

The White Paper and Cycling

Is it A New Deal for Transport and Better for Everyone ?

As you probably know, the Government's White Paper, setting out their policy on the 'Future of Transport', was finally published on 20 July. Though *The Sun's* front page had a picture of Chinese cyclists *en-mass* under the headline *Is This Prescott's Vision of Britain? ...and he's planning bigger bike sheds too*, most press coverage concentrated on the impact on motorists. So we thought we should look at what it has to say about cycling.

We obtained copies of the White Paper straight away. Unluckily for us, it was published the day after our *Newsletter 19* went to the printers! So here are our thoughts and a summary in this separate supplement.

The 170-page paper is no panacea, but it is a good step forward. It looks at the ways different kinds of transport can be improved and especially how they fit together. It considers how change can happen, including funding and partnerships.

We think there are three ways in which cyclists will benefit if it all happens:

- specific cycling measures
- side effects arising from other changes
- the need even for cyclists to be less dependent on cars.

Specifically cycling

We have reproduced the main section on cycling overleaf. The original consultation document barely mentioned cycling, so the emphasis on the National Cycling Strategy is very welcome. This policy was developed by, for, and with cyclists and cycling organisations. The strategic points put all the emphasis on the road environment, not on getting cyclists out of the way of cars.

Sustrans and the National Cycle Network have clearly impressed the Government.

Some people think that encouraging cycling would worsen accident statistics. Paragraph 3.11 is therefore particularly important.

Elsewhere, enforcement of traffic law should bring direct benefits to cyclists and pedestrians. For example, keeping cars out of bus lanes will help bikes, but it's a shame that the same words aren't used about cycle lanes.

In common with many of the other more important policies, much of the further work on enforcement is only for future review, research or pilot studies. Speed policy is to be reviewed, as are funding and simplification of the rules for speed cameras, and who can operate them.

The Paper is strong on extension of 20mph zones, making them easier to implement. But it stops short of promoting fully-fledged Home Zones.

Integration of cycling with trains is close to the hearts of cyclists who don't have access to cars. Cycle parking at stations is emphasised. Anglia Railways gets a good mention, for its 'Bikes on Trains' scheme, and for following the code of conduct developed by cycling groups. Research on better cycle access to stations is also to be carried out.

On the down side, however, there are proposals for studies on the effects of allowing motorcycles to use bus-and-cycle lanes. Nationally, cycling organisations have been opposing such moves. Certainly, we find it hard to square this with moves elsewhere in the paper to reduce noise pollution, as well as the negative effect on cycling safety.

Side effects

The main thrust of the White Paper is to reduce dependence on cars. If successful, reduced traffic levels will be a big bonus for cyclists. As the paper says,

We have a shared responsibility. But great sacrifices aren't called for. **It doesn't take much to make a difference - if we all left the car at home just once out of the ten or so shopping and leisure trips we make from home each month, we would deal with most of the projected increase in traffic this year.**

A new independent body, the *Commission for Integrated Transport* (CfIT), will link the strands of the plan together. This will co-ordinate research and development of the whole policy, and will be largely independent of Government. It will make recommendations to ministers. It would be great if people like Stephen Joseph of Transport 2000 were among the members of the Commission.

Improvements to public transport – many people's main alternative to the car – have to be paid for. The Government has promised to allocate new taxes raised from transport to pay for the new plans. This is technically known as *hypothecation* and only the landfill tax has operated on this basis before. Two much-heralded mechanisms for raising money were indeed included:

- taxing work-place parking (although unfortunately excluding retail parking at this stage)
- road tolls on busy urban and trunk roads.

But critically, *only specific pilot schemes are allowed for now.*

Therefore, to help Cambridge, and provide money for public transport and cycling, it is really important for the County Council to get involved in these pilot studies. The large amount of *private non-residential parking* (there are 40,000 spaces in the City) has long been one of the largest influences on Cambridge travel patterns.



'Integration in action on Anglia Railways'



Making it easier to cycle

An excerpt from the White Paper

3.8 The National Cycling Strategy (NCS) published in 1996 highlighted the potential of cycling as a flexible, relatively cheap and environmentally friendly way to travel with important health benefits for people of all ages. We agree. Cycling, however, has been in decline nationally, even though more cycles are owned than ever (and annual sales of bicycles outstrip the number of new cars sold). But this doesn't have to be the case if we make it easier and safer to cycle:

- in Munich, cycle use rose from 6% of all trips in 1976 to 15% in 1992;
- in Hanover, cycling has increased from 9% in 1976 to 16% in 1990;
- in York in recent years about 20% of commuting has been by bike.



Adapting existing road space for cyclists (Reading).

3.9 The NCS encourages local authorities and others to establish local targets for increased cycle use. A number have already done so and we expect targets to become more widespread as local strategies for cycling evolve. The NCS has established a national target of doubling the amount of cycling within six years (against a base year of 1996) and of doubling it again by the year 2012. **We endorse this target.** A National Cycling Forum [comprising representatives from a range of organisations across the UK including central and local government, business and the voluntary sector] has been established to oversee its implementation.

