ourselves.
- Our vision is for a dramatic increase **in the number and diversity of people who cycle**, because they see it as a safe and normal activity.
- We suggest that the long-term ambition should be to **increase cycle use from less than 2% of journeys in 2011, to 10% of all journeys in 2025, and 25% by 2050.**

## Recommendations

Our recommendations are divided into five broad topics.

- A new priority for investing public funds
- Redesigning our roads, streets and communities
- Safe driving and safe speed limits
- Training and education
- Political leadership







*Cycling budget of £10-£20 per year per head of the population, for a sustained period*

## A New Priority For Investing Public Funds

Whether by helping people get to workplaces, reducing the phenomenal cost of physical inactivity to the health service or alleviating the strain on local public transport, our economy is boosted every time a journey is made by bike.

Dutch cities reap **massive economic benefits** because of a consistently high level of investment for several decades (now £24 per person per year). Although London now plans to spend £12.50, Scotland is up to £4 and other cities are increasingly following, England outside the capital still spends less than £2 per head; far too low to seriously increase cycling levels. Investment now would help government realise the full financial potential that cycling can deliver.

It is essential that the patterns of spending on cycling should be seen as mainstream commitments, with **long term continuity** rather than temporary initiatives. While these are welcome, they should be in addition to a much larger sustained base of funding, not in place of it.

Many of the improvements that would benefit cyclists, such as improvements to road quality, creation of segregated cycle tracks and junction changes, will also **benefit pedestrians and other road users**. They should therefore form part of planned highway maintenance programmes.

Money is needed for both capital and revenue budgets. Creating cycle-friendly roads, junctions and cycle facilities will require significant capital spending over many years. In the meantime though, some well-targeted revenue funding for cycle training and other smarter choices measures could help kick-start the process of Getting Britain Cycling with some highly cost-effective quick wins.

### Recommendations

- Create a cycling budget of at least £10 per person per year, increasing to £20
- Ensure local and national bodies, such as the Highways Agency, Department for Transport, and local government allocate funds to cycling of at least the local proportion of journeys done by bike.
- Cycle spending that makes a tangible contribution to other government departments, such as Health, Education, Sport and Business, should be funded from those budgets, not just the DfT.







*The objective of good design is to create a safe and comfortable cycling experience for the entire end to end journey.*

## Redesigning Our Roads, Streets And Communities

Too often cycle routes have been designed piecemeal or cyclists have been an afterthought in highway design. As we saw from some best practice areas, **thinking bike at the beginning** of a design and planning process can reap dividends for other road users as well as cyclists.

Suitable road surfaces, arrangements at junctions, and interactions with other traffic are often about planning rather than cost. Cycle friendly driving styles and the speed of passing vehicles can be supported by design. Small improvements such as a **well-placed bollard or junction redesign** can make a big difference.

**Purpose-designed exclusive rights of way**, segregated from other traffic, are ideal, especially as part of a network of cycle paths and lanes, making use of verges, parallel rights of way, disused railways, bridle paths and similar. Continuity of funding would enable better and more cost effective planning of connected segregated routes.

Designated on-road lanes play an important role where segregation is not appropriate, and may require **reallocation of road space**. They need to be substantial - too often in the past they have been token gestures, ending abruptly at junctions, weaving across pavements, or just too narrow.

We were struck by the Highways Agency witnesses' candour in acknowledging that most of his profession had **little knowledge or training** in how to design for cycling. This will need to be remedied.

Bike security is also an important factor in people's decision to cycle and we call for more secure bike parking at both ends of a journey, including railway stations.

## Recommendations

- A statutory requirement that cyclists' and pedestrians' needs are considered at an early stage of all new development schemes, including housing and business developments as well as traffic and transport schemes, including funding through the planning system
- Revise existing design guidance, to include more secure cycle parking, continental best practice for cycle-friendly planning and design, and an audit process to help planners, engineers and architects to think bike in all their work.
- The Highways Agency should draw up a programme to remove the barriers to cycle journeys parallel to or across trunk roads and motorway corridors, starting with the places where the potential for increased cycle use is greatest.
- Local authorities should seek to deliver cycle-friendly improvements across their existing roads, including small improvements, segregated routes, and road reallocation.
- The Department for Transport should approve and update necessary new regulations, such as allowing separate traffic lights for cyclists and implementing Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004.







