

## Deputation to Leeds City Council by Leeds Cycling Action Group

Leeds Cycling Action Group, representing Leeds Cyclists, wish to bring Councillors' attention to the contribution cycling can make to Council's objectives on health and wellbeing, climate change and economic growth; and to the current poor consideration of cycling within the Council's programmes.

Although in recent years, cycling has become a pleasant, popular and convenient way of getting around many cities, in Leeds, take-up is still extremely low, Leeds' strategy documents are positive about walking and cycling, but these modes of transport are treated as afterthoughts in policy implementation.

The benefits of a large shift away from private motor vehicles to cycling include:

1. better health and well-being, through increased physical activity,
2. environmental benefits: improved air quality and reductions in carbon emissions, and
3. reduced traffic congestion.

60% of all journeys are less than five miles, a distance that can easily be cycled by most adults. Many European cities have levels of cycling far greater than the UK, and even within the UK Leeds compares unfavourably with many other cities. We are failing to give Leeds people choices in transport, especially those who are financially stretched or do not have access to a car. Instead of aspiring to put more cars on Leeds' roads, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups could be enabled to travel easily and cheaply by bicycle.

Why do so few people cycle in Leeds? A recent survey concluded that the biggest barrier is the perceived danger from traffic, especially for those new to cycling. At present, motor vehicles are prioritised, but cyclists are - and need to be seen to be - legitimate users of the roads. While off road routes are helpful, especially for new cyclists, they can't be used after dark or in bad weather.

If the road environment were to be made as welcoming as possible, Leeds could move to a virtuous circle where many people engage in cycling and walking as normal and sensible transport choice.

### **Five obvious actions are:**

1. Allocate a fair and proper proportion of road space in all improvement schemes. Excellent guidance is available from the Department of Transport, but this is mostly ignored by Leeds planners who aim to maximise capacity and speed, effectively pushing vulnerable users off the road.
2. Implement all the planned Core Cycling Network routes, maintain them properly, and ensure they can easily be accessed by cyclists on all types of bike.
3. Limit speeds to 20mph in all residential areas; this has local benefits far beyond cycling and walking.
4. Use the planning system to ensure employers and businesses provide cycle parking for customers, and changing facilities for their staff.

**5.** Use existing Council communications to publicise the benefits of cycling, and the new routes and facilities already available.

Leeds lags woefully behind other authorities in making good use of cycling as a sensible transport choice. Cycling can make a vital contribution to your targets on climate change, health and well-being, and economic growth.

### **Notes**

- In 2010, 99% of killed or seriously injured pedestrians in urban areas – i.e. where pedestrians are most likely to be – were the result of a collision with a motor vehicle.
- Out of 11,716 car/pedal cycle collisions in Britain in 2010, no car occupants died.
- On average, 1 cyclist is killed on Britain's roads for every 30 million miles travelled by cycle. You are more likely to be injured in an hour of gardening than in an hour of cycling.
- People who cycle regularly in mid-adulthood typically enjoy a level of fitness equivalent to someone 10 years younger, and their life expectancy is two years above the average.

References for the above statistics are available from the Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC), <http://www.ctc.org.uk/> in their "Cycling and Road Safety" briefing.

Department for Transport Local Transport Note 2/08 "Cycle Infrastructure Design", October 2008

<http://www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/ltnotes/ltn208.pdf>

### **Further information and contacts:**

Dave Holt, vice-chair, Leeds Cycling Action Group,  
and LCAG members Martin Bennett, Kevin Cooney, Lizzie Reather; and Chris Boulton (CTC Leeds)

Leeds Cycling Action Group

<http://leedscyclists.org.uk/>

University of Leeds Bicycle Users' Group (joint chairs Lizzie Reather and Will Crocombe)

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/leedsbug/>

CTC: The UK's National Cyclists' Organisation

<http://www.ctc.org.uk/>