



Consultation on the Draft Cycling Delivery Plan

Response on behalf of National Parks England

12 November 2014

Summary

National Parks England welcomes the opportunity to be able to comment on the Consultation on the Government's "*Cycling Delivery Plan*". National Parks England collectively represents the views of the nine English National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority, and our response follows internal consultation amongst the authorities. Over recent years National Park Authorities and their partners have collectively received significant funding from Cycling England and the Department for Transport to deliver cycle schemes. These schemes are achieving improvements to cycling facilities within and around national parks for residents as well as promoting cycling to a wide audience of visitors to national parks. Evidence from the monitoring of the initial Pedal Peak District Project demonstrated large numbers of new and returning cyclists, often from less represented groups, both resident and visitor. We note that DfT research¹ has demonstrated a cost benefit ratio of 5.5:1 – whereby spending £1 on cycling in National Parks generates £5.50 worth of social benefit. The same research says that in relation to National Parks, "the grants are therefore considered to deliver very high value for money" (page 11). As a consequence **National Parks England would encourage DfT to ensure that National Park Authorities are acknowledged as important delivery vehicles for the Cycling Delivery Plan.**

English National Parks collectively account for more than 90 million visitors a year² and as such National Park Authorities are in a position to influence a good number of people who are making leisure visits and tend to be more amenable to trying new or unfamiliar experiences. The recent funding for cycling in national parks will enable new and returning cyclists to have a positive leisure cycling experience. It is recognised that leisure cycling contributes to a number of benefits including health and the economy. It is also the most obvious route into cycling for everyday purposes, such as for access to work, education and other services. The provision of funding for cycling in national parks is also in keeping with the Government's 2010 circular on National Parks, by helping to maintain access to jobs education and services in those locations where public transport provision has reduced over recent years.

Whilst the funding that has been provided over recent years has proved most welcome, not all National Parks have been able to benefit from it. Even where funding has been made available, there are still opportunities to extend facilities for cyclists and to help engender cycling as a lifestyle choice by encouraging more people to access national parks either directly by bike, or by public transport with their bikes. At the very least, we should be encouraging those who arrive by private car to park in the most appropriate locations and giving them every opportunity to continue their visit by more sustainable means including walking and cycling. However, this will require consistent investment to allow a more efficient delivery of both schemes and their benefits to help deliver the cycling revolution envisaged by the Prime Minister through removing barriers for a new generation of cyclists.

In responding to this consultation, National Parks England will focus on those areas that are particularly pertinent to National Parks and National Park Authorities, or those areas where we are best able to provide an input based on our experience of on the ground delivery.

¹ DfT (2014) [Value for Money Assessment for Cycling Grants](#)

² National Parks England [Infographic](#)

Detailed comments on the Draft Cycling Delivery Plan

Introduction

Paragraph 2 – National Parks England welcomes the Department for Transport's commitment to publish a paper setting out the economic case for cycling. Whilst, National Park Authorities can point to local evidence, (quantitative and qualitative), robust national and international evidence will enhance our ability to provide accurate Cost Benefit Ratios for future schemes.

Theme 1: Vision, leadership and ambition

Paragraph 1.2 – National Parks England welcomes the Department's commitment to walking, but we feel that the draft delivery plan looks and reads like a plan for cycling rather than for both cycling and walking. Therefore we would question whether the intention is to progress the walking agenda through a separate document? If this is not the intention, then we would recommend that the reference to walking should be reinstated into the title and equal weight given to it within the Plan.

Paragraph 1.4 – National Parks England welcomes the plan for partnerships between government and local authorities to deliver the Cycling Delivery Plan. Over recent years National Park Authorities have forged partnerships with both constituent and neighbouring local authorities to deliver LSTF and Cycling Grants. **Can you confirm that national park authorities are eligible to enter into these partnerships either jointly with other local authorities or on their own behalf?**

As mentioned above National Parks have been very successful in delivering cycle projects, including many kilometres of new routes. For example within the Wider Peak District area recent funding has / will lead to the opening up of approximately 60km of multi-user routes. Similarly, in the South Downs National Park, more than 65km of new or improved multi user routes has been/will be delivered. However, it should be recognised that National Park Authorities have neither the land ownership nor highway powers enjoyed by other local authorities, particularly highway authorities. In addition the high environmental designation of national parks can mean that arriving at the appropriate design for a project and undertaking appropriate consultation can also be time consuming. Therefore we would welcome the outlined approach of partnership working which should give more leeway for a proactive approach, whilst hopefully tempering some of the time constraints experienced over recent years.

Theme 2: Funding

Paragraph 2.1 – National Parks England welcomes the commitment to explore ways of increasing funding for cycling to £10 per person by 2020-21. However, considering the undoubted benefits of cycling including health and wellbeing, environmental, transport / access and economic, we are disappointed that the Cycling Delivery Plan lacks a firm commitment to the levels of funding currently enjoyed in London; particularly as the aforementioned benefits from cycling are being clearly demonstrated within the Capital.

Paragraph 2.6 – We welcome the commitment to cycle proof parts of the strategic road network, but would request that this is not restricted only to those routes where major works are proposed to tackle congestion.

Theme 3: Infrastructure and Planning

Paragraph 3.2 – We welcome the commitment to address a number of issues related to cycle proofing.

Theme 4: Safety and Perceptions of Safety

Paragraph 4.1 – Whilst we recognise cyclist perceptions of the dangers of road cycling are less than those who do not cycle, it is still of concern that almost half of all cyclists (48%) perceive road cycling as dangerous. It is also concerning that two thirds of non-cyclists also think that it is dangerous. Both groups will need to be reassured in order for the hoped-for step change in cycling to take place. We therefore welcome the commitment to improve safety and the perceptions of safety for cyclists.

It is important that some thought, backed up with committed funding, is given to addressing such concerns in rural areas, and in particular national parks given the high volume of visitors that they experience. In such areas, outside of settlements, traffic speeds are significantly higher, whilst the levels of environmental protection coupled with topography make the traditional approaches to cycle safety inappropriate. Therefore, we would welcome the opportunity to work with Government to identify more innovative solutions that are in keeping with national park purposes and settings to address this issue. For example this might include working with sat-nav companies to make motorists aware of locations where they might expect large numbers of road cyclists.

Annex A: Summary of Actions

Theme 3 – Infrastructure and Planning: summary of actions – Whilst the action related to improving cycling facilities at railway stations is welcomed; the plan misses the opportunity to encourage the carriage of cycles on public transport. In order to address some of the issues related to travel by private motor vehicle, particularly into national parks, it is vital that visitors who wish to transport their bikes can do so by public transport – both bus and rail. The piloting of such schemes would be welcomed, and National Parks England would be keen to work with Government to identify locations where this could take place.

NPE
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