

Comments on Draft Walking Plan for London

Thank you for inviting Sustrans to comment on Transport for London's Draft Walking Plan for London. Please find below our comments relating to the two sections of the plan.

(1): Comments on Part 1 "The Facts"

Part 1 does not conjure up a vision of what a walkable London would look or feel like. Instead it focuses almost entirely on the negative qualitative and quantitative data. Most walking practitioners are already familiar with these depressing facts and figures, so who is the target audience and what does the document seek to achieve by concentrating on the negative? By the time one has ploughed through 12 pages of text on burgeoning population, declining walking statistics, high traffic volumes, poor air quality, litter, uncoordinated street furniture, fatal traffic accidents and fear of crime, it is enough to make you want to get in a car. A more inspiring and visionary approach would be to focus on the success stories, the areas where London has reinvented itself due to changed priorities, improved public realm and reduction in motor vehicle access. The "facts" could focus on:

- The vibrancy and prosperity of long-established traffic free areas like Carnaby Street, Columbia Road Flower Market, Covent Garden and Camden Lock
- The dramatic changes in central London being brought about by the Trafalgar Square World Squares Initiative
- The huge increases in walking which have been generated by the opening of the Millennium footbridge
- The noticeable impact of congestion charging and its significant long term potential to improve streets and the public realm

These facts speak for themselves and allow the reader to catch a glimpse of what London could be like if walking and the public realm are given political commitment and appropriate levels of resources.

Part 1 should try to draw case studies and supporting facts from seminal reports and government papers on walking and the public realm already published including:

By Design (DTLR and CABE 2001)

A Walking Strategy for Central London (Central London Partnership 2001)

Paving the Way (CABE 2002)

The benefits of town centre pedestrian and public realm schemes (TfL Street Management 2002).

A final comment on Part 1 is that the Table and Figures do not add value to the plan since it is unclear what message they are trying to convey (e.g. Figure 1.2). Good photographs (e.g. those on pages 3, 6 and vii) have a much greater impact.

(2): Comments on Part 2: "The Action Plan"

This section (as summarised in Figure and Table 2.1) is a poor attempt at providing practitioners and policy makers with a logical framework for action. The relationship between "measures" and "outcomes" has not been developed logically which is why there are so many confusing "linkages". For example: "Best Practice and consistent approach disseminated" is not an outcome (it will be ineffectual if nobody uses this information) but as a measure. The outcome should be that "Practitioners are working more effectively to improve walking environment". These points are not semantic but fundamental to developing an operational plan of action. Assistance should be sought to develop a meaningful plan which does not muddle measures and outcomes.

Similarly, the Performance Indicators cannot be clearly linked to the objectives so are essentially meaningless. Many of them are inappropriate or so subjective as to be pointless (e.g. “%footpaths easy to use”).

It is interesting to note that 64% (27 out of 42) of the actions are already “underway”. This would seem to imply there is no real need for this plan since people are already doing all the right things. In fact, what it demonstrates is that it brings nothing new or innovative to the table and does not provide any inspiration or guidance for the boroughs and organisations that are already working on delivering improved public realm and walking projects.

The plan leaves many unanswered questions such as:

- Who are the key stakeholders and partners?
- What is the delivery mechanism for the plan?
- Is there any “new money” associated with this?
- How will the success of the plan be measured in 2015?

On one final specific issue, which I am sure many other organisations will raise, is that the plan fails to adequately address the issue of shared use. As I am sure you are aware, this issue was hotly debated and argued at the Steering Group meetings. Rather than avoiding the issue, the Plan provides an ideal opportunity to take a positive approach to this problem. It should seek to bring together cycling and walking practitioners to agree appropriate design standards and guiding principles that will not compromise the safety, security and convenience of either user group.