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CWIS Safety Call for Evidence
RULIS
Department for Transport
3/29 Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

31 May 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) safety review

The Devon Countryside Access Forum (DCAF) is a local access forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act). Its statutory remit is to give independent advice “as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area...”

The DCAF currently has seventeen members, appointed by Devon County Council, who represent the interests of landowners/managers, access users and other relevant areas of expertise such as conservation and tourism.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum has considered the questions posed in the above consultation and has the following comments. This response will be on the agenda for formal approval at the next meeting.

The Forum would welcome improvements to safety which encourage people to walk and cycle for both functional and recreational purposes.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is a local access forum. It is required, in accordance with Sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, to provide advice as to the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment.

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Question 1

Do you have any suggestions on the way in which the current approach to development and maintenance of road signs and infrastructure impacts the safety of cyclists and other vulnerable road users? How could it be improved?

1) General comment

Current cycling provision is often poor especially on road and new cycle lanes often fail to address cyclists' needs, only seeking to separate motor transport from cyclists. Often cycle lanes disappear where roads narrow, just at the place where separation is most needed. The same applies to pavements for pedestrians. To address the safety issues, the needs of **all** highway users should be considered equal rather than the hierarchical situation that currently exists. Current road signage is too car-centric and a fundamental change is needed to normalise cycling and pedestrian use.

2) Cycling lanes and turning vehicles

Where no alternative route exists next to narrowing roads "virtual" pavements or cycle lanes through road markings on the existing carriageway should be considered, where width allows.

Some Forum members suggested that consideration should be given to methods of making cycleways more user-friendly. For example, it was suggested that where there are cycle routes alongside roads they usually turn into every side road where the cyclist is expected to give way. This stop-start and constant in and out is why cyclists continue to use the main carriageway. It is suggested that regular cyclists, and hence commuting cyclists, need the same priority as other road users at junctions with the onus on turning vehicles having to give way to cyclists carrying onward. A useful way would be to add a slightly raised or marked cycle way across the junction, so effectively adding a traffic calming measure on the turn, to make drivers aware of the cycle lane

However, other Forum members have commented that in practice this is quite difficult and dangerous and actually unsettling for drivers – "there is one on the way into Plymouth and as a driver you are paranoid about turning across a cyclist in poor light or if they come haring down the inside".

3) Highway infrastructure

Despite highway maintenance budgets and ring-fenced budgets such as the Pothole Action Fund, many potholes remain. Most of these potholes are at the edge of the road forcing cyclists out onto the middle of the carriageway. This reduces navigability and makes rural roads particularly dangerous in the darker winter months. Manhole covers can be slippery, sink or get damaged, again an issue that makes cyclists swerve out into traffic. Drivers do not anticipate that a cyclist may have to move out to avoid issues with the standard of the highway. Such defects may also cause drivers and motorcyclists to react unpredictably. Additional monitoring is required following highway repairs.

4) Rural verges and footways

The scope of this consultation should include all vulnerable road users, not only cyclists and walkers but also dog walkers and horse riders. Pedestrians are frequently accompanied by dogs and data from the MENE (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment) survey shows dog walking is by far the most significant leisure activity (48% of visits to the outdoors in 2015/16). Safety is a particular concern in rural areas as few towns and villages are connected effectively by footpaths and this means many people either end up driving, or driving those who cannot drive, to avoid walking on rural roads. Cycling can also be hazardous.

Well-maintained verges can provide some refuge for vulnerable road users, particularly between settlements or between nearby public rights of way. Where work is undertaken which affects verges it is important that these are made good afterwards.

5) Built environment and planning

In terms of infrastructure, the built environment, and especially new housing, needs to take more account of cycling. People only cycle if it's convenient, and having somewhere to store family bikes 'ready to go' is essential. As fewer new homes have garages, or gardens with sheds, this becomes more difficult. Such storage facilities should be given priority in the development of planning policy and in the design of new developments.

Encouragement should be given to businesses to design premises and parking areas to provide cycle facilities and promote cycle use.

