



**RESPONSE TO**

**THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER**

**CYCLING ACTION PLAN FOR SCOTLAND**  
**More People Cycling More Often**

**19 August 2009**

**THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTS**  
Response to the Scottish Government Consultation Paper  
“Cycling Action Plan for Scotland”

## **Introduction**

This is the response of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to the Scottish Government’s consultation paper, “Cycling Action Plan for Scotland”. The consultation paper seeks views on the proposals to get more people cycling more often and to achieve Scotland’s Vision for Cycling, which is, by 2020:

- Have created communities where people of all ages and abilities can cycle safely and comfortably
- Everyone will have access to information, materials and incentives to make day to day cycling a realistic choice
- Our legal powers and investment will assist in achieving a target of 10% modal share for cycling and will reduce carbon emissions
- We will live longer, healthier lives

RoSPA supports both Scotland’s Vision for Cycling and the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland. There are many strong reasons for encouraging people to cycle, and for Scottish Government policies and actions to help people to do so more often and, crucially, more safely.

In June this year, the Scottish Government published “Scotland’s Road Safety Framework to 2020”, which sets out Scotland’s road safety vision, road casualty reduction targets and the many and varied ways in which these will be achieved. It is essential that “Scotland’s Road Safety Framework to 2020” and the “Cycling Action Plan for Scotland” support and complement each other. However, the Road Safety Framework does not appear to be mentioned in the Policy Context section of the Cycling Action Plan (pp 4 – 11). This is a significant omission, and RoSPA recommends that a section outlining the links between the Action Plan and the Framework be added to the Cycling Action Plan.

Scotland’s road safety vision is “*A steady reduction in the numbers of those killed and those seriously injured, with the ultimate vision of a future where no-one is killed on Scotland’s roads, and the injury rate is much reduced*”. This includes cyclists.

It is clear from the survey findings quoted in the Cycling Action Plan consultation paper that ‘danger from traffic’ and other road safety concerns (eg, ‘vehicle driver behaviour’) are very significant deterrents to cycling. Therefore, one of the aims of the Cycling Action Plan should be to contribute to the road safety vision and casualty reduction targets by helping more people to cycle more often **more safely**.

The key challenge is how to achieve an increase in cycling without increasing cyclist casualties. This will require measures to provide a safer road environment for cyclists, to improve the awareness and behaviour of drivers and to improve the awareness and behaviour of cyclists.

## Response to Specific Questions in the Consultation Paper

### Strategic Objective 1 (Planning and Designing for Cyclists)

By 2020 we will have created communities where people of all ages and abilities can cycle safely and comfortably.

Q1 Are there any actions or activities on planning and design that are missing and that would encourage you to cycle more often.

Q2 How do we achieve these actions effectively? Who is best placed to deliver these changes?

### RoSPA Response

RoSPA agrees that providing a safe environment, and one that is perceived to be safe, is essential to achieving the overall aim of the Cycling Action Plan, to help more people to cycle more often.

The Action Plan correctly identifies a wide range of outcomes to achieve this through the Planning and Design process, including the need to ensure that the professionals in this field fully understand and seek to meet the needs of cyclists, that road design helps cyclists (including, but not exclusively, through cycle facilities) and that cycling is integrated into overall transport policy. Traffic control, especially speed management, is also crucial.

There are many examples of good practice in countries such as the Netherlands, and increasingly in Great Britain. The funding provided for Cycling Demonstration Towns and Cities should identify effective ways of increasing cycling without increasing the level of cyclist casualties.

### Pedestrians

The consultation mentions periodically the need to increase walking but in the pursuit to promote cycling initiatives, care needs to be taken to ensure that the needs, choices and safety of other road users specifically, pedestrians and elderly road users, are fully addressed. The aim is a modal shift from car use to cycling, not walking to cycling.

The consultation paper correctly notes that while one of the measures, in some places, may be to create shared use pedestrian/cyclist paths, great care needs to be taken in their design to ensure that there is no conflict between these two groups. The needs of cyclists should not be given priority over the needs of pedestrians. In particular, we must ensure that elderly people, or people with disabilities, are not scared to go out because what used to be a pavement has now become a shared path.