3.10 To support the NCS, we are continuing to research innovative measures to improve the safety and convenience of cycling and will publish advice on good practice. We want to see better provision for cyclists at their destinations, at interchanges, in the design of junctions and in the way road space is allocated. In particular, we are looking to local authorities to:

- establish a local strategy for cycling as part of their *local transport plans*;
- institute 'cycle reviews' of the road system and 'cycle audits' of proposed traffic schemes;
- adapt existing road space to provide more cycle facilities;
- make changes to traffic signalled junctions and roundabouts in favour of cyclists, giving them priority where this supports cycling;

- apply speed restraint more widely to support their cycling strategies and provide for cyclists when applying speed restraint measures;
- increase provision of secure parking for cycles;
- maintain cycle lanes adequately to avoid hazards to cyclists;
- use their planning powers to promote cycling through influencing the land use mix, layout and design of development and through the provision of cycle facilities.

3.11 Concern about road safety is a major reason for people not using their bikes for everyday journeys. Parents in particular see the dangers for their children of cycling on roads. In many areas radical changes are needed to create safer cycling conditions. Cycling promotion policies therefore need to mesh with those on road safety. Safety should be an additional incentive for action, not a reason for delaying priority measures for cyclists.

3.12 We will continue to help with the development of the National Cycle Network being co-ordinated by the transport charity Sustrans. The network will be a linked series of traffic-free paths and traffic-calmed roads providing some 8,000 miles of safe and attractive routes by 2005. By opening

up opportunities for people to cycle more, the network will help to create a culture that welcomes cycling as an activity.



National Cycle Network

Longer term thinking becomes easier at the local level, with five year strategic *Local Transport Plans* replacing the current annual funding bids. The focus has changed, to include *Green Transport Plans* for workplaces and *Quality Partnerships* (agreements between local authorities and bus companies, made to raise the standard of provision).

The Paper says that *Local Transport Plans* will mean:

- integrated transport strategies for local needs
- local targets, for example to improve air quality, reduce road casualties, increase the number or proportion of cycle journeys, increase use of public transport and amount of road traffic reduction
- more certainty of funding
- greater use of traffic management.

The second Road Traffic Reduction Act will be law shortly (it has now passed through both Houses), so traffic reduction targets will be required anyway.

In the very long term, planning developments with integrated transport in mind should reduce or shorten journeys. The Government says it will update the key instructions it gives to local authorities (*Planning Policy Guidance* and *Regional Planning Guidance* in the jargon) in line with the White Paper.

We are pleased to see positive comments on the potential for reduction of lorry and van movements by the possible introduction of transhipment facilities. These are locations to which large lorries deliver goods, with local distribution being carried out using specialised vehicles which may be smaller, quieter and less polluting. This is particularly important as European Union regulations continue to increase the



maximum allowed lorry weight. The White Paper sneaks in 41 tonnes maximum for next year instead of 40, and does not rule out 44 tonnes, which the freight industry is pressing for.

How will this affect us in Cambridge and Cambridgeshire?

The Paper stresses that the Government cannot achieve these changes alone.

Business, operators, communities and individuals all have a part to play in responding to the challenge. Green transport plans produced by local authorities, businesses, community organisations, schools and hospitals will alert people to the problems and the solutions. We will help to spread information about new ways of working and living which reduce the need to travel and the impact of journeys. Partnership of various forms provides a good means of bringing different interests together.

One area in which Cambridgeshire does lead the way, along with Nottingham, is the *Travel for Work* initiative, in which Cambridge Cycling Campaign is a partner organisation. The paper encourages the creation of such partnership schemes. We can be confident that the *Travel for Work* and *Cycle Friendly Employer* projects will grow further, as the White Paper is implemented.

In the light of recent publicity surrounding car-parking at Addenbrooke's, we found this statement interesting:

We are particularly keen that hospitals are seen to be taking the lead in changing travel habits. By the very nature of their work, hospitals should be sending the right messages to their communities on acting responsibly on health issues. We would like to see all hospitals producing green transport plans.

Many of the statements in the paper begin with phrases like 'we will start trial schemes on', 'we will start research in', etc. These are applied particularly to the new forms of revenue generation, which are the 'sticks' which will enable the 'carrots' to be implemented.

We expect that those local authorities which seek to be involved in the trial schemes at an early stage will have a huge head-start in dealing with traffic problems. Congestion seriously reduces the quality of life in Cambridgeshire. We hope that our local councils have the wisdom to pursue these opportunities, and we will urge them to do so.

So is it good for everyone?

The Government rather wisely published a long excerpt from the previous Government's transport Green Paper called *Transport: The Way Forward*. This shows very clearly that the previous administration had identified the same problems, was considering similar solutions, and had realised that predicting traffic growth and providing for it was no longer a viable option.

As our roads approach gridlock, and *predict and provide* has failed, there is consensus that the most anti-car route ahead is to do nothing at all. So, yes, we believe it can be a 'new deal for transport', and 'better for everyone', if it all happens.

It is a hard balancing act – too weak, and it won't bring about change; too tough, and the Government will be out of power, and the changes reversed, before they can have an effect.

Decide for yourself

There is a great deal more than we can possibly mention here. The Paper is really quite readable and attractively presented. You can get your own copy:

- on the web: <http://www.detr.gov.uk/itwp/>
- from Heffers: 20 Trinity Street, Cambridge, 01223 568568
- by phone: 0171 873 9090 (for £16.50 plus £2.94 P&P)

We will be taking the White Paper as the theme for our next Campaign Meeting, which is of course on Tuesday 4 August at 7.30 for 8.00 at the Friends Meeting House, Jesus Lane. We hope we may see you there.

David Earl and Clare Macrae