

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The National Cycling Strategy

Since the first publication of these Guidelines in February 1996, the landscape of transport policy has changed considerably with the launch on 10 July 1996 of the National Cycling Strategy. Endorsed by local government and many public and private institutions, this enormously valuable document from the Department of Transport moves policy forward in a number of directions. Some of its statements are reproduced here to serve as an introduction to this second issue of the Guidelines (our emphasis of key phrases).

*"Sustainable transport options are needed for **both utility and leisure trips**, offering practical alternatives to the private motorcar".*

*"Many of the actions to provide for cycling will involve a more cycle-friendly application of existing resources. For instance, cyclists can be taken more fully into account and **given priorities** within traffic management schemes. This process may well involve the **reallocation of road space** to create convenient and safe access by cycle. Other actions will involve **shifting resources** to schemes which recognise the value of cycling".*

*"Leisure cycling is a high quality way to enjoy the countryside and a good way to **introduce** people to cycling for their everyday transport needs".*

"On the whole, creating a cycle-friendly infrastructure does not demand either complex or expensive traffic management measures.

*Instead some significant changes in **thinking, attitudes and priorities** are needed in the way we manage our roads".*

*'Pedestrians will also benefit from the measures to enhance cycling. Attention needs to be directed towards **reducing the sources of danger**, rather than inhibiting the movement of environmentally sustainable yet vulnerable road-users".*

The action plan for a model local cycling strategy" contained in the document envisages that by the year 2002 the following should have been achieved:

- completion of **utility networks** in major towns including any construction
- safer routes to all secondary **schools**
- completion of urban sections and strategic inter-urban sections of the **National Cycle Network**

The National Cycling Strategy document compares the U.K.'s low level of cycling with some of our neighbours and notes that "In Switzerland there are more hills, Sweden has colder winters and Germany higher car ownership, yet each has five times the share of bicycle trips than in the UK". The cause of this can be found in our negligible provision to foster cycling with consequent poor records of safety compared with our continental counterparts. Accident rates for cyclists are 10 times lower in Denmark than in Britain; it is not surprising that cycle use is around 10 times

higher.

With fewer journeys made by cycle in the UK, correspondingly high profile efforts will be required to persuade the public that it is safe and attractive to cycle, that cycling is a sensible way to travel in the late 20th Century and a sustainable way of going into the next Millennium. This task is the primary function of the National Cycle Network.

The National Cycle Network

In September 1995 the 6,500 mile National Cycle Network became the first major project, and still the only truly nationwide project, to win the support of the Millennium Commission. Its Millennium Routes, some 2,500 miles, are to be completed in the year 2000, with a national celebration on Midsummer's Day. The remaining 4,000 miles should be open by 2005, although many sections are already ahead of schedule as local authorities look to implement their cycling policies. Indeed, the Network itself is being extended beyond that first put to the Millennium Commission.

The aims of the National Cycle Network are:

- (i) to provide a nationwide network of safe, attractive, high quality routes for cyclists which also extend the provision for walkers and wheelchair users;
- (ii) to promote cycling as a form of transport. The Network will be aimed at providing a standard appropriate to the needs of inexperienced or novice cyclists;
- (iii) to stimulate wider measures benefitting cyclists and pedestrians, and help to promote local and regional route networks.

The design standards outlined for the National Cycle Network call for the routes to be suitable for use by a novice adult cyclist, a family with young children or a sensible unaccompanied twelve-year-old. A mental picture of this constituency of likely users may help in the resolution of design issues.

A second, but equally crucial level of network is also under development - regional routes connecting to the National Cycle Network and acting as a framework for the fine-grained local networks which will eventually carry the bulk of regular journeys. It is desirable for regional routes to be built to the same standards as the National Cycle Network Routes.

The National Cycle Network Routes, in particular, must address the means of persuading those who currently do not cycle to start to do so. To this end they should be of a particularly high quality and be:

- safe, continuous and attractive to encourage novices to cycle
- useful for all manner of routine journeys for local people and existing cyclists
- so memorable for visitors and tourists that people starting with a recreational trip are persuaded to cycle more.

The Guidelines

These Guidelines have been developed with assistance from the Department of Transport, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, The Scottish Office and the Welsh Office. During their preparation, principles and details have been agreed with the Department of Transport.

The Guidelines are for use by planners, engineers and designers, and by those with an advisory or consultative role in transport policy and infrastructure. They set out the design philosophy and criteria for the National Cycle Network but are equally suitable for cycling infrastructure of all sorts at a regional or a local level.

National or other cycle routes should not be created in isolation but within the integrated transport policy each authority will be developing. Route development should be one of a wide range of initiatives to reduce the impact of motor traffic and to improve the urban and rural environment for pedestrians, people with reduced mobility and public transport users. These policies will make use of, extend and enhance the National Cycle Network.

The Guidelines comprise a series of diagrams with notes giving advice on the planning and design of each part of the National Cycle Network.

It should be stressed that the Guidelines are not intended to cover every aspect of cycle provision. They should be used in conjunction with the following:

- Cycle-Friendly Infrastructure: Guidelines for Planning and Design prepared by the Institution of Highways and Transportation, the Department of Transport, the Bicycle Association and the Cyclists' Touring Club (1996);

Department of Transport Local Transport Notes, Traffic Advisory Leaflets and general technical advice;

Local authority standards, such as The London Cycle Network Design Guide.

The development of the Guidelines is a partnership process, like the National Cycle Network programme itself. Sustrans and Ove Arup Et Partners warmly acknowledge the feedback on the first edition, which has been used to update this document.

Comments on the first edition came from numerous Local Authorities, the British Horse Society, British Waterways, Forest Enterprise, the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People, the National Trust, the Royal Association for Disability Et Rehabilitation, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, Scottish National Heritage, the Tandem Club, Transport 2000 and many others including individual cyclists and civil engineering practices.

Over one hundred different issues were raised, leading to substantial alterations being incorporated in this 1997 edition.