## **Strategic Objective 2 (Day to Day Cycling)**

For cycling to be the natural choice for your daily journeys

Q3 Would an improvement in local facilities for cycling encourage you to cycle more often? If not, what else could be done to change your mind?

Q4 How do we achieve these actions effectively? Who is best placed to deliver these changes?

### **RoSPA Response**

The measures discussed under Planning and Design would help to make cycling a realistic choice for many people. Of course, there will always be people who do not wish to cycle, for personal reasons or because it is impractical (their journeys may be too long, they may have too much to carry).

In addition to the measures to provide a safer environment, measures are also needed to improve the awareness, skills and behaviour of both cyclists and drivers.

### **Cyclists Skills and Behaviour**

RoSPA strongly recommends practical, on road, cyclist training is provided, via initiatives such as the Scottish Cycle Training Scheme, Ready Steady Bike and Go By-Cycle. This can and should be supported by measures to help children cycle to school safely, such as cycling trains and safer routes to school projects, and by road safety education in schools.

Cycling education and training should be seen as part of a wider road safety education curriculum, that includes pedestrian safety (including practical pedestrian training, which would normally occur before practical cyclist training), in car safety and ultimately pre-driver education.

While the primary audience for cyclist training is schoolchildren, appropriate courses should also be available for other's, such as adults.

Properly trained parents, teachers, cycling and pedestrian skill training professionals would be best placed to deliver such training within a properly risk assessed on road environment . One of the good developments in recent years has been the creation of the system of instructor training for cyclist training courses.

### **Driver Skills and Behaviour**

Most cycle accidents involve a collision with another vehicle. Although, there is much that cyclists can do to avoid such collisions, the behaviour of drivers is of even greater importance. There are many accidents in which the cyclist is using the road responsibly and safely, but is put at risk because a driver fails to do the same. Drivers need to be aware of the characteristics, needs and vulnerability of cyclists.

Cycle accidents at junctions in urban areas are usually the fault of drivers who fail to see a rider who is in clear view, and in some cases even wearing high visibility garments. Government road safety publicity campaigns need to target drivers with key messages to raise their awareness that they need to look out for cyclists, especially at junctions. It is essential that drivers are aware that cyclists may be present on any road, at any time.

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The Department for Transport is currently conducting a thorough review of the causes and circumstances of cycling accidents, and what further measures might be effective in preventing them. This should produce some valuable insights into the causes of cycling accidents and how they may be prevented.

A particular issue that deserves more focus is the interaction between cyclists and large vehicles, especially when large vehicles are turning left at junctions.

It is often suggested that when people are learning to drive, the process should include some form of cyclist training in order to give prospective drivers some experience of cycling and help them understand the vulnerability and needs of riders. While this idea seems superficially attractive, RoSPA does not believe it would be practical or cost-effective.

### **Strategic Objective 3 (Encouragement and Incentives)**

For people to have the confidence and the right information to make cycling a realistic choice for some journeys.

Q5 If your employer introduced the Bike to Work scheme would this encourage you to take up cycling? What else could your employer do to encourage you to cycle?

Q6 Did you know that the route you drive to work may not be the same route you would use if you were cycling? Would free local maps encourage you to cycle? What other information do you think is missing?

Q7 Would you use a public bike hire scheme in your town or city such as those running successfully in Paris and Munich?

Q8 Which organisation(s) in your opinion are best placed to deliver the actions in this section?

### **RoSPA Response**

#### **Bike To Work**

As an employer, RoSPA found little interest amongst its staff (at Head Office in Birmingham) when the issue of introducing a Bike to Work Scheme was raised. Those staff who cycle, whether to work or for leisure, already had bicycles, and many staff did not believe that the financial benefits of the Scheme were worthwhile.

There are employers who have staff who use a bicycle in the course of their work. These employers should be encouraged and helped to ensure that their health and safety policies and procedures address the risks faced by these staff.

### **Cycle Maps**

Cycle Maps, whether printed or online, are very useful. They can help to highlight safer, cycle-friendly routes, which may not be obvious (as they are probably less direct and include both on and off road sections). These cycling maps tend to be extremely popular with visitors, students and young people who are enthusiastic about cycling. If they are free, more people are likely to use them, although they do need to be promoted and accessible. However, many routes are not linked nor are there always off road availability. This is a clear indication that these cycle paths and infrastructure need to be improved for those wishing to cycle safely.