6) Signage

Signage could be improved, particularly for shared use paths, to encourage better behaviour. Speed limits for cyclists could apply on shared use paths but ideally education and awareness should encourage people to share paths responsibly. Clearer signage is needed to discourage pedestrians from using cycle-only paths (usually this is where a separate footpath is available but pedestrians walk on the cycle path). Signage needs to be clear, consistent and pictorial. National standards for signage, agreed via consultation with users, should be introduced.

7) Quiet Lanes sign

The current Quiet Lanes sign is rarely used and the Forum is not aware of how successful it has been in reducing speed and encouraging awareness of other users. The concept is good and it would be useful to explore further as rural roads are particularly hazardous for users. However, Devon has one of the largest road networks in the country with 2,706 miles of 'C' roads and 4,026 miles of unclassified roads. It would be difficult to prioritise where to locate such signs. The message of 'Quiet Lane' or 'Shared Lane' or 'Shared Route' is very important in rural areas to ensure drivers receive the message to "slow down and consider other users". A dog walked to heel would be a useful addition to the existing Quiet Lanes sign.

8) Dogs

It would be helpful to include advisory notices for cycle/shared paths to ensure people do not use extended leads and that dogs are under control e.g. on a short lead or walking to heel around others. There is an issue regarding the use of extending leads in public places, which can lead to tripping and other injuries. This could be included in the Highway Code. The Government should also consider how best this should be addressed. If existing legislation is sufficient, it would be helpful to know in what way.

Question 2.

Please set out any areas where you consider the laws or rules relating to road safety and their enforcement, with particular reference to cyclists and pedestrians, could be used to support the Government's aim of improving cycling and walking safety whilst promoting more active travel.

- **Turning the Corner Campaign**

Some Forum members would like the Highway Code to change as per the Turning the Corner campaign.

- **Speed limits**

The use of local speed limits in urban and village locations to protect vulnerable road users is supported.

Speed warnings currently display your speed. Positive reinforcement through more widespread use of speed indicators that turn to a smile or indicate thank you when the speed limit is complied with would be better.

- **Use of mobile devices**

Use of mobile phones and headsets has increased markedly. It would be difficult to enforce a ban on their use for cyclists and pedestrians. Cyclists and pedestrians should be made more aware that such use could increase risk, both to themselves and to others. The law should require cyclists to 'ride with due care and attention' and 'to look out for and respect other users'.

- **Passing distance and speed**

The requirement to give cyclists a car's breadth of room when passing is widely ignored on rural roads. There is a perception that it is acceptable to squeeze past without dropping speed. This is particularly dangerous for children and young people, who can look like an adult on a bike but who lack road experience, and for whom bikes are often the only form of independent transport. Education campaigns are needed to tackle this. The most useful thing would be for car drivers to **significantly** reduce speed when passing cyclists, walkers and horses. The Highway Code, driver training and tests should emphasise the added danger and risk to vulnerable road users of driving too fast past them. On narrow roads cars may need to stop to ensure vulnerable road users can pass safely. Equally it may be appropriate for cyclists to stop for car drivers. The important message is consideration for all users.

- **Highway Code**

Access to the Highway Code should be improved and designed in a way that would make it easy to share tips and raise awareness of key sections via social media. Video and Public Information Films could also be used more to get messages across. The Highway Code should clearly apply to all users of roads and pathways including car drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, horse riders and dog walkers.

- **Enforcement**

Where the Highway Code or law specifies certain safety requirements are a 'must', there should be more emphasis on enforcement e.g. there needs to be stronger action to keep cycle lanes free of parked cars.

Question 3.

Do you have any suggestions for improving the way road users are trained, with specific consideration to protecting cyclists and pedestrians?

- **General**

Rural off-road trails, like Devon's Tarka Trail, are a fabulous leisure asset and invaluable in getting children and hesitant riders to cover reasonable distances and negotiate obstacles with control in a safe environment. More dedicated cycle routes are needed. They do not all need to be scenic - there is a real value in providing a car free or 'low car' alternative to the main roads for cyclists. However, they do need to have money allocated for maintenance - see note on infrastructure and pot holes above.

- **The Bikeability Scheme**

The Bikeability scheme is very valuable and needs continued support but even Level 3 is not enough to make young cyclists safe on busy roads. New cyclists need time to build up confidence and road sense, hence the need for trails and alternative low traffic routes.