*Cycling is a safe activity - but could be more so*

## Safe Driving And Safe Speed Limits

Cycling is a safe activity, especially when compared to the health risks of physical inactivity.

Yet there are collisions and deaths on our roads. These are tragic and avoidable.

Fears over safety are a major barrier to getting more people cycling. Evidence from the UK and elsewhere show that places with high cycle use are the safest places to cycle: more cycling leads to safer cycling, and vice versa. More cycling and less motor traffic also creates safer streets for everyone else too.

Heavy goods vehicles are disproportionately involved in deaths and serious injuries, despite some excellent work by some freight organisations.

We support the widespread **extension of 20mph speed limits** as the default value on urban streets, with exceptions (whether higher or in some cases lower) being determined by positive decision at local level. We accept that roads used largely as the main conduits for through traffic will continue to have higher speed limits, and where this is decided, alternative cycle provision should be provided.

Although roads going through rural areas may not be suitable to a general approach such as this, there are many **rural lanes where speed limits of 40mph or less** are entirely justified on general safety grounds, and we support the successful implementation of these.

We are very concerned that the police seem not to be interested in enforcing the law when it comes to speed limits, and a tacit acceptance that enforcement of such limits is mainly a matter of design and education, and outside the scope of ordinary policing, penalties, and courts. This undermines respect for the law, reduces its impact, and costs lives.

Similarly, the courts and justice system too often produce trivial sentences even when avoidable deaths and injuries are caused by drivers. This sends a damaging message. Equally, cyclists should of course obey the law when cycling.

### Recommendations

- Extend 20 mph speed limits in towns, and consider 40mph limits on many rural lanes.
- Improve HGV safety by vehicle design, driver training, and mutual awareness with cyclists; promote rail freight and limit use of HGVs on the busiest urban streets at the busiest times, and use public sector projects to drive fleet improvements.
- Strengthen the enforcement of road traffic law, including speed limits, and ensuring that driving offences - especially those resulting in death or injury - are treated sufficiently seriously by police, prosecutors and judges.







***Bikeability should continue to be funded and expanded.***

## Training and Education

Most children do not cycle. We need to encourage young people to ride a bike as a healthy, active, cheap and fun experience and help them cycle as much as they can. **Cycle training is a cheap and effective way of promoting activity that children can do outside school, can be integrated into sport in school and can help tackle childhood obesity.** It is a skill that they will be able to use all their lives.

Despite the Government's support for Bikeability cycle training (which was described to us as "cycle proficiency for the 21st century"), it is currently only available for about half of all school pupils in England, with even fewer being trained to level 3 Bikeability in their teens. It should be available to all, as swimming is.

**Better training at an early age will also train future car drivers to think bike and could have a long term impact on driver safety.**

People of all ages should be enabled to give cycling a try, and particularly those we know cycle less: people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Department for Transport's own research shows that smarter choices measures of this kind are highly cost-effective ways to boost cycle use.

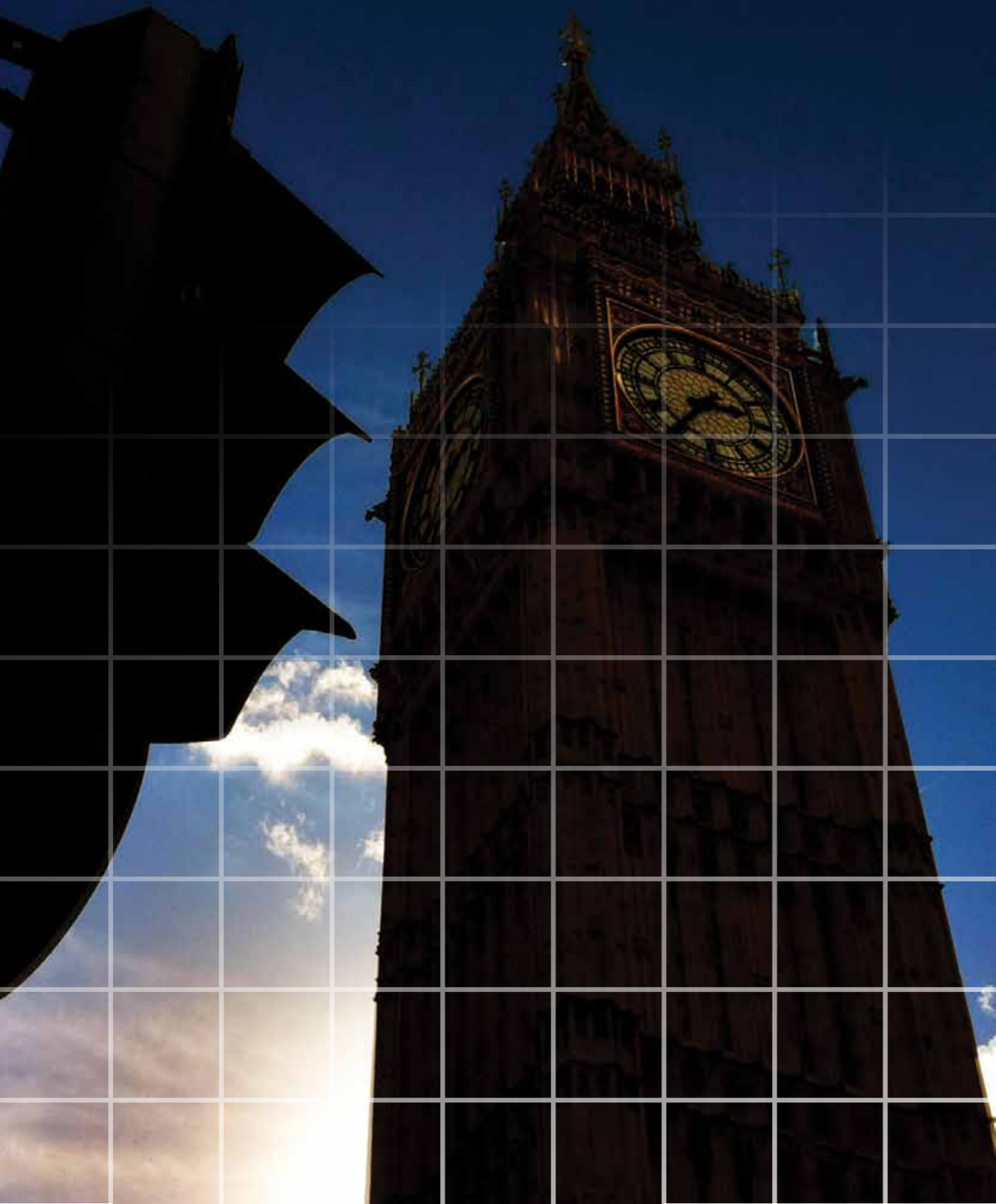
Transport for London's Catch up with the Bicycle campaign is an excellent example of how to promote cycling as stylish and aspirational, which anyone can do in their normal clothes. Cycling must become a normal activity, not a minority pursuit.

## Recommendations

- Provide cycle training at all primary and secondary schools
- Offer widespread affordable (or free) cycle training and other programmes to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to give cycling a try, as evidenced by NICE.
- Promote cycling as a safe and normal activity for people of all ages and backgrounds.







*To Get Britain Cycling we need vision and leadership from the very heart of government.*

## Political Leadership

It is striking that the places where best practice has been developed furthest, and the greatest successes seen, have been those where **politicians at the highest levels have made an explicit, genuine commitment**. To Get Britain Cycling we need vision and leadership from the very heart of government.

But it is not a task for central government alone. **Local authorities and devolved administrations have an important role to play**, particularly given their responsibilities for promoting public health. They also need to work with a huge range of partners in the transport sector and beyond.

National and local government should designate cycling responsibilities at the highest professional and political levels, these being a major part of their job description and not simply a formal responsibility. There needs to be a commitment at local government levels particularly to sweeping away unnecessary barriers to implementation of suitable measures.

The Government should produce a **Cycling Action Plan**, drawn up with a wide range of partners and signed by the Prime Minister. This must include the roles of different government departments - the Home Office, MoJ, DCLG, DCMS, DEFRA, DfE and BIS all have key roles to play and should make clear commitments, not just leaving cycling within the Department for Transport.

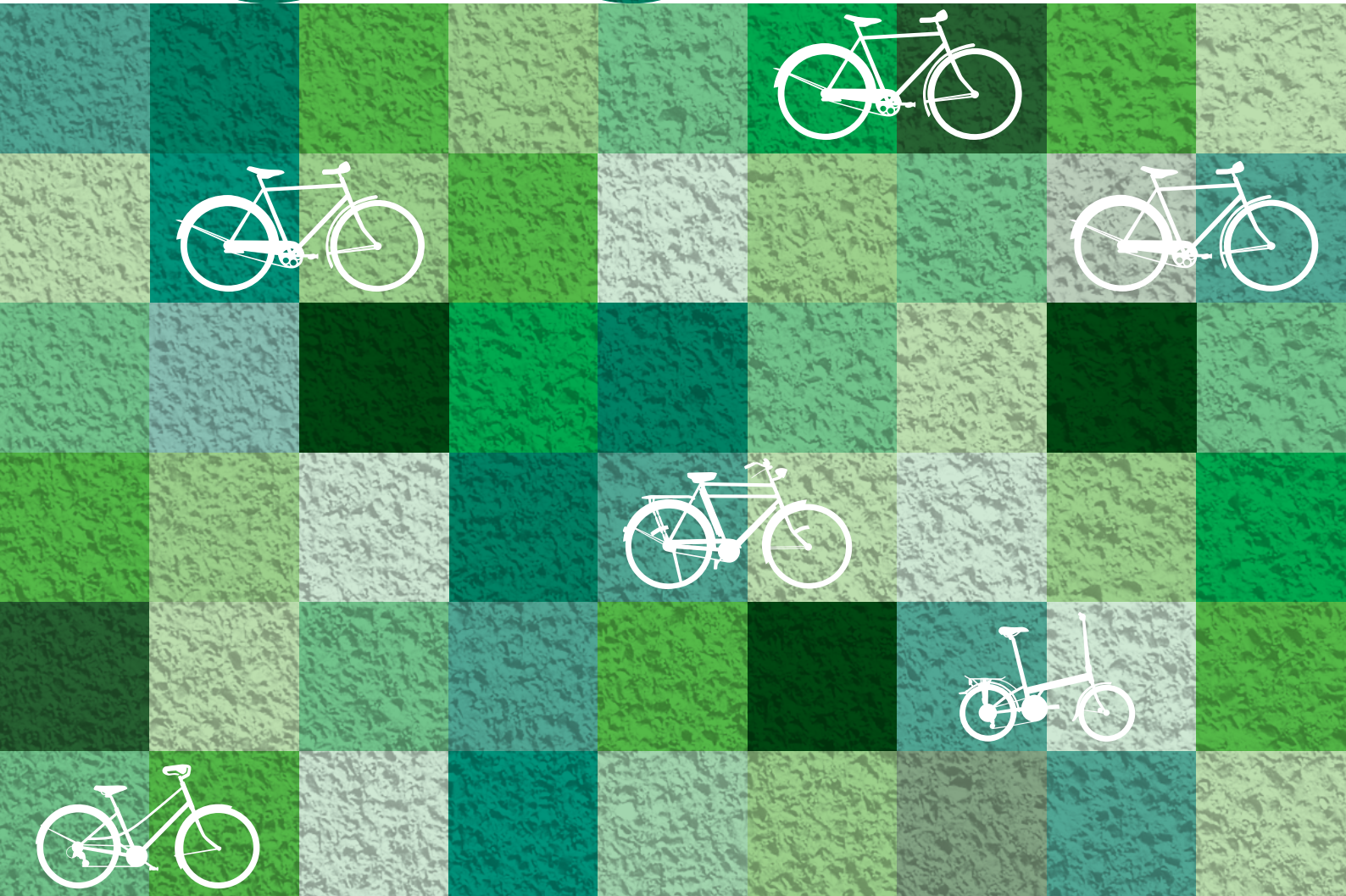
This National Cycling Action Plan should have clear timescales and deliverables, and lead to **annual progress reports**, which should be published and debated in Parliament. These should include better data on cycle use, cycle safety and perceptions of cycle safety.

## Recommendations

- The Government should produce a cross-departmental Cycling Action Plan, with annual progress reports.
- The Government should appoint a national Cycling Champion, an expert from outside the Department for Transport.
- The government should set national targets to increase cycle use from less than 2% of journeys in 2011, to 10% of all journeys in 2025, and 25% by 2050
- Central and local government and devolved authorities should each appoint a lead politician responsible for cycling.







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