### **Cycle Hire Schemes**

Such schemes may well prove useful and lessons should be learnt from examples in cities in other countries. Apart from the obvious issues of bicycle theft and damage, the road environment should be ready to cope for the expected increase in cycling that a hire scheme may produce in a relatively short period of time.

### **Strategic Objective 4 (Legal Powers)**

Legal powers will promote access and keep people safe and active.

Q9 Should the liability laws be changed to give cyclists (and pedestrians) more protection? If so, how?

Q10 Should all road users pay road tax? If so, how much should it be for cyclists and how could it be enforced?

Q11 Should current powers of enforcement be better used? If so, which ones and how?

Q12. Should local authorities make greater use of their power to re-determine the use of roads which are footways / pathways to create cycle tracks which can be used by both cyclists and pedestrians, where it is suitable to do so? Would this encourage you to cycle more?

Q13 Who is best placed to deliver these changes?

### **RoSPA Response**

RoSPA is not convinced that this would be an effective or sensible move.

Is it accurate to say “*In most Western European countries, the liability in any collision involving a motor vehicle and a cycle (or a pedestrian) lies with the driver of the vehicle, other than in the case of an adult cyclist who is shown to have been responsible for the accident.*” (p41 of the consultation paper) or does this only apply in certain circumstances (such as accidents in Woovnerf or Home Zone type areas)?

Before any move to impose automatic liability was introduced, RoSPA suggests that a thorough review of practice in other countries is conducted to establish exactly how this applies and how it works, along with a review of whether it would be practical within Scotland’s legal system.

A drawback may be that it would feed the view of some people that drivers are unfairly treated and that cyclists ‘get away’ with things that drivers are punished for – such as riding through red lights. It may encourage antipathy between the two groups, which would have implications for the safety of cyclists, and make it harder to encourage non-cycling car users to consider using a bicycle for some journeys.

Finally, an assessment should be made of how such a change would improve road safety. Would it affect driver behaviour in any meaningful way, given that most drivers do not think that their driving will lead to an accident?

### **Road Tax**

RoSPA does not believe that cyclists should be required to pay road tax. Many are also drivers, and so pay road tax anyway. It would make cycling more expensive, which would deter some people from cycling. It would require the creation of an administrative and enforcement system, the costs of which would have to be recouped from the Cycling Road Tax. In order to be enforceable, it would require some means of identifying individual cyclists, so that those who had not paid the tax could be detected, payment obtained and any sanctions imposed.

Many cyclists are children who could not be charged tax; therefore an age at which the tax applied would need to be set and enforced.

### **Current Powers of Enforcement**

Existing laws need to be enforced if they are to be effective. Some cyclists do behave badly by riding on pavements, going through red lights and so on. This not only creates a risk for all road users, but it creates a poor impression of cycling. Enforcing these laws not only reduces road risk but ultimately will help the cause of encouraging more people to cycle.

A recent case in which a cyclist who ran into and killed an elderly pedestrian, and was consequently sentenced to 7 months' imprisonment shows, in a tragic way, that cyclists who behave dangerously can create a serious risk to others and that they can be charged, convicted and sentenced to prison for doing so. However, it seems that bringing a suitable charge in this case was difficult, and there may need to be a review of offences, and sentences, relating to bad cycling. Such cases are, fortunately, very rare and it is certainly true that pedestrians face a much greater risk from drivers than from cyclists.

### **Shared Use**

As noted in our response on page 2 under Planning and Design, there are some places where it is possible to create shared use pedestrian/cyclist paths. However, great care needs to be taken in their design to ensure that there is no conflict between these two groups. The needs of cyclists should not be given priority over the needs of pedestrians. In particular, we must ensure that elderly people, or people with disabilities, are not scared to go out because what used to be a pavement has now become a shared path. Cyclist may not think they are a danger, but the perceptions of safety of vulnerable elderly, the young and the increasingly older age group of road users should be seriously considered.

RoSPA thanks the Scottish Government for the opportunity to comment on the proposals. We have no objection to our response being reproduced or attributed.

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Road Safety Department  
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