- **Driver training**

Few rural roads have pavements and a minority of car drivers fail to give pedestrians due consideration. Their needs and rights should be emphasised more in driver training. Driving tests are urban-focussed but should include rural road driving and vulnerable user perception. For example, many rural roads are narrow and windy yet a pedestrian, cyclist, dog walker or horse rider may be just around the corner.

In rural areas, and noting the important exception of young people, almost everyone who cycles also drives or has experience of driving. The reverse is not true - many drivers struggle to see the cyclists' perspective. Much more could be done through driver training and the theory and driving test. More refresher courses could be offered to drivers to bring them up to date with changing conditions.

Question 4.

Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve road user education to help and support more and safer walking and cycling?

❖ Public health messages

Health messages should include child education with the left right left campaign.

❖ The Driving Test

The Highway Code theory test should include greater emphasis on pedestrian and cyclist safety, as should speed awareness courses. The Driving Test itself should include additional questions on this matter.

❖ Cycling

There is sometimes conflict between cyclists and pedestrians, particularly on off-road trails or shared routes. Cycles must be fitted with a bell on sale but there is no obligation to retain or use a bell. Cyclists should be made more aware that they may not be heard without a bell. However, many people have hearing impairments which are an invisible disability and would not hear a bell. As part of training and awareness the importance of extreme care when overtaking or passing others should be emphasised. The Highway Code refers to deafblind people but not deaf people and should be amended to include this.

❖ Electric cars

Electric cars will have an effect on road safety because people are not used to quiet vehicles. In rural villages, pedestrians frequently step off pavements, having checked for traffic only with their ears. Cyclists encounter pedestrians doing this and it will become more of an issue for car drivers. Keeping speeds down will be crucial for safety. Electric car drivers should be made aware that vulnerable road users may not be able to hear them, may be deaf, or may not be used to a different noise. All users need to be more visually aware. More could be done to raise awareness of blind people (with a white stick or Guide Dog) or deafblind people with a white and red stick.

Question 5.

Do you have any suggestions on how Government policy on vehicles and equipment could improve safety of cyclists and pedestrians, whilst continuing to promote more walking and cycling?

Safety options

The Devon Countryside Access Forum advises that the following aspects should be investigated:

- a) Consider compulsory cycle helmets on the road.
- b) Regular cyclist and pedestrian awareness training for HGV drivers.
- c) More cycle safe routes along commuter corridors and to open spaces.
- d) Alongside the rise in dashboard cameras for cars, helmet cams for cyclists could have an increasing role in both encouraging better driving/cycling and in apportioning liability after accidents. This should be voluntary and not a legal requirement.

- e) Consideration should be given to increasing the mandatory requirements for lights and reflectors on bicycles. Reflectors on the wheels or retro-reflector strips on the spokes or wheels, as in some European countries, would enhance visibility and in particular when turning. This could be achieved at minimal cost at the point of manufacture. Mudguards to prevent mud from reducing the visibility of lights and reflectors would also increase safety.
- f) Technology in cars can contribute to a vast improvement in road user safety. Car designers should be encouraged/required to build in warnings about cyclist/pedestrians in blind areas around vehicles. Design regarding bumpers should also consider the safety aspects of collision with vulnerable road users and successful design should be mandatory.

Question 6:

What can Government do to support better understanding and awareness of different types of road user in relation to cycle use in particular?

- **Awareness**

Both groups are quick to criticise the other. There needs to be more awareness that both are entitled to use the road and should respect each other. There should be clearer guidance on how to use existing laws if someone is abusive to you and the police need to show they will prosecute.

- **Farming vehicles**

In rural areas, harvest time brings big vehicles to roads, often driven by contractors rushing between fields or farms 'while the weather holds'. Employers and organisations in the agricultural sector could do more to emphasise the need for these drivers to share rural roads with cyclists, pedestrians, dog walkers and horse-riders. This is an issue as farm land holdings get larger but more widely distributed.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum trusts its comments will be taken into account and would welcome feedback.

Yours faithfully



Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Letter sent on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum

Chair: Sarah Slade

Vice Chair: Chris